

Analysis of the Teaching Practicum in the Light of a Reflective Teaching Approach¹

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This article reports a small-scale descriptive study on the extent to which the teaching practicum in the Foreign Languages Program of a public university has been approached as a reflective experience. Data was collected through journal entries and questionnaires. In the analysis, several pre-categories arose which were then framed into Bartlett's five reflective teaching categories (mapping, informing, contesting, appraising, and acting) (1994). The findings show that student teachers have not fully undertaken their teaching practicum from a reflective perspective.

Keywords: *teaching practicum, reflective teaching, diaries*

Análisis de la práctica docente desde un enfoque de la enseñanza reflexiva

Este artículo da cuenta de un estudio descriptivo en torno al alcance reflexivo de la práctica docente en el Programa de Lenguas Extranjeras de una universidad pública. La recolección de información se hizo a través de cuestionarios y los registros de los profesores practicantes en sus diarios. A partir del análisis de esta información, surgieron varias pre-categorías las cuales fueron estructuradas dentro de las cinco grandes categorías (documentación de la experiencia, interpretación de la experiencia, confrontación conceptual, plan de acción y actuación) que Leo Bartlett propone para el desarrollo de la Enseñanza Reflexiva. Finalmente, se logra determinar que la práctica docente en este contexto no ha sido promovida como una experiencia suficientemente reflexiva.

Palabras clave: *práctica docente, enseñanza reflexiva, diarios.*

¹ Researchers conducted this particular study as the diagnostic stage of a bigger research project aimed at promoting reflective teaching in the practicum (August 2007-November 2008). This has been done as the thesis requirement researchers were to meet in order to obtain the degree of M.A. in English Didactics at Universidad de Caldas.

Analyse du stage pédagogique dans le cadre d'une formation de professeurs axée sur la réflexion

Cet article rend compte d'une étude descriptive à propos de la capacité à la réflexion de la pratique d'enseignement dans le programme de Langues étrangères d'une université publique. La collecte de données a été faite au travers de questionnaires et des notes des étudiants-stagiaires dans leurs journaux. À partir de l'analyse de ces informations, quelques pré-catégories ont émergé et nous les avons mises dans les cinq grandes catégories (documentation de l'expérience, interprétation de l'expérience, la confrontation conceptuelle, plan d'action et la procédure) selon ce que propose Bartlett pour le développement de l'enseignement réflexif (1994). Finalement, on a pu déterminer que la pratique d'enseignement dans ce contexte n'est pas reconnue comme une expérience suffisamment réfléchie.

Mots clés: *pratique d'enseignement, l'enseignement réflexif, journaux*

INTRODUCTION

The official educational regulations in Colombia require academic institutions to promote strategies aimed at involving students in self-assessment and reflective processes, which guarantee professionals who are committed to continuous self-development. Therefore, the Foreign Language Program at Surcolombiana University has established, through the teaching practicum, objectives aimed at empowering student teachers to reflect and think critically about their own performance. They are expected to identify classroom problems by themselves, and to propose innovative solutions to generate meaningful changes. To the effect, they need to be provided with reflective teaching insights.

Reflection has been considered a central component in all sectors of teacher education for a number of years; it is seen as a very useful approach that leads teachers to see teaching differently, to assume the teaching and learning process with a critical view in order to identify problems and take actions to better the learning opportunities of their pupils. One of the scholars who invites teachers to assume a critical view of their teaching practice is Shor (1999, p. 24). He suggests teachers to assume teaching as a process of helping students visualize reality, think critically about the context of their personal lives, and empower them with useful strategies to find solutions to the problems. Richards and Nunan (1994, p. 201) suggest that "experience alone is insufficient for

professional growth, and that experience coupled with reflection is a much more powerful impetus for development". Pennington (in Farrell, 2003, p. 14), on her part, claims that reflection is a means for improving classroom processes and outcomes, and developing confident, self-motivated teachers and learners. In this research study Pennington found that through "deep reflection, teachers were able to reconstruct a teaching framework to incorporate the previously contradictory elements" (p. 14). Taking into consideration the findings of these scholars, we can conclude that it is through reflective teaching that student teachers can optimize their practicum experience.

