

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the research, the statement of the problem, the objective of the research, the significance of the research, the scope of the research, and the operational definition.

1.1 Background of the Research

In the 21st century, being a qualified teacher is quite challenging due to the required knowledge and skills (Kourieos, 2016). Particularly after the post-method era, recognizing that teaching is a more complex task than previously thought, the emphasis shifted from teaching methods to teacher professional development, where reflection becomes an essential component of the teaching experience. (Karakas & Yükselir, 2021; Turhan & Kirkgoz, 2018) The importance of bridging the gap between theoretical courses provided through teacher education institutions and school-based field experiences has been highlighted by (Önal, 2019) and the microteaching technique, due to its flexibility, can easily function as a bridge between theory and practice in any context.

The fact that prospective teachers are unable to successfully fill the role of a real teacher is well known. They encounter issues and challenges with regard to teaching, classroom management, assessing learning outcomes, and other issues. They need urgency and importance to address the issues they face in order to reduce their prevalence, build and maintain self-efficacy, and perform at a high level of excellence (Prilop et al., 2021). The microteaching program is created to equip student teachers with the necessary skills for the leadership positions they will hold as real teachers. It gives them the opportunity to work on a real project involving teaching experiences. It explains how campus teaching practice relates to the actual work they will do in the future (Prilop et al., 2021). In applying microteaching techniques, student teachers must create lesson plans, choose educational objectives, be able to hold students' attention, effectively manage the classroom and their time, implement their lesson plans, ask and respond to questions, and evaluate

their own and their colleagues' performance (Önal, 2019). Through participation, the student teacher is expected to develop the necessary competencies and skills for classroom work. They will be able to prepare for their future roles as teachers while also experiencing the realities of the teaching profession because it is their first close encounter with the real world of teaching (Önal, 2019; Prilop et al., 2021).

A large number of researchers have investigated reflective practice among pre-service teachers in the education field. As Belvis et al. (2013) stated, teacher education through reflective practice and activities deals with enhancing teacher performance with the help of reflective practices. Çelik (2014) indicated that reflective writing was an effective learning strategy and stimulated critical and metacognitive thinking despite initial resistance toward reflection. Hickson (2011) argues that reflection is more than thinking about past experiences; to achieve critical reflection, it is necessary not only to understand experiences in their social context but also to realize how one can make use of those experiences to improve his/her future practices. The importance of reflective practice in language teaching has been undeniable, especially in the last decade (Yuan et al., 2022). There are also studies indicating the need to integrate reflective practice into pre-service teachers' professional development in collaboration with their peers to strengthen the quality of reflective dialogue (Yuan & Mak, 2018)

According to the findings of Önal (2019) even when students are not accustomed to the practice of reflection, as long as they are given the chance to critically and creatively think, they can develop their reflective abilities. Meanwhile, Hamiloğlu (2013) claimed that there was a clear lack of rigor in teacher education programs' reflective practices. Furthermore, she believed that practicum courses in Turkish universities were solely focused on knowledge rather than encouraging teacher candidates to engage in critical reflection. To address the issue, she proposed a more critical-reflective approach that could assist teacher candidates in developing a professional identity. That is, participating in reflective activities may not be enough for teacher candidates; instead, they should develop a critical stance while reflecting.

Despite a growing body of research, Hamiloğlu (2013) argued that more studies on critical reflective writing are necessary. Numerous studies show a large amount of research about reflection in the education field. However, only a few studies on analyzing student teachers' reflectivity, in this regard especially in the field of English language teaching (ELT). To address this gap, this study aims to examine the reflection of EFL student teachers through microteaching practice, specifically targeting the EFL student teachers of English Education Department University of Muria Kudus.

The results of this study are expected to help teachers lead better performances and foster the development of best teaching practices through reflection. The researchers hope that this study will contribute to the field of teacher education by shedding light on how to navigate the various methods of encouraging prospective teacher reflectivity in microteaching. Teacher education programs should strive to train productive and reflective teachers by providing opportunities to connect theoretical knowledge with pedagogical practice.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Based on the background of the research above, this study was guided into two research questions as follows:

1. What are the themes of student teachers' reflection in their microteaching practice at EED UMK in academic year of 2021/2022?
2. What stage of reflection do EFL student teachers reach in their microteaching practice at EED UMK in academic year of 2021/2022?

1.3 Objectives of the Research

According to the problem statement above, the researcher states that the objective of the research was aims to :

1. To find out the themes of student teachers' reflection in their microteaching practice at EED UMK in academic year of 2021/2022.
2. To find out the stage of reflection do EFL student teachers reach in their microteaching practice at EED UMK in academic year of 2021/2022.

1.4 Significance of the Research

The researcher expects that conducting this study will be advantageous both conceptually and practically.

Theoretically, this research is expected to be used as a reference for future researchers who will conduct similar research on the reflection of EFL student teachers in microteaching.

Practically, the researcher hopes that this research will enlighten teachers and lecturers about the importance of reflection for better learning practices, as well as provide answers to such problems.

1.5 Scope of the Research

The researcher focused on the EFL student teachers' self reflection when they conduct teaching practice in the microteaching lesson. The participants of this research were the sixth-semester EFL student teachers of English Education Department of Muria Kudus University in Academic year of 2021/2022 who has enrolled in the microteaching subject.

1.6 Operational Definition

Based on the title of the research, there were three terms that can be defined in the operational definitions as follows:

1. EFL student teachers are the students who are learning English as a foreign language in English Education Department of Muria Kudus University and had been enrolled in microteaching lesson study classes.
2. Reflection means the process by which the EFL student teachers recall, considered, and evaluated their teaching practice.
3. Microteaching is a course for sixth-semester EFL student teachers that are required to do teaching practice during one semester as the main provision to teach real students.