



# The Development of Pre-service English Teachers' Ability of Teaching Reflection

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### ABSTRACT

During the practicum period, pre-service English teachers are assigned to different schools in groups. Peers provide various ways to help pre-service English teachers in the process of practicum and promote pre-service English teachers' professional development and reflection level. This study aimed to explore the pre-service English teachers' reflective ability after the practicum and how peer assistance affects pre-service English teachers' reflective competence during the practicum. It is found that pre-service English teachers' reflective ability is generally in the middle and low level, with a higher level in meta-cognitive and practical, and lower in cognitive, emotional and critical levels. After the internship, pre-service English teachers have improved in practice, cognitive, meta-cognitive and emotional levels.

Keywords: Pre-service English teachers; Level of teaching reflection

### Literature Review

#### Research on Reflective Teaching of Pre-service English Teachers

##### Related Research Abroad

In foreign countries, reflective teaching has been integrated into many professional fields. In practice, especially in educational practice, a large number of studies have adopted specific reflective models and methods to explore effective ways to improve teachers' reflective ability and provide empirical insights for the development of reflective teaching.

**Teachers write logs of teaching reflection:** Dobbins (1996) believes that in teachers' reflection, the writing of teachers' teaching logs can effectively improve their reflective ability. English teachers should pay attention not only to their own performance in teaching but also to what they have learned in the process of teaching so that practice teachers can reflect more comprehensively and deeply (Richards, J. C. & Farrell, 2005). If the pre-service English teachers write the teacher's log only to meet the requirements of the school, then the teacher's log will lose its value. In addition, Dobbins (1996) also points out that pre-service English teachers should set aside a certain amount of time for reflection, and teachers should regard reflection in practice as important as other teaching activities. Only by setting aside enough time for reflection, the reflection would really occur and pre-service teachers can perceive its real value.

**The establishment of a teachers' teaching community:** Some scholars also emphasize the benefits of establishing a teachers' teaching community to improve pre-service teachers' reflective ability. Lee (2005) believes that reflective background is one of the most important factors in the development of teacher reflection and learning. The forms of the community include the establishment of reflective teacher learning groups, peer mutual help laboratories and teacher mutual evaluation (Valli, 1997), while Hatton and Smith (1995) call them "critical colleagues or friends". Peer feedback and suggestions can reduce the mental vulnerability of pre-service English teachers when they are criticized. The cultural reflection of practice schools can also provide pre-service English teachers with a reflective background and give them the opportunity to practice their own educational ideas.

**The guidance and influence of teacher educators:** Some researchers have studied the teaching

reflection ability of pre-service English teachers from another perspective. The researchers point out that in-school tutors and out-school tutors play an important role in the development of pre-service English teachers' teaching reflection ability. Foong et al. (2018) believe that the instructional style of pre-service teachers' tutors should be changed from instructive to collaborative, which will enable pre-service English teachers to actively analyze the causes of their own teaching problems, rather than directly presenting the problem itself without thinking about the logic and causes behind it. Francis and Starrs (2005) proposed that tutors also need to reflect on their own understanding of reflective teaching and the way to guide students. Clarke (2006) explored the relationship between the characteristics and nature of tutors' guidance style and the communication between practice teachers and found that the benign interaction between pre-service English teachers and tutors can help to improve the development of tutors' reflective ability (Parker, 2008).

With regard to the research on the teaching reflection of pre-service English teachers, foreign scholars have mainly explored ways to improve the reflection ability of pre-service English teachers, such as writing reflection logs and establishing teachers' teaching communities. In addition, the guidance and communication methods of tutors also play an important role in the development of pre-service English teachers' reflection levels. The above studies all provide a reference for this study. In the study of Valli (1997), it is emphasized that the establishment of teacher learning groups and peer evaluation is helpful to the development of teachers' reflective ability, which is the focus of this study. Then under the domestic educational background, the author will discuss whether mutual assistance among pre-service English teachers can promote the development of teachers' reflection levels during educational practice.