However, despite the fact that the practicum has been stated as a reflective process in our institution, there was not any systematic study about the reflective scope of the teaching practicum. Therefore, this study was aimed at establishing to what extent the EFL teaching practicum has been assumed as a reflective process by the student teachers of our Foreign Language Program.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Reflective teaching

Reflection has been considered as an enlightening factor for teacher professional development (TPD) by different scholars. Pennington (in Farrell, 2003) views it as *the input for development and as the output of development*. That is, an activity or process in which experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose concerned decision-making, planning and action. But more specifically, what is meant by reflective teaching?

Pennington (in Farrell, 2003, p. 14) defines reflective teaching "as a means for improving classroom processes and outcomes, and developing confident, self-motivated teachers and learners". She also states that teacher's change, and development require an awareness of a need to change, and she sees teacher development as a continual cycle of innovative behavior and adjustments to circumstances. Two key components of change are considered by Pennington: innovation and critical reflection. Through her own experience in TPD courses, she has noted that deep reflection let teachers reconstruct a teaching

framework to incorporate the previously contradictory elements. Bailey (1997) also quotes Pennington who contends that “the term reflective teaching has come to signify a movement in teacher education, in which student teachers or working teachers analyze their own practice and its underlying basis, and then consider alternative means for achieving their ends”. Other scholars who have made important contributions in this field are Richards and Lockhart (1994). They point out that a reflective approach to teaching examines teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching.

Richards (in Farrell, 2003) also sees reflection as a key component of teacher development. He defines critical reflection as a process in which “experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose” (p. 15); he also argues that this process is a basis for evaluation, decision making and a source for planning and action.

Murphy (2001) poses three main purposes of reflective teaching: a) to expand one’s understanding of the teaching learning process, b) to expand one’s repertoire of strategic options as a language teacher, and c) to enhance the quality of learning opportunities one is able to provide in language classrooms. For those teachers who are interested in reflective teaching, he suggests some steps in order to deepen awareness of teaching and learning behaviors:

- Gather information on whatever is taking place within a language course.
- Examine such information closely in an effort to better understand what they collect.
- Identify anything puzzling about the teaching-learning process.
- Build awareness and deepen understanding of current teaching and learning behaviors.
- Locate and collaborate with others interested in processes of reflective teaching.
- Pose and refine questions tied to one’s teaching that are worth further exploration.
- Locate resources that may help to clarify whatever questions are being posed.

- Make informed changes in teaching, even if only modest changes.
- Document changes in teaching-learning behaviors and responses.
- Continue such efforts over time and share emerging insights with others.

Reflective teaching framework

Bartlett (1994) proposes a cycle for the process of reflective teaching. It is made of five components, namely, mapping, informing, contesting, appraising, and acting, which are not linear or sequential. Each one of these elements is a response to a particular question, as shown here:

- 1) *Mapping* (What do I do as a teacher?). "It involves observation and the collection of evidence about our own teaching." (Bartlett, 1994, p. 209). Mapping implies asking questions about what we do as teachers. What is very important in the mapping phase is that observation must be done by individual teachers (and through the use of personal diaries, learning logs, portfolios, and journals). The teachers approach to the mapping phase should be a descriptive one. The description should account for the teachers' routine and conscious actions in the classroom. Teachers should, for instance, focus on their specific teaching problems which can be improved. In fact, the aim of the mapping phase is to raise teachers' consciousness through writing.
- 2) *Informing* (What is the meaning of my teaching? What did I intend?). "It is looking for meaning behind the maps." (Bartlett, 1994, p. 210). That is, the teacher revisits his first records -his maps-, adds to them, and makes sense of them. As such, the informing phase provides the teacher with an understanding of the difference between teaching routine and conscious teaching action, and the ability to unearth the principles behind them as well as reasons underlying one's own theory of teaching.
- 3) *Contesting* (How did I come to be this way? How was it possible for my present view of teaching to have emerged?). "This phase involves contesting our ideas and the structures that hold them in place." (Bartlett, 1994, p. 211). To this end, teachers can share their understandings and reasons for teaching in particular ways with their colleagues. As becoming experienced teachers, they

