Teaching Practicum Experiences: Pre-service English Teachers’ Self-Reflections of Their Professional Growth

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Abstract: Reflection is one of essential components which could develop prospective teachers’ professional practice. By capturing participants' self-reflections in their teaching practicum experiences, this study aims to explore the nature of student-teacher individual reflection throughout their teaching experience in the teaching practicum. Narrative data garnered through multiple semi-structured interviews had been scheduled for 30-60 minutes per interview session. The interview-derived narrative data analysed by using IPA (interpretative phenomenological analysis) and CDA (critical discourse analysis). These analytical frameworks were to explore the longitudinal nature dimensions of three pre-service English teachers during their teaching practicum experiences. The finding of this study indicated that most of the reflections created the participants awareness that learning environments, teacher ability and creativity, managing the time and classroom have pivotal role in teaching process. Drawing on this, the practical implication of the study is that teachers not only develop their professionalism, but they must also develop skills, creativity, and understand what students need during a teaching practicum.

Keywords: pre-service teacher experiences, professional growth, self-reflections, teaching practicum


INTRODUCTION

Teaching practicum plays an essential role by giving students with the knowledge they require in order to practice prospective teacher’s teaching skill effectively. It offered the opportunity to the prospective teacher in connecting and practicing knowledge they learned in teaching education into their teaching practice (Noguera & McCluskey, 2017). Yung (2020) emphasized one of the most pivotal and recognized points by student teacher education is teaching practicum. Therefore, they suggest that teaching practicum provides novice teachers with necessary knowledge and professional experience to become in-service teachers. However, during the teaching practicum, the novice teachers have found encounter classroom-related problems and experience difficulties in adapting to the school and learning environment as well as difficulties in building relationship with school teachers who may have different teaching backgrounds and lack of teaching ability (Farrell, 2008) that impact on their professional growth. Therefore, to avoid problems that can occur repeatedly, pre-service teachers must conduct reflective practices to help them in developing their professionalism as teachers in the future.

Reflective practice is becoming one of the recently dominant paradigms in the field of teacher education and educational studies. It has generally been agreed that the reflection practice involves the experience of the individual in understanding the learning and teaching process and the process of professional development as a teacher. Widodo and Ferdiansyah (2020) emphasized that reflection could help individuals in developing his/her experience, which provides new knowledge that would help in organizing that knowledge into professional activities in the future, this certainly requires critical discourse analysis. Moreover, whatever form of reflection practice is needed, the reflective practice must continue to grow and can be learned from individuals’ self-awareness, because self-awareness is the basis of growth and learning in the reflection process that has been widely believed by many researchers (Hendriwanto, 2021; Makina, 2019; Widodo & Ferdiansyah, 2020). Pre-service teachers used the reflective practice to reflect their teaching experiences that give them a chance to develop their professionalism through their own experiences. Beauchamp (2015) also believed that reflective practice is a component that could develop pre-service teachers’ professional practice. Therefore, the reflective practice was also referred to as a cog in the engine of self-development. Reflection practices could also help individual to identify what skills they need to be developed, what goals they want to achieve and what they need to do in order for their goals to be achieved.

For this reason, this study gave the contribution to demonstrate prospective teachers’ awareness and professional growth through their self-reflection. empirically, the findings of this study hopefully can be really useful in helping to investigate pre-service teachers’ reflection and build self-awareness in developing their
professional growth.

Grounded in investigating the nature of reflective of three pre-service teachers by capturing their experiences in the teaching practicum, this study adopted interpretivist and socio-constructivist paradigm. Interpretivist paradigms connect with the subjective experience of the individual and discover reality through the views and backgrounds of the individual itself (Vygotsky, 2019). The paradigm of interpretation involves experience and understanding the world of human experience. Yanow & Schwartz-Shea (2011) emphasized that this paradigm investigates real life by looking at their own experiences and backgrounds. This understanding sees social reality as something in the form of labels, names or concepts used to build the individual real life. For this reason, the study also uses social constructivism which focuses on building social, cultural, and historical meanings of understanding human experience. This experience in the world is something that is “lived, felt, undergone”. In order to explore the participants’ self-reflection, these paradigms provide the contexts that allowed us to explore what the pre-service teachers in this study have to interpret their teaching practicum experiences. In addition, to convey their reflections, pre-service teachers will be asked to share stories during the practice of learning, understand themselves, and they are asked to compare the new knowledge they have gained with their old experiences and arrive at new understandings during reflections that in the case of this study can lead to changes in practice.