### **Related studies at Home**

The domestic research on reflective teaching of pre-service English teachers is mainly combined with educational practice, which is a bridge to promote the development of pre-service English teachers' reflective competence and a key period for pre-service English teachers to apply the theories they have learned to practice. During the internship period, pre-service English teachers' experience and feelings about teaching have a great impact on what kind of teachers they will become after entering the workplace. During the period of educational practice, there are many factors that affect the development of pre-service teachers' reflective ability. This paper will sort out the literature on the development of pre-service English teachers' reflective ability during the internship.

**The influence of Education practice on the development of pre-service English teachers' reflective competence:** Sun Xiaohui et al. (2010) explored the development of pre-service English teachers' reflective ability during educational practice. It is found that the reflection level of pre-service English teachers is generally at a low level in the early stage of practice, and the reflection level of teachers in the later stage of practice is improved in varying degrees. The influencing factors include the guidance style of internship tutors, peer feedback, interaction between teachers, students' performance, as well as teachers' own attitude and understanding of teaching reflection. Guo Xinjie et al (2009) found that during the practice period, pre-service English teachers' reflective level focused on morality and meta-cognition. The factors affecting teachers' reflective development include teachers' personal characteristics, habits, time arrangement during the internship, and teachers' reflective skills. Other scholars have also investigated the effect of educational practice on the development of pre-service English teachers' reflective ability and found that there is no significant

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difference in pre-service English teachers' reflective level before and after practice. The teaching reflection consciousness of pre-service English teachers, the guidance style and frequency of practice school tutors, the lack of guidance motivation of practice school tutors, and the lack of reflection enthusiasm of pre-service teachers all have a certain impact on the pre-service English teachers' reflective level.

**The influence of teaching reflection approach, content and process on pre-service English teachers' reflective ability:** Starting with reflective teaching theory, some scholars have discussed the appropriate ways to improve pre-service English teachers' reflective competence. It is found that reflective journals, peer cooperative learning, "scaffolding guidance" and real classroom situation are very effective in improving English teachers' reflective competence. In addition, how to cultivate the reflective competence of pre-service English teachers should become an important project in graduate schools, so as to better help the future professional growth and development of pre-service English teachers. Han Gang (2008) explored the reflection content, level and process of novice English teachers, and found that novice teachers' reflection focuses on classroom teaching and students' learning, and teachers have less reflection on their own professional development and educational background. Most of the levels of reflection are at the practical and technical level and rarely reach the critical level.

The influence of Class videotaping and school-based mentors on the reflective ability of pre-service English teachers. Zhou Qian (2021) conducted a study on the development of pre-service English teachers' reflective ability during the internship based on Class videotaping. The study found that videotaping as a means of reflection can help and improve the development of pre-service English teachers' reflective ability. Zhang Shengqi (2021) explored the influence of school-based mentors on pre-service English teachers' reflective ability and found that the influence of school-based mentors was mainly concentrated on the levels of practice, emotion and meta-cognition level. Throughout the whole internship, mentors adopt the following ways to help pre-service English teachers: private talking, sharing teaching experience and after-class feedback. Zou Weicheng (2009) conducted a study on the development of English teachers' reflective ability and found that pre-service English teachers' reflection focused on classroom teaching, student learning, teacher's professional development, teacher-student relationship, and teachers can expand the breadth and depth of teaching reflection through curriculum, reading related books and peer assistance.

#### **Summary**

Summing up the above literature review, the development of pre-service English teachers' reflective ability has become a hot research topic in the past two years. The main points of researchers on the development of pre-service English teachers can be divided into the following points: 1) Educational practice. As a bridge for pre-service English teachers, Education practice plays an important role in teachers' professional development, and many scholars observe the changes that educational practice brings to pre-service English teachers' reflective ability. However, the academic research results are not consistent on whether the educational practice can promote the development of pre-service English teachers' reflective ability, so the first two questions of this study will focus on whether Education practice can improve the development of pre-service English teachers' reflective ability. 2) School-based mentors. The pre-service English teacher has mastered educational theory in the school, and how to apply reflective teaching theory to educational practice is inseparable from the guidance of

school-based mentors. 3) Classroom key events and videotaping. The researchers mainly concentrated on whether these two ways can promote the reflective competence of pre-service English teachers during educational practice. In the relevant literature review, we can find that many scholars emphasize the importance of peer cooperation and peer feedback among the factors that affect the development of pre-service English teachers' reflective ability during the internship.