develop their own theories of teaching and learning and their professional histories which contain assumptions about the best ways of teaching. In addition, "Contestation involves a search for inconsistencies and contradictions in what we do and how we think." (Bartlett, 1994, p. 212).

- 4) *Appraisal* (How might I teach differently?). It has to do with a search for alternative courses of action. "Appraisal begins to link the thinking dimension of reflection with the search for teaching in ways consistent with our new understanding." (Bartlett, 1994, p. 213). Appraisal is a quest for alternative courses of action, that is, emerging plans or strategies to enhance the quality of teaching and learning processes.
- 5) *Acting* (What and how shall I now teach?). It is concerned with implementing those emerging teaching plans. Freire (in Bartlett, 1994, p. 213) states that "reflection without action is verbalism, and action without reflection is activism."

To sum up, what is expected with this cycle, according to Bartlett (1994), is that "We rearrange our teaching practice after mapping what we do, unearthing the reasons and assumption for these actions, subjecting these reasons to critical scrutiny, appraising alternative courses of action, and then acting" (p. 213).

The diary as a reflective tool

Farrell presents a range of activities that can encourage teachers reflect on their work: group discussions, observations, journal writing and critical friends. Among these activities, journal writing or diary keeping is one of the most common and useful tools student teachers can take advantage of to reflect about their practice teaching.

Keeping diaries has become a recurrent practice by learners and teachers in the last years. Several scholars such as Asher, Brown and Bailey have made use of diaries to collect data as part of their own research studies. And what are diaries? According to Jiménez, Luna and Marín de Otalora (1993), they are one of the introspective techniques that teachers, learners, and researchers can use in order to record information and insights on specific aspects of language teaching and learning. Moreover, they state that "keeping diaries is a reflective task in

which teachers and trainees should be trained focusing on a particular language issue, classroom problem, or classroom setting". Bailey (1994, p. 215), points out that, in language research and pedagogy, diaries can be used for three different objectives: "to document language learners' experiences, to register student teachers' reactions to academic courses, and to record teaching experiences".

Jarvis (in Richards & Nunan, 1994), on her part, highlights the importance for pre-service or in-service teachers of keeping a diary, in the way it can provide them an opportunity to reflect on their teaching experience. She claims that changes in professional awareness come if the awareness is situated in practice, a kind of reflection-in-action; she adds that diaries might provide a space in which there is at least an opportunity for practitioners to move from a real life problem, to reframing the theory which accounts for the problem, to new action.

In the context of the practicum, Bailey (1994, p. 221) claims that student teachers can use diaries not only to describe their classroom experiences, but also to reflect on the teaching learning process. Based on her own experience, she concludes that "diaries were extremely useful exercises for the teachers-in-preparation, both in generating behavioral changes and in developing self confidence". She also points out that asking students to read aloud selections from their teaching diaries, may lead them to make parallels with, and gain insights into their own issues. Also, the comments their classmates make can help them interpret their own records, or benefit from others' teaching experiences.

METHOD

This study was developed within the framework of the descriptive research design since it was intended to give an account of the way the teaching practicum was being approached as a reflective process, in the context of the Foreign Language Program. Forty student-teachers of the seventh and eighth semesters of this program took part in this study. Data was collected from two sources: First, an open-questionnaire (Appendix) administered to 40 student teachers who were doing the practicum during the second academic term of 2007. Second, the entries of ten diaries which were analyzed according to five categories, namely, evaluating teaching, theories of teaching, approaches and methods,

self-awareness and questions about teaching, presented by Ho and Richards (1993). Another category (teacher's feelings) emerging from the information students registered in their journals was also considered. Despite the fact that the forty student teachers admitted to having kept a journal as a practicum requirement, only ten of them allowed researchers to use their journals as a source of information.