In terms of theoretical frameworks, this study is founded on the importance of reflective practice as central of a teacher’s professional life and as fundamental to develop teacher's performance. Russell (2005) in his study appraised his own teaching practice in early teacher education and explored whether the practice of reflection could be taught or not. In his evaluation, he showed that the practice of reflection can be taught explicitly must be patient and apply reflection in action to understand the practice of reflection of one's teaching towards others. Therefore, Burhan-Horasanli and Ortaçtepe (2016) states that these types of reflections are grouped into reflection-on-action, reflection-in-action, and reflection-for-action.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection-on-action</th>
<th>Reflection-in-action</th>
<th>Reflection-for-action</th>
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<tr>
<td>This reflection occurs after an action (metacognitive action).</td>
<td>Reflection takes place during an action itself (spontaneous reflection).</td>
<td>This reflection occurs before an action (proactive reflection) includes planning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers rely on memoir.</td>
<td>Teachers see what is happening and interrogate why this incident is occurring.</td>
<td>Teachers use reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action data.</td>
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<td>Teachers take a retrospective look or look back on their past experiences.</td>
<td>Teachers reflect on the present practices, situations, and conditions.</td>
<td>Teachers identify weakness and strengths to make and an informed decision on future actions.</td>
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<td>Teachers’ position themselves as learners (learner identity) and as professionals (teacher identity)</td>
<td>Teachers examine or reconstruct their beliefs and practices.</td>
<td>Teachers adopt the role of an agent of change.</td>
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In this table showed that reflection involves self-observation (identify events and actions that occurred in the classroom); descriptions (of observed events, actions, and behaviours); self-awareness (critical analysis of why the observed events, actions, and behaviours took place); and self-evaluation (critical examination of how such incidents led to a change in an understanding of teaching practice). Thus, in the practicum context, self-reflection helps student teachers understand or develop new knowledge, reconstruct professional knowledge from experiential knowledge, understand socially fluid teaching practices, and learn from experience.

Reflective practice has been widely used by some researchers in the field of teacher education (Azimi et al., 2019; Cavanagh & Prescott, 2010; Cirocki & Widodo, 2019; Arslan, 2019). However, to the best our knowledge, no longitudinal study as to whether reflection leads to changes in the nature of EFL student-teacher reflection during the school experience phase, teaching practices and entry into the workplace does exist in the literature in an Indonesian context. Therefore, to fill the aforementioned gap in assessing the effectiveness of the current teacher education practicum used in Indonesia, this study examined the reflection nature of EFL teachers throughout their teaching practicum experience and after they entered the teacher profession. This aim of this study to explore the nature of student-teacher individual reflection throughout their teaching experience in the teaching practicum. To this purpose, structured reflection is used to gain a more thorough knowledge of the issue. As Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) has advocated, structured reflection plays an important role in promoting professional growth and can contribute to the improvement of teacher.
competence. Therefore, this model is used to structure student-teacher reflection in terms of their content during practicum. This research is guided by the following questions: (1) What are the natures of pre-service English teacher’s self-reflections during their teaching practicum? (2) What are the pre-service teachers’ expectations before their teaching practicum? are there changes in their expectations across the teaching practicum?

METHODS

Grounded in narrative study design, this study investigated three pre-service teachers’ self-reflections during their teaching practicum experiences (Clandinin, 2016). This case study approach is important because case studies explore an individual's experience in depth and analyze the factors that influence the development of their professionalism. The case to be discussed in this study is about the nature reflection of pre-service teachers during their teaching practice and also this study traces the development of reflective practice over a period of time.