### Research Questions

1. What is the reflective level of pre-service English teachers before the practicums?
2. After the practicums, does the reflective competence of pre-service English teachers change? At which levels are the changes more obvious?

### Research subjects

The research was conducted among 18 pre-service English teachers from an M.Ed program (Master Degree in English Education) at Yangtze University. Among the 18 subjects, 2 were males and 16 were females. Most of the students majored in English education, and few of them majored in English or business English. Among the 18 subjects, the author will select four students to collect their reflection logs and conduct interviews.

### Data collection

The data for this study were collected through three sources. A questionnaire that is designed to reveal pre-service English teachers' teaching reflective competence and its changes after practicums. Interviews and reflective journals aimed to help reveal how practicum affects pre-service English teachers' teaching reflective.

The questionnaire was translated into Chinese so that subjects can understand them more easily. Questionnaires were conducted twice. They were first distributed before the participants' teaching practicum. 18 pre-service English teachers completed it and all the questionnaires were valid. After most pre-service teachers have finished their practicum, the questionnaire was distributed again to those 18 participants. The research purpose was explained before each distribution to make sure that every participant understood the topic clearly. The author also made a commitment that the personal information of subjects would not be leaked or used for other purposes.

Four subjects wrote a reflective journal every two weeks, and the practicum is half a year, each student teacher wrote eight reflective journals and the author collected 32 journals in total. The way they wrote their reflective journals was by recording them. The interview was adopted in the middle of the practicum and at the end of the practicum. It was conducted in Chinese through face-to-face communication, and each interview lasted thirty minutes or so permissions were granted from four interviewees on the whole process of synchronous audio recordings.

### Results and Discussions

**Table 1 Pre-service English Teachers' Reflection Level before Practicum**

| component      | Item  | Mean | SD    |
|----------------|-------|------|-------|
| Practical      | 1-5   | 3.22 | 1.003 |
| Cognitive      | 6-10  | 2.69 | 0.907 |
| Affective      | 11-13 | 3.15 | 0.787 |
| Meta-cognitive | 14-20 | 3.31 | 0.732 |
| Critical       | 21-26 | 2.79 | 0.737 |

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The above table revealed that pre-service English teachers had cultivated some reflection habits and awareness of teaching reflection before they went to the practicum. Among the five components, the meta-cognitive level of pre-service English teachers is the highest (Mean=3.31), the practical level of pre-service English teachers is relatively high (Mean=3.22), but the cognitive and critical levels of student teachers are extremely low (Mean=2.69, Mean=2.79), and the effective of Pre-service English teachers is in the middle level (Mean=3.15). The data shows that at least some of the participants often thought of their own teaching, but they did not actively engage themselves in reflective activities. A detailed descriptive analysis of each level will be presented in the following part.

**Table 2 Practical Level of Teaching Reflection before Practicum**

| Item   | Mean | SD    |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. I have a file where I keep my accounts of my teaching for reviewing purposes.           | 2.83 | 1.339 |
| 2. I talk about my classroom experiences with my colleagues and seek their advice/feedback | 3.39 | 0.778 |
| 3. I discuss practical/theoretical issues with my colleagues.                              | 2.83 | 0.857 |
| 4. I observe other teachers' classrooms to learn about their efficient practices           | 3.83 | 0.786 |
| 5. I ask my peers to observe my teaching and comment on my teaching performance            | 3.22 | 0.878 |