Instruments

Students' diaries: They were used to determine the extent to which they were being considered as a useful tool to reflect on their practice teaching experience.

Questionnaire: The questionnaire was intended to find out the perceptions of student-teachers about the practicability of reflective teaching in the practicum of the Foreign Language Program. It was made of four general sections. The first one deals with personal information such as gender and age. These data were useful to describe the sample population. The second one enables researchers to gain information about the practicum context. The third one is concerned with unearthing the initial conceptions student teachers have about reflective teaching. And the fourth one refers to the student teachers' reflective praxis in their practicum; issues such as journal-keeping, group discussion and problem-solving were particularly examined.

RESULTS

Questionnaire Analysis

As to their conceptions about reflective teaching, 42 references were analyzed in terms of what kind of associations student teachers made with reflective teaching:

Table 1. Reflective competences

a. Reflective competences are defined by student-teachers as:	N	%
b. Thinking	6	14
c. Understanding student attitude	1	2
d. Using teaching methods	2	5
e. Teaching the student how to be a person	1	2

f. Self-evaluation	15	35
g. Problem solving	7	17
h. Improvement	6	14
i. Critical appraisal of process	1	2
j. Theory application	1	2
k. No notion	2	5
Total	42	100

From the information in Table 1 we can see that for student teachers having reflective competences was linked to self-evaluating (15 references) followed by problem solving, thinking and improvement. Even these assumptions are considered an important component of being reflective; less than 36% of the references are related to them. The other ones do not evidence a profound knowledge on reflective competences by student teachers.

Table 2. Importance of reflective competences in the practicum

Reflective competences are important in the practicum for	F	%
a. Improving	11	46%
b. Self-evaluating	3	12%
c. Reflecting	3	12%
d. Helping students	2	8.5%
e. Getting experience	1	4.2%
f. Introducing reflectivity	1	4.2%
g. Applying theory into the practicum experience	1	4.2%
h. No answer	2	8.4%

Source: Questionnaire applied to student teachers

Table 2 illustrates the student teachers' opinions about the importance of reflective competences during the teaching practicum experience. Only 26 references were recorded about this aspect. 46% reflect that they see improvement as a result of reflection. A lower percentage of references (b and c 12%) show that these competences are related to self-evaluation and reflection.