Content and participants

In the first two years in EFL teacher education in Indonesia, students concentrate on general learning of English. In the third year, students will focus on teaching languages specifically such as second language learning theory and methodology of English teaching. When entering the final year, students will be assigned to go down to school and practice teaching with a predetermined time. This research is designed to capture the development of student teacher identity and professional growth through a qualitative case study approach. Three prospective teachers, Joni (male), Anton (male), and Hayu (female) (all pseudonyms) with range ages 21 to 23 participated in the study with consent. Three participants came from other regions in Southeast Sulawesi, Central Java and North Sumatra. They were chosen primarily because they came from the same group (and thus the class in the last year) and they attended the PPG & PPL program. In this program, they learn about what they should prepare before practicing teaching and what they will do when teaching and evaluating after teaching. hopefully, their participation can provide an ongoing and in-depth exploration of teacher character building and professional development in the same field-based teacher training program, from university courses to field trips.

Data collection and analysis

Data were garnered from different sources, such as teaching philosophies written by three pre-service teachers, interview, and reflective journals. This study collected the data through participants’ self-reflections, interview, and their experience stories during the teaching practicum. Further, the self-reflection template will be adopted from Smyth (1989).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 2. Self-reflection template</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Class:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Describing</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Confronting</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Reconstructing</strong></td>
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Source: (Smyth, 1989)

The data were collected from three participants’ experiences. They took part in a semi-interview (duration from 30-60 minutes) which addressed their perceptions of mentoring process, expectations, teacher mentors’ role, and how the teacher mentor guided and encouraged them during the teaching practicum. The questions were designed to encourage the conversations, trusts to establish the rapport, and developed by feedback from the earlier focus groups. The interviews were used to explore pre-service teacher experiences of mentoring relationships during the teaching practicum and it allowed us to acquire personalized information about how teacher mentors’ role on guiding and supporting pre-service teachers during the teaching practicum. This open-ended interview enabled the participants to speak freely and emotionally with depth and honesty in their perceptions. The form of the conversations allowed the participants to offer their opinions, experiences, and views, that including their personal stories. To guarantee the validity and the richness of the data, we used the open-minded interview, which used the nature of language, open question, and
interpretation of the nuanced description, deliberate openness with the interviewers assumed a role in the discussion.

Looking back to the research questions was helpful as a starting point to build and identify the themes. The first step involved coding and reducing the data into coherent text sections. This coding supported understanding of the participants’ subjective view on the mentoring relationship. This study applied phases of coding, (1) open coding, where all themes are captured and categorised, (2) axial coding, where the categories are interconnected with each other, (3) selective coding, where only relevant and potential themes are selected for the discussion of the research. Thus, the interviewers had been interviewed about their experiences in their real-school life during their teaching practicum. Interviewees discussed their approaches to language teaching, preparations, expectations, reflections, relationships, challenges, difficulties during their teaching practicum and their future career plans. For this reason, this study will use IPA and CDA to analyse the data. Following the work of Hood (2016), IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) was used to reveal what the pre-service teachers experienced during their teaching practicum. Pre-service teachers’ personal lived experience is viewed as a unique phenomenon that conveys socially fluid meanings of lived realities. This study also used CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) to explore how pre-service teachers developed their ideas about the teaching practicum as the reality of building their identities as English teachers. Drawing on these IPA and CDA analyses, two emergent themes were identified; the component of good mentoring relationships which these components were divided into three parts (1) encouragement and support; (2) open communication and good interaction; (3) feedback, and the impact of mentoring relationships.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the study, we used reflective practice to explore the nature of reflective of three pre-service English teachers by capturing their teaching practicum experiences based on their self-perspective. The results showed that participants’ awareness of the factors neither inside (e.g., ability, skill, creativity) or outside (e.g., environment, time management, class management) has pivotal role in professional growth. From the perceptions expressed by pre-service teachers, the study raised three main topics: (1) learning environment, (2) teacher ability and creativity, (3) time and classroom management.

Learning environment

Learning outcomes are heavily influenced by the student learning process, learning plan, social environment, and arrangements of learning environment in the classroom, which will further impact the quality of students’ learning outcomes. Therefore, to be able to learn well, a conducive learning environment is needed. A conducive learning environment in this case means a learning environment can support a good learning process. The comfort of learning environment affected on the effective and maximal learning process. An effective learning process can affect and spur one’s learning outcomes, so learning outcomes are directly influenced by one’s learning environment. It was conveyed by Hayu in her reflection expressed that learning environment has pivotal role for herself and her students.