Pre-service English teachers lack real teaching experience due to the reality. So the only way for them to improve their classroom experience is to observe excellent English teachers' classrooms (Mean=3.83, SD=0.786). Speaking of the communication between pre-service English teachers and their colleagues, the reflection level of pre-service English teachers is moderate (Mean=3.39, SD=0.778). Sometimes, pre-service English teachers invited their colleagues and peers to observe their class and longed for feedback and advice from them (Mean=3.22, SD=0.878). The data shows that colleagues and peers played an important role in promoting pre-service English teachers' professional development and effective feedback is very valuable for pre-service English teachers to improve their reflection level. Finally, the Q1 and Q3 show that although pre-service English teachers had some certain degree of reflective consciousness, such as observing others' classes and looking for feedback extra, they did not have a good habit of teaching reflection before entering the practicum. Most of them did have a file to keep their accounts of teaching (Mean=2.83, SD=1.339).

**Table 3 Cognitive Level of Teaching Reflection before practicum**

| Item   | Mean | SD    |
|--|------|-------|
| 6. I read books/articles related to effective teaching to improve my classroom performance                             | 3.22 | 0.732 |
| 7. I think of writing articles based on my classroom experiences.  | 2.44 | 0.922 |
| 8. I look at journal articles or search the internet to see what the recent developments in my profession are.         | 2.89 | 0.832 |
| 9. I carry out small-scale research activities in my classes to become better informed of learning/teaching processes. | 2.44 | 0.922 |
| 10. I think of classroom events as potential research topics and think of finding a method for investigating them.     | 2.44 | 0.924 |

This table suggests that at the cognitive level, pre-service English teachers are improving their teaching reflection through reading literature and professional books (Mean=3.22, SD=0.732). They also learn about the latest developments in English teaching through the internet or journal articles (Mean=2.89, SD=0.922). But the mean of Q7,9,10 is especially low (Mean=2.44), the reason for this phenomenon is partly because they have learned much theoretical knowledge but there is no opportunity for them to put it into classroom practice.

**Table 4 Affective Level of Teaching Reflection before practicum**

| Item   | Mean | SD    |
|--|------|-------|
| 11. I talk to my students to learn about their learning styles and preferences.                      | 3.33 | 0.840 |
| 12. I talk to my students to learn about their family backgrounds, hobbies, interests and abilities. | 3.22 | 0.878 |
| 13. I ask my students whether they like a teaching task or not.                                      | 2.89 | 0.583 |

Table 4-4 reveals that speaking to the students, pre-service English teachers are inclined to know about the learning styles and learning preferences of the students (Mean=3.33, SD=0.840), maybe because pre-service English teachers have some difficulties in designing teaching objectives and plans as new teachers, and probably they can solve this problem through talking with students (Lee, 2007). Pre-service English teachers have an enthusiasm for their own students, so they are more concerned about students' personal situations (Han Gang, 2008), for example, their family background and personal habits (Mean=3.22, SD=0.878). But the Mean of Q13 is pretty low (Mean=2.89, SD=0.583). This data proves that pre-service English teachers pay attention to the feedback and opinions from their peers and tutors, but ignore students' evaluation of their teaching performance.

**Table 5 Meta-cognitive Level of Teaching Reflection before Practicum**

| Item   | Mean | SD    |
|--|------|-------|
| 14. As a teacher, I think about my teaching philosophy and the way it is affecting my teaching.                            | 3.22 | 0.878 |
| 15. I think of the ways my biography or my background affects the way I define myself as a teacher.                        | 3.06 | 0.802 |
| 16. I think of the meaning or significance of my job as a teacher.   | 3.50 | 0.707 |
| 17. I try to find out which aspects of my teaching provide me with a sense of satisfaction.                                | 3.44 | 0.616 |
| 18. I think about my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher.  | 3.44 | 0.705 |
| 19. I think of the positive/negative role models I have had as a student and the way they have affected me in my practice. | 3.22 | 0.732 |
| 20. I think of inconsistencies and contradictions that occur in my classroom practice.                                     | 3.28 | 0.669 |

At the meta-cognitive level, pre-service English teachers get the highest scores (Mean=3.31). The data shows that pre-service English teachers always reflect the significance of their job, and the meaning of being an English teacher (Mean=3.50, SD=0.707). The pre-service English teachers