Diary keeping

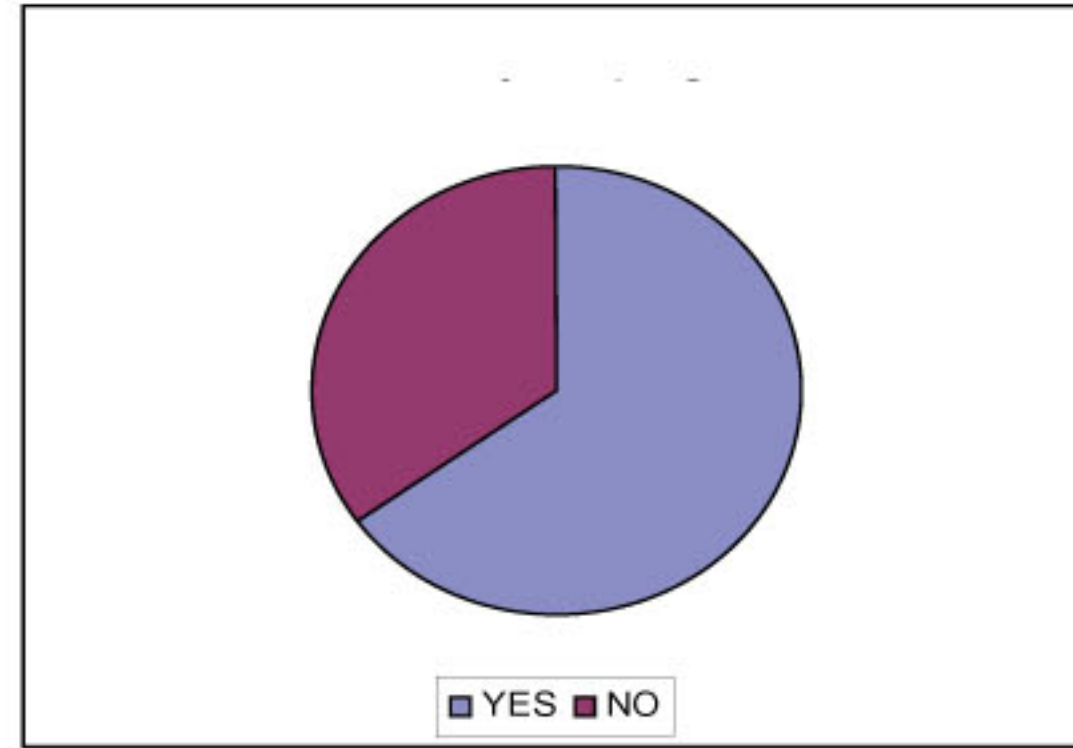


Figure 1. Did you keep a diary in your practicum?

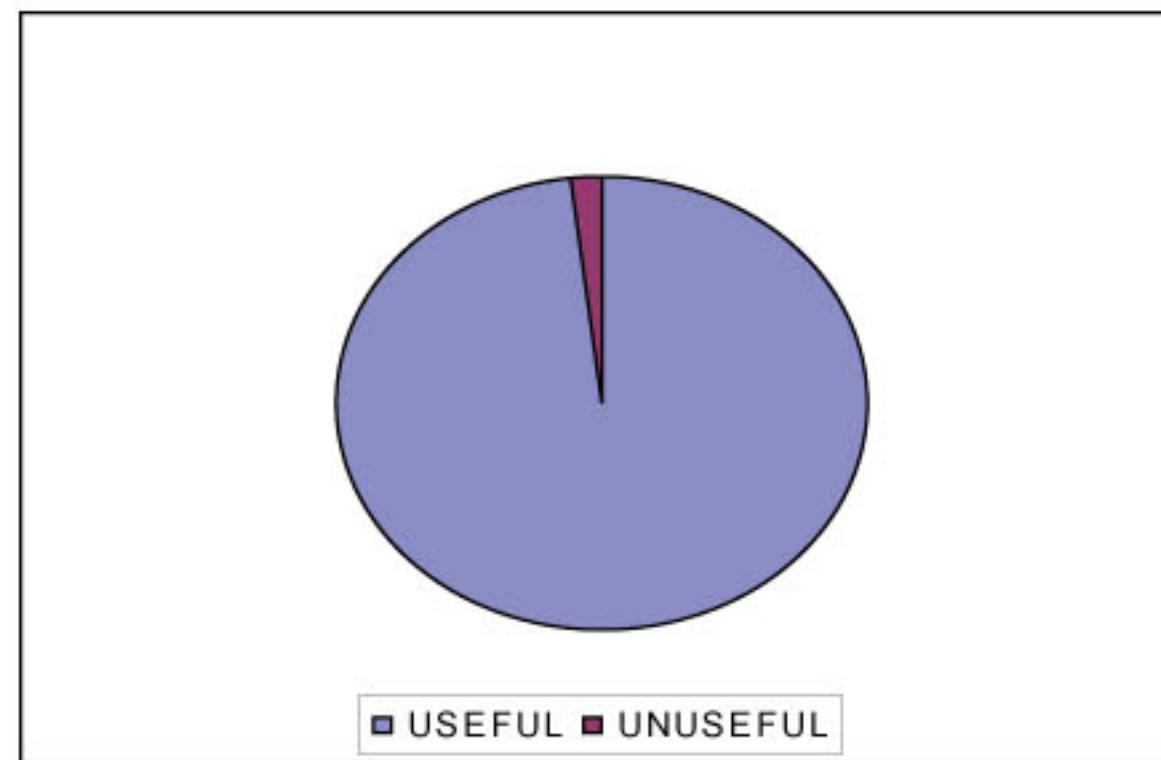


Figure 2. Is diary-keeping useful?