“Yes, of course. It can change the students’ learning skills and learning habits which is able to make pupils create new contexts for learning. In a conducive learning environment, I could build good relationship with my students, got to know and understood them so that I can know how to teach them and I use it to create a conducive learning environment even in online teaching.”

Hayu said that the learning environment is an external factor which impact the learning outcomes. The lexical use “of course”, indirectly, Hayu stated that conducive learning environment has pivotal role because it could change the students’ learning skill and habit. Therefore, a conducive learning environment needs to be created and maintained students’ development to be effective and efficient, so that the goal is achieved optimally. Hayu mentioned “online teaching”, means learning environment is not only formed through the condition of the classroom, but is formed through the condition of school environment, home environment, community environmental, the influence of learning friends is part of the learning process. From the data above, Hayu created a conductive learning environment because she believed that A good learning process in conducive environmental conditions will produce good learning outcomes. Moreover, Hayu stated by a conductive environment, she can build good relationship. Hayu realized that she is a social human being, which she required the students’ role to develop good relations and communications. Therefore, Hayu tried to build a conducive learning environment and tried to interact with students to establish good relations and communication in order to make the teaching and learning process runs well and produced good learning outcomes. The same thing was said by Joni:

“Students could learn effectively and seriously when they were in supportive learning environment whether it was at school or at home. I do agree with that. Supportive learning environment such as
created comfortable and safe sense, motivate the students, and good relationship between, student and teacher or student and student. I thought a good teacher can create an effective learning environment. I had ever imagined I could do the same. But the reality shocked me. Trying to communicate, understand, and motivate them weren’t easy to do. But I tried my best to do that.”

The data showed that Joni believed if a supportive learning environment affects students’ learning process. It was proven by the lexical use “I do agree”. By those words, Joni also believed that feeling comfortable and safe is essential things to support the students’ learning process. It was required because if the students feel fear, worry, or disturbing by their environment, they can’t concentrate in learning. For example, the condition of the learning environment such as home or school isn’t possible to study, the situation in the classroom and home is very noisy and make them feel uncomfortable, so it can make the student lost concentrate in learning. It will give impact to the student's motivation to learn. Conversely, if the circumstances of the family environment, school environment and community environment are very supportive to learn, it will rise students’ learning motivation. In addition, the learning environment also can build interaction between students and teachers, peers and even those around them. A good learning environment will build good interaction and vice versa. This good interaction can make the students feel comfortable and they will accept the lessons that was conveyed by the teacher easily. Joni explained that he never expected for creating a good environment is complicated. He imagined what was happened in the class and what he would do at that time. It changed his expectation but he believed he can do the best. This statement was conveyed by Anton and he explained his reflection: “A good learning environment can form good interactions. By good interaction, students will feel comfortable, feeling happy without feeling worried or afraid of people around them. When students feel comfortable, that's where students will learn effectively.”

Teacher ability and creativity
As a professional educator, teaching is not the only thing that should teacher do, but they should be educating, guiding, training, assessing, and evaluating the students in the formal educational path. To carry out their duty professionally, a teacher is not only having educational ability, but must also have a reliable personality as role model for students and communities. However, many teachers seem passive such as teaching monotonously, they always use the same learning strategy in teaching. Therefore, teachers are asked to be creative. One way that teachers can be creative, teachers are asked not to be afraid to try something new. Creativity also comes from the learning process, so that when teachers dare to try new things, then they can create creative ideas in every process. From the statement, Anton explained his reflection

“That’s right. A creative teacher has a big role in teaching and learning process. Teacher should search and try something new. It was not only for teaching their student but it can help them to develop their teaching skill. I know, it wasn’t easy to do because we should prepare new strategy that appropriate to the learning material. I had ever expected it was easy to do, but I was wrong, it was not.”

Anton showed his reflection that teachers were not only to be creative, but teachers also should give innovation to the students which is supported by the creativity of teachers in teaching to develop students' learning interest, developing the quality of learning, science and insight, and previous learning to be better. Therefore, educators must be innovative in order to find effective learning strategies or learning methods. Anton also did the same but it was beyond his expectations. He stated that was not easy to try something new. He should adjust to the learning material and students’ ability so that student can focus on their goals. It did not make him felt tired, he tried to do as best as he can. The same was stated by Hayu. She reflects that the creativity of teachers is very important, which can make students more interested and enjoy learning in class.