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always reflect on themselves about what are their strengths and weaknesses as a teacher and how to change themselves to ensure they will become excellent teachers one day (Mean=3.44, SD=0.705). Job satisfaction is an important strength for them to stick to their post, therefore the pre-service English teachers will actively explore which aspects of their work can bring them job satisfaction (Mean=3.44 SD=0.705). In addition, some other factors also influence the way of pre-service English teachers' understanding of English teachings, such as personal experience, educational background, and their teaching philosophy (Q14, 15 Mean=3.22). At last, some teachers often think about the inconsistencies and contradictions during the teaching practice in order to avoid it happening next time (Mean=3.28, SD=0.669).

**Table 6 Critical Level of Teaching Reflection before Practicum**

| Item   | Mean | SD    |
|--|------|-------|
| 21. I think about instances of social injustice in my own surroundings and try to discuss them in my classes.                        | 2.83 | 0.618 |
| 22. I think of ways to enable my students to change their social lives by fighting poverty, discrimination, and gender bias.         | 2.78 | 0.878 |
| 23. I ask my students whether they like a teaching task or not.  | 2.61 | 0.778 |
| 24. In my teaching, I include less-discussed topics, such as old age, AIDS, discrimination against women and minorities, and poverty | 2.72 | 0.752 |
| 25. I think about the political aspects of my teaching and the way I may affect my students' political views.                        | 3.00 | 0.686 |
| 26. I think of outside social events that can influence my teaching inside the class.  | 2.78 | 0.732 |

The above table shows that pre-service English teachers' critical level is extremely low (Mean=2.79). Pre-service English teachers expect to cultivate students' tolerant and democratic social values in class (Mean=3.0, SD=0.732). When talking about the unhealthy phenomenon of society, political views and less-discussed topics, pre-service English teachers seldom involve such content in the classroom (Mean=2.78, 2.61, 2.72). The reason for pre-service English teachers' critical level in such a low place is mainly because most teachers focus on language points and language structure when teaching English in the stage of compulsory education, while the cultivation of social and political value is generally ignored.

### **Pre-service English Teachers' Reflection Level after Practicum**

This section will discuss whether the pre-service English teachers' reflection level has changed after practicum, and if so, at which level. The author combines the questionnaire data and reflective journal to explore the changes.



**Table 7 Data Comparison**

| Reflection Level     |      | Practical | Cognitive | Affective | Meta-cognitive | Critical |
|----------------------|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|----------|
| Before the practicum | Mean | 3.22      | 2.69      | 3.15      | 3.31           | 2.79     |
|                      | SD   | 1.003     | 0.907     | 0.787     | 0.732          | 0.737    |
| After the practicum  | Mean | 3.63      | 3.00      | 3.41      | 3.56           | 2.81     |
|                      | SD   | 0.917     | 0.887     | 0.901     | 0.854          | 0.767    |

The table presents pre-service English teachers' reflective competence at each level. According to the data, pre-service English teachers' overall teaching reflective competence changed at the practical, cognitive, affective and meta-cognitive levels.

**Table 8 Practical Level of Teaching Reflection after Practicum**

| Level            |      | Q1    | Q2    | Q3    | Q4    | Q5    |
|------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Before Practicum | Mean | 2.83  | 3.39  | 2.83  | 3.83  | 3.22  |
|                  | SD   | 1.339 | 0.778 | 0.857 | 0.786 | 0.878 |
| After Practicum  | Mean | 3.28  | 3.89  | 3.33  | 3.67  | 4.00  |
|                  | SD   | 1.127 | 0.676 | 0.840 | 0.970 | 0.767 |

After practicum, pre-service English teachers have cultivated good teaching reflection habits. Some pre-service English teachers had a file where they keep their accounts of their teaching for reviewing purposes (Means=3.28, SD=1.127). In addition, pre-service English teachers cooperated more closely with their peers during the practicum (Mean=4.00, SD=0.767). The reason for practical level improved mainly because practicum provided a good chance for pre-service English teachers to apply their teaching theories. Pre-service English teachers' efforts at the practical level also can be reflected in their reflective journals. Examples are presented as follows:

*This is the first week of my practicum, I felt that the students and school-based mentor were very kind to me. I am going to have my first English class, and I am afraid that I can't finish it well, so I talked with my school-based mentor. She told me the first thing I should do before I give a class was to listen to others' English classes. She communicated with two excellent teachers and arranged me to observe their classes (reflective journals).*

*I recorded my class with a camera and watched those videos over and over after class. I recorded my problems, thought of ways to improve and try to avoid repeating them next time. In addition to self-reflection, I also asked my classmates to point out my problems, and listened to other people's suggestions, because many times I can't find problems on my own (reflective journals).*

Pre-service English teachers used multiple ways to reflect their teaching, such as creating reflection profiles, asking for feedback from peers and mentors and observing others' classes. The educational practicum brought a close relationship between pre-service English teachers and their peers and improved the pre-service English teachers' practical competence (Guo Xinjie, 2009).

**Table 9 Cognitive Level of Teaching Reflection after Practicum**

| Level            |      | Q6    | Q7    | Q8    | Q9    | Q10   |
|------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Before Practicum | Mean | 3.22  | 2.44  | 2.89  | 2.44  | 2.44  |
|                  | SD   | 0.732 | 0.922 | 0.832 | 0.922 | 0.922 |
| After Practicum  | Mean | 3.44  | 2.89  | 3.33  | 2.78  | 2.56  |
|                  | SD   | 0.705 | 0.758 | 0.767 | 0.878 | 1.042 |

The pre-service English teachers' cognitive ability was at a very low level before the practicum (Mean=2.44). After the practicum, they had certain teaching conditions and they began to do teaching research and write papers based on their teaching experience (Mean=2.89, SD=0.758). However, as for the teaching research topics, pre-service English teachers rarely focused on them (Mean=2.56). The following excerpts came from pre-service English teachers' reflective journals:

*After today's class, I found that the lead-in part was not successful. The students were unable to understand the passage due to new English words they didn't recognize. I thought about it after class, maybe because I didn't leave enough time for them to review, or I taught new words in the wrong way, and they couldn't remember them effectively. I know the word teaching always was a difficult part for teachers, and I am ready to read some articles to solve these problems, and maybe I can write my Master's paper based on it (reflective journals).*

*My school-based mentor told me that as a new teacher, I should look at journal articles or search the internet to see the recent development in English teaching (reflective journals).*

Pre-service English teachers began to read professional books and articles to improve their teaching ability. During the practicum period, pre-service English teachers would receive guidance and advice from many aspects, and all of these suggestions would help promote their cognitive level.

**Table 10 Affective Level of Teaching Reflection after Practicum**

| Level            |      | Q11   | Q12   | Q13   |
|------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| Before Practicum | Mean | 3.33  | 3.22  | 2.89  |
|                  | SD   | 0.840 | 0.878 | 0.583 |
| After Practicum  | Mean | 3.72  | 3.33  | 3.17  |
|                  | SD   | 0.958 | 0.907 | 0.786 |

Although the data showed that pre-service English teachers' affective level had improved in the above three questions, the results of pre-service English teachers' affective ability after practicum were similar to the results before practicum. Pre-service English teachers still paid more attention to the learning styles and preferences of students (Mean=3.72, SD=0.958). As for whether students like or note the teaching task, pre-service English teachers seemed not to care (Mean=3.17, SD=0.786). and the results were consistent with the content of reflective journals:

*There will be a class meeting in our class right away. My school-based mentor serves as the head teacher of the class, so she decides to give me the chance to charge the class meeting. I was very happy and nervous. Since I didn't know much about the students' situation, I decided to interview several students. First, I hope to have a deeper understanding of them. Second, I hope they can make suggestions for my class meeting activities. In the meantime, I also asked them what are their views on English class. I found that students prefer me to ask questions and assign more tasks to them so that they can have an opportunity to get more points.*

In the teacher's reflection journals, few pre-service English teachers mentioned students'

situations. We could see from the above data, pre-service English teachers were more interested in students' thoughts about themselves or their teaching, when it came to specific teaching tasks, pre-service English teachers thought they should ask their tutors or their peers.