As we can notice in Figures 1 and 2, most of the students admitted to keeping a diary and they considered it was useful to keep one during the teaching practicum.

Table 3. Usefulness of diary-keeping

a. Diary-keeping is useful for the following reasons:	F	%
b. Record of what was done in class	17	35
c. Self-evaluation	7	15
d. Improvement of the process	6	13
e. Awareness-raising of the process	5	11
f. Observation of the process	4	8
g. Reminder of what worked or not in class	4	8

h. Problem solving	1	2
i. Catharsis strategy	1	2
j. Collecting data	1	2
k. Analysis of what happens in class	1	2
l. Report of feedback from the cooperating teacher and the supervisor	1	2
	48	100

Source: Questionnaire applied to student teachers

According to the answers on the usefulness of keeping a diary, 35% of the references show that student teachers recognized it as a useful tool to record what goes on in the classroom. In 7 out of the 48 references, they established diaries served as a source for self-evaluation. Only six references evidence that they considered it as a record of their improvements. As for awareness raising, only 5 of them are related to it. As we can notice, most of the student teachers took diaries as an exercise to record what happened in the classroom, but only few of them considered it as an excellent tool for reflection. Bartlett (1994) points out that our writing should be about "our routine and conscious actions in the classroom; conversations with pupils; critical incidents in a lesson, our personal lives as teachers; our beliefs about teaching; events outside the classroom that we think influence our teaching; our views about language teaching and learning" (p. 209). We consider the entries kept in the student teachers' diaries fall short in recording this type of information.

Table 4. Evaluation of general meetings of the practicum.

Opinion	Favorable		Non favorable	
	F	%	F	%
a. To talk about how the teaching process is going on	4	12		
b. To clear up doubts	3	10		
c. To share experiences	3	10		
d. To know new methodologies	2	7		
e. To identify positive and negative aspects	1	3		
f. No reason	0	0		
g. Lack of organization in the meetings			8	24
h. They are not meaningful			4	12
i. Lack of students commitment			4	12
j. They are purposeless			2	7
k. They do not foster discussion and reflection			1	3
Total	13	42	19	58

Student teachers were asked to evaluate the general meetings of the practicum. The references were divided into favorable and non-favorable. 13 out of 32 references have to do with positive comments about the meetings. Students claimed they were important to talk about how the teaching process was going on, to clear up doubts or to share experiences. Just one reference deals with the identification of positive and negative aspects of their experience. Regarding the non-favorable reasons, 19 out of 32 established the meetings were not important because there was lack of organization, they were not meaningful, they were purposeless and one student considered they did not foster discussion and reflection.

According to Bartlett (1994), "informing" is part of the reflective cycle, and student teachers could take advantage of these meetings in order to share their experiences and try to understand the meaning of teaching from their peers and the supervisors. In this way they could extend their insights about themselves as teachers and as individual members of a larger community.

Table 5. Problem solving procedures.

Problems are solved in the following ways:	F	%
a. Dialogue with students	26	64
b. Solutions according to the nature of the problem	4	10
c. Applying the school code of conduct	3	8
d. Reflections about the class incidents	2	5
e. Affective strategies	2	5
f. Punishment	1	2
g. Common sense	1	2
h. Playful activities	1	2
i. Past experiences	1	2
Total	41	100

Source: Questionnaire applied to student teachers

Table 5 reflects students' answers about how they usually solved the problems in the classroom. 64% of the answers focused on dialogue with students. Only 10% of the references reflect students' concern about seeking solutions to problems, and just 5% resort to reflection to handle the class incidents. The other references are related to different procedures.