“I wanted to make the students more active and autonomous. I felt that if they (student) like my lesson, they would be more motivated. Here, as a teacher I should be more creative to make the students more interest in my class to make learning process more be fun and enjoyable. I know it took long time, from preparing myself, learning material, and some strategies that should I use. I never expect if I can do that.”

Hayu gave her reflection about teachers need to think creatively and develop their creativity. When a teacher thinks about what to do, how she prepared for her learning, the questions and assessments he chooses shows that the teacher was ready in the stage of the thought process. Creative thinking according to Graham Wallas as cited by Smith (2015) there are 4 stages of the process: 1) the stage of preparation/illumination; 2) incubation stage; 3) illumination stage; and 4) verification stage. To understand the four stages of this creative thought process will be explained by using illustrations of a student's story. A student was given the task by her lecturer to create a creative and innovative learning medium and will be featured in a microteaching practice exam. Citra begins to learn and search for information to create an
interesting and innovative learning medium. At this moment Citra was at the preparatory stage. One day Citra feels bored and does not want to think about his task, this Citra is in the incubation stage. Suddenly Citra found a brilliant idea will use video-scribed software for learning media, this means that Citra is already entering the illumination stage. Finally, Citra tried and tried until finally managed to make a video-scribed learning medium that is really interesting and innovative. Based on the stages of creative thinking above, to be a creative teacher requires a process. This process needs to be passed by getting used to think creatively and Hayu did the same.

Another pre-service teacher, Joni, stated his reflection:

"My previous teaching practicum experience made me realized that I needed to be more creative, hone my teaching skills, and learn more understanding what students need. I hope what I get can be useful in my practice in the future."

Joni expressed his mission to pay attention and understanding the students are very important, the way they learn, and what needs are needed by students in order to make the teaching and learning process runs smoothly. In the learning context, learners as parties who need attention so that they can have the meaning of learning. Means, the student is the first one who needs to be considered, then the circumstances, abilities, and determine the other components. What kind of materials are needed? how the right way to act? what tools and facilities are suitable and supportive? all of them must be tailored to the needs of learners. In addition, based on his experience during teaching practicum, Joni realized that he had to establish himself in his professional as an educator. Professional awareness as an educator must carry out his profession totally and whole heartedly must continue to be built in the teacher. With an awareness of the responsibilities of the profession, every teacher is expected to constantly encourage himself to provide the best thing in education for students.

**Time and classroom management**

Time management is the process of planning and controlling how much time will be spent doing the certain activities. In this case, it is the most pivotal thing for teachers to be able to complete the teaching and learning activities during lesson hours. By the right time management, students will gain more knowledge and get maximum learning results. Whereas if the teacher cannot manage the time properly, all the plans that have been designed will not be achieved. As Anton, he arranged his teaching time in order to give some activities that would be given to her students. He said:

"I knew that teachers might gave some problems and yeah, they also have to find the solution, as well. For time management, I found that making plans in advance (preparing myself, preparing learning material, determining the learning target, etc) and keeping a calendar might work very well. Sometimes, I used some activities (e.g., games, icebreakers) in my class and I also used technology to complete the activities because I asked them to learn by some games in their phone (scrabble, duolingo, etc)."

Anton explained his reflection that time management is one of common problem that had experienced by pre-service teacher in teaching and learning process. Anton had made planning to manage his teaching time well. he prepared himself to be confident in teaching and he read the learning material before he taught because if he did not understand the learning material, he had difficulty in teaching. Anton should determine his learning target. This is one of the right learning strategies. First, Anton made a general sight of the subject matter he wants to teach. he looked at the table of contents of the textbook, to determine what subject matter should be learned and understood in a week. Secondly, he made a mapping about understanding the concept of the subject matter. This method made him easier to measure his understanding of the concept of the subject matter. In addition, Anton also applied technology and some activities such as icebreakers to help him in the teaching and learning process.

In the same line, Joni also expressed their reflection on time management and classroom management experienced during teaching practicum.