**Table 11 Meta-cognitive Level of Teaching Reflection after Practicum**

| Level            |      | Q14   | Q15   | Q16   | Q17   | Q18   | Q19   | Q20   |
|------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Before Practicum | Mean | 3.22  | 3.06  | 3.50  | 3.44  | 3.44  | 3.22  | 3.28  |
|                  | SD   | 0.878 | 0.802 | 0.707 | 0.616 | 0.705 | 0.732 | 0.669 |
| After Practicum  | Mean | 3.22  | 3.33  | 4.00  | 3.78  | 3.78  | 3.33  | 3.44  |
|                  | SD   | 1.003 | 0.907 | 0.767 | 0.808 | 0.548 | 0.907 | 0.705 |

The above table showed that pre-service English teachers' meta-cognitive ability had slightly improved than before. It can be seen that after entering the practicum, pre-service English teachers often reflected what is the meaning of their job as an English teacher (Mean=4.00, SD=0.907). However, the pre-service English teachers seldom reflected on the influence of their learning experience (Mean=3.33) and the inconsistencies and contradictions that occurred in their classes (Mean=3.44, SD=0.705). The relevant content of the reflective journal was cited as follows:

*A very unpleasant thing happened today. When I was having an English class, I saw a student who was sleeping. I went over and asked him up. He got up and didn't speak. After a while I found him lying on the desk again, and I went over to wake him up. Five minutes later, he lay down on the desk again. This time I was angry. Standing on the platform, I said, "Zhang, could you stand up? This is the third time", he stood up and whispered, "the teacher is so annoying". I didn't speak when I heard that, but I was very sad. We have been taught not to give up any of our students. Our teacher taught us the same way when I was at school. I don't know what went wrong, maybe I should change my teaching belief.*

*I always thought that if a student is really not interested in the knowledge which was taught by school, he can learn something he is really interested in. But my school-based mentor seems to dislike the students who do not study well, especially the students who sit in the back of the classroom and do not study. What should teachers do when facing those students? What is the meaning of a teacher's job? Which one goes first, teach or educate children?*

From the pre-service English teachers' reflective journals, we can see that practicum not only made pre-service English teachers question and rethink the teaching concepts they once believed in, but also made pre-service English teachers think deeply about the meaning of their jobs (Gelfuso, 2014), which allowed-service teachers to re-examine their teaching beliefs and made progress in teaching reflection.

**Table 12 Critical Level of Teaching Reflection after Practicum**

| Level            |      | Q21   | Q22   | Q23   | Q24   | Q25   | Q26   |
|------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Before Practicum | Mean | 2.83  | 2.78  | 2.61  | 2.72  | 3.00  | 2.78  |
|                  | SD   | 0.618 | 0.878 | 0.778 | 0.752 | 0.686 | 0.732 |
| After Practicum  | Mean | 2.94  | 2.56  | 2.39  | 2.94  | 3.06  | 2.94  |
|                  | SD   | 0.873 | 0.616 | 0.608 | 0.802 | 0.802 | 0.725 |

There is no significant change in the critical level of pre-service English teachers before and after the practicum. The Q22 and Q23, teachers rarely lead students to discuss unfair social phenomena in class (Mean=2.56, SD=0.616) and hardly ever talk about sensitive topics (Mean=2.39, SD=0.608). The

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scores of these two questions are lower than the mean before the practicum. However, when they see some major events happening in society or around them, pre-service English teachers would bring them into the classroom and discuss it with students (Mean= 2.94, SD=0.873). Pre-service English teachers' reflective journals not mentioned anything about the critical level. It is consistent with the questionnaire data, which proved that the critical level of pre-service English teachers has not improved.

### **Summary**

This study is aimed at exploring the teaching reflective competence of pre-service English teachers and the changes after teaching practicums. Quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to collect data. 18 pre-service English teachers were investigated and four of them were interviewed by the author. The major finding can be summarized as the following.