Analysis of Journals

In order to analyze and interpret the information recorded by student teachers in their diaries, the entries were coded according to six general categories and 17 sub-categories. Categories 1 through 5 are based on those presented by Ho and Richards (1993) (cf. Table 6). The last one arose from the rest of information students kept in their diaries.

What did student teachers write about in their diaries?

Looking globally at the results, the most frequent topics student teachers wrote about were related to evaluating teaching (90 references) followed by what they expressed about their feelings (25 references) and approaches and methods (20 references). With regard to the other 3 categories, they have a minor number of references: questions about teaching (12 references), theories of teaching (6 references), and self-awareness (9 references). Of the aspects they recorded the most about *evaluating teaching*, 38 were related to diagnosing problems, however, only 13 references show student teachers tried to find solutions to problems by themselves or by asking for advice to their cooperator teachers or supervisors.

With respect to what student teachers point out in each category, we found out the following results:

- 1) Evaluating teaching: in this category, 24 references out of 38 have to do with classroom management; student teachers found it difficult to control students' disruptive behavior. Regarding solutions to this problem, only 10 out of the 24 references kept in their entries were aimed at proposing solutions to the indiscipline problem. The great majority of the other ones were focused on how to improve methodological issues.

I consider the student didn't have too much trouble in understanding what the record said ... (Student teacher 1)

A big problem here on educational public sector is the waste of time because there is no water, an urgent meeting, etc. This time is never recovered ... (Student teacher 1)

Some other students remain reluctant to work properly. They don't bring the materials to work in class. They seem to care about failing the subject and are always asking: when is the make-up test? (Student teacher 10)

I came up with some solutions to the problem. In order to know my students better, I designed myself some tags which they have to get back at the end of the class. I also designed a billboard with all their names on it. (Student teacher 5)

- 2) Theories of teaching: the student teachers wrote only 6 references dealing with theories of teaching. They evaluated some methodological principles and draw their own conclusions about their effectiveness.

My theory about homework is different to others. My projection on how to develop a new method which help students to reach an actual conception about responsibility and autonomous learning. (Student teacher 6)

- 3) Approaches and methods: entries in this category focused mainly on describing the content of the lesson; 14 out of the 20 references deal with this aspect.

The topic today was as a I said before, Fashion: a topic that all teenagers love. (Student teacher 4)

- 4) Student teachers' feelings: student teachers used regularly the journal entries to express their feelings; the most common feelings they expressed were: disappointment, frustration, enjoyment, fear and desperation. Twenty out of 25 references are aimed at describing negative feelings.

This week was terrible, sometimes I feel I can't stand children (Student teacher 1)

I'm feeling better today, because this group is better ... (Student teacher 2)

Table 6. Frequency of categories of topics that ten student teachers wrote about in their diaries.

Categories	Sub-categories	TF	MF	ST1	ST2	ST3	ST4	ST5	ST6	ST7	ST8	ST9	ST10
1. Theories of teaching	1.1 Applying theories to class practice	1	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	1.2 A belief or conviction	2	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
	1.3 Theories and beliefs about teaching and learning	3	0.3	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
2. Approaches and methods	2.1 The content of a lesson	13	1.3	1	1	0	1	0	4	0	4	2	0
	2.2 An Approach or procedure	7	0.7	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	0
3. Evaluating teaching	3.1 Diagnosing problems	38	3.8	3	4	3	0	8	4	3	1	8	4
	3.2 Proposing and seeking solutions to problems	24	2.4	2	5	1	0	5	7	1	0	1	2
	3.3 Testing/Assessment	7	0.7	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
	3.4 Evaluating lessons	21	2.1	1	4	3	4	0	2	1	5	0	1
4. Self-awareness	4.1 Recognition of achievements and learning differences	9	0.9	2	0	4	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
5. Questions about teaching	5.1 Asking for reason	7	0.7	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	5.2 Asking for suggestions	5	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
6. Student teachers' feelings	6.1 Disappointment	10	1.0	2	0	0	2	4	2	0	0	0	0
	6.2 Frustration	6	0.6	1	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
	6.3 Enjoyment / excitement	5	0.5	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
	6.4 Fear	3	0.3	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
	6.5 Desperation	1	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total		162		13	15	16	10	28	30	10	10	18	7

- 5) Self-awareness: there were only 9 references related to this category. Most of them have to do with recognition of personal growth.