"These two things (time and classroom management) always have been problem for pre-service teachers like me. Sometimes I get overwhelmed by managing my teaching time. I often run out of teaching time when the material I delivered has not been completed. It made me think about managing my time well. In addition, we must also understand the character of the student, his learning style, and the needs of students. When we (pre-service teachers) can manage the class and time well then, we can know what students need and as teachers of course we will do the best for them (students)."

Hayu in her reflection:

"I can manage the time but I got difficult managing the classroom. I expected I can manage the class by giving some activities, games, and so on, but it was useless. The student did not look excited and
In their reflection, Joni dan Hayu had same problem in managing the classroom. It made them got difficult while teaching in the class. Personally, Joni stated if he can manage the class well, he can recognize the students and what the students need easily. In addition, a class that had well-organized would create good atmosphere and learning process would run well. in the same line, Hayu got difficulty in managing the class. Hayu had been done various ways to manage the class such as giving games for completing her activities in the class. For this reason, Hayu emphasized that classroom management is an important requirement that determines the creation of effective learning. The creation of a comfortable classroom is the study of classroom management, because classroom management is a series of teacher behaviors in an effort to create and maintain classroom conditions that allow learners to learn well. Teachers must know each student's differences and how to learn. By managing the class well, the teacher will know how to learn what the student need. The same thing was conveyed by Hayu that She had difficulty in managing classes, especially to understand the learning style of students. Being a teacher is not easy because she really has to know students and must be patient with students in order for him to master the class.

The results of this study showed that most of the reflections delivered by participants involved three components already mentioned (learning environment, teacher creativity, classroom and time management). These findings have been supported by Maaranen & Stenberg (2017) in their research, they investigated that one of the factors that can help the learning and teaching process is the learning environment. Therefore, a teacher must ensure his students are in a good learning environment and support the smooth process of learning and teaching. Therefore, in this study, pre-services have realized the importance of a good learning environment to help the continuity of a good learning process.

Besides of learning environment, this study also discussed about the teacher ability and creativity. A teacher must have creativity in order to find a variety of learning models that are suitable to apply in the classroom. Creative teachers will be able to find many ways to overcome problems (problem solving), both related to student problems when in class, at school, or outside of school. The ability to create will help teachers in finding good ways of teaching, how to open an elegant class, how to make and make practical assessments, how to give a good task, but not burdensome, how to lead discussions in the classroom and encourage children to actively convey their ideas, how to give a wise punishment, and many more. From the perception expressed by the participants in this study, they realized that being a creative teacher is essential for the continuity of teaching process. They also know that being a creative teacher is not easy. From this teaching experience they begin to develop their skills and creativity in teaching so that it helps them in the future.

Another result in this study is how the way pre-service teacher manage the time and class during their practicum. From the statement of the three participants, it was found that to manage time, they must know the purpose of their learning. With this goal, the pre-service teacher can pay attention and manage time well to produce a good learning process. By managing the time that teachers have, activities that can be done will be much more efficient and effective, especially for people who have a profession as a teacher the learning goals that have been set before will be achieved and fulfilled in a timely manner. That way your students will also get maximum results in their learning. Moreover, managing classes is also an important point in teaching. Without good classroom management, the teacher will get problems and difficulties in the classroom, so learning will be hampered. If the teacher is able to manage the classroom, it will create a conducive learning environment for students so as to achieve the teaching objectives effectively and efficiently. When the class is disturbed, the teacher tries to return it so as not to be a hindror to the teaching and learning process. Therefore, time and class management are two important things that will help teachers in learning.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the finding of this study implied pre-service teachers’ reflection during their experiences in the teaching practicum, which may help them to raise their awareness of the proper and good context of teaching. From their experience, they suggest there are 3 important factors in teaching and learning activities such as learning environment, teacher ability and creativity, and time and classroom management. Reflection is not only awake one’s consciousness, but reflection gives participants the opportunity to understand their own views and worlds. In this study, pre-service teachers were helped by reflections that will make them able to understand their own world, after which they will realize what they lack and they will develop it, such as teaching ability. Pre-service teachers can integrate practice reflection into their teaching competencies, it has been widely proven by some researchers that the practice of reflection is an indication of professional competence. Thus, pre-service teachers should become more familiar with reflective practices and model them in their teaching well.
REFERENCES