Firstly, the pre-service English teachers' reflective competence was at the medium and low level before teaching practicum. They paid the most attention to the meta-cognitive level of teaching reflection while they paid the least attention to the cognitive level. As English teachers, they always reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses and learn the teaching ways of their school-based mentors. However, the practical, cognitive and critical aspects of teaching reflection were neglected by some pre-service English teachers.

Secondly, pre-service English teachers' reflective competence improved at the practical, cognitive, meta-cognitive and affective levels, as for the critical level, they did not change much. The reasons are discussed and analyzed in the previous chapter. According to the qualitative data, pre-service English teachers did not have a full understanding of the teaching reflection concept, thus they did not pay much attention to a cognitive or critical level. Some subjects also said the actual situation of internship school was different from what they thought, for they did not have enough chances to observe and teach new lessons.

Finally, pre-service English teachers should develop the consciousness of reflecting on their teaching. From the interviews, almost all pre-service teachers recognize the significance of teaching reflection, but they should have a better understanding of the concept of teaching reflection and reflect on more components.

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## APPENDIX I

### **A questionnaire on the reflection of pre-service English teachers during their internship**

Dear students, Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. This is a questionnaire about the reflection of pre-service English teachers during their internship. this questionnaire is only for academic research. The answers to all the questions in the questionnaire will not have any impact on your work, study and life. Any information you fill in will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you sincerely for your support!

#### **1. Basic personal information.**

Your name:

Gender:

Your undergraduate major is (full name of major):

Do you have any experience with an educational internship during your undergraduate period:

The length of your internship during your undergraduate is:

Did you have any internship experience before you went to graduate school?

The type of your teaching is:

Your teaching hours are:

The internship school where you work for this internship:

The number of your internship team is:

#### **2. Reflective proficiency Test for Master of English Education.**

- 1) I have a special folder to record the teaching so that I can review the teaching situation in the future.
- 2) After each class, I will discuss the successes and shortcomings of this class with my colleagues and peers, and ask for advice and feedback.
- 3) I will discuss issues related to teaching practice and educational theory with my peers and colleagues.
- 4) I will sit in the classes of excellent teachers in the school and learn from them.
- 5) I will ask my peers and colleagues to attend my class and evaluate my teaching performance.
- 6) I will take the initiative to consult the literature and related books to improve my teaching practice ability
- 7) I will consider how to write relevant papers based on my classroom experience.
- 8) I will consult journals and use the Internet to follow the latest developments in English education.
- 9) I will conduct some small research activities in class to help me better understand the process of students' learning and teachers' teaching.
- 10) I regard unexpected events in the classroom as a potential research topic and look for ways to study them.
- 11) I will understand the student's learning styles and preferences.
- 12) I will learn about the student's family background, hobbies, interests and learning ability.
- 13) I will ask the students whether they like a particular part of the class.
- 14) I will think about how my educational philosophy affects my teaching practice.
- 15) I will think about how my personal experience and educational background affect my definition of myself as a teacher.
- 16) I will think about the significance of teachers' work as a teacher.
- 17) I will try to find out what aspects of teaching can bring me career satisfaction.
- 18) I will think about my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher.

- 19) I will look back on the positive and negative teachers of my student days and think about how they influenced my teaching.
- 20) I will think about the inconsistencies and contradictions in my teaching practice.
- 21) When I find social injustice events around me, I will try to bring them to the classroom to discuss them with the students.
- 22) I will ask the student to improve his or her social life in the future by fighting against social phenomena such as poverty and sexism.
- 23) In class, I will lead students to discuss topics that are rarely discussed in society, such as the elderly, vulnerable groups, AIDS and sexism.
- 24) I will think about the political aspects involved in my teaching and how it affects my students' political views.
- 25) I will consider how to promote the values of tolerance and democracy in the classroom and society as a whole.
- 26) I will think about how external social events affect internal classroom teaching.

**The responses to the above-mentioned questions were based on**

(Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always)

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