I think I have been very cute with them (Student teacher 5)

Me sentí muy bien realizando esta actividad. Es importante la ambientación que se dé a los niños. (Student teacher 3)

Mi compromiso para la siguiente semana es hacer unas clases más dinámicas y ser más fuerte frente a la indisciplina en el salón. (Student teacher 3)

- 6) Questions about teaching: seven out of 151 references were concerned with questions student teachers asked about. All of them are related to methodological aspects such as teaching grammar, controlling disruptive behavior and group work.

¿Cómo adelanto un buen proceso de enseñanza con estos dos grupos que parece que no han aprendido nada desde que estaban en sexto? (Student teacher 3)

If we look at individual student teachers, first of all we can notice great differences among the number of references they recorded in their diaries. While ST5 and ST6 have 28 and 30 references, ST4, ST7, ST8 and ST10 only have between 7 and 10 references. Student teachers 1,2,4,5,6,7,8 and 10 did not ask any question about what happened in the language classroom.

Do student teachers show signs of being reflective practitioners?

The main objective of the diagnostic stage was aimed at determining the extent to which the teaching practicum has been approached as a reflective experience. One of the opportunities student teachers have to develop reflective competences is through diary keeping. Jarvis (in Richards & Nunan, 1994) contends that keeping a diary or a journal can provide pre-service teachers an excellent opportunity to reflect on their teaching experience. However, according to Ho and Richards (1993), "the mere fact of writing about teaching does not necessarily involve critical reflection if teachers write at procedural levels rather than underlying or deeper issues".

In order to determine if the diaries were used as a reflective tool, we decided to take into account Barlett's point of view, on what critical reflection involves. He points out that:

Becoming critical means that as teachers we have to transcend the technicalities of teaching and think beyond the need to improve our instructional techniques. This effectively means we have to move away from the "how to" questions, which have a limited utilitarian value to the "what" and "why" questions, which regard instructional and managerial techniques not as ends in themselves but as a part of broader educational purposes. In reflecting on "what" and "why" questions we begin to exercise control and open up the possibility of transforming our everyday classroom life. These questions need to be systematized into a set of procedures to help us to become critically reflective teachers. (Barlett, 1994)

Therefore, Bartlett (1994) proposes a specific process of inquiry based on Dewey's ideas of reflective teaching. This cycle contains five elements: *mapping, informing, contesting, appraising, and acting*.

Mapping involves observation and the collection of evidence about our teaching: The emphasis of this phase is on description, which does not involve the teacher in critical reflection. *Informing* where the pre-service or in-service teacher asks about the meaning of his/her teaching, and begins to search for principles that underlie their teaching. *Contesting*: the pre-service or inservice teachers wonder how they came to be that way; it involves a search for inconsistencies and contradictions in what they do and how they think. *Appraisal*: teachers ask how they might teach differently; it implies a search for courses of action. *Acting*: finally the teachers ask what and how they shall teach.

In the light of these elements, the following categories were classified as primarily reflective (Ho & Richards, 1993) (cf. Table 7).

1) Evaluating teaching

Evaluating lessons: positive and negative evaluations of lessons.

Diagnosing problems: students' problems, classroom interaction, teachers' problems.

Solutions to problems: alternative ways of presenting a lesson, deciding on a plan of action.

2) Theories of teaching

Theories and beliefs about teaching and learning: a justification for something, a person opinion.

Applying theories to classroom practice: contradictions between theory and practice, how theories changed.

3) Approaches and methods

The teacher's knowledge: pedagogical knowledge, knowledge and experience

The learners and the school context.

4) Self-awareness

Perceptions of themselves as teachers: their teaching style, comments on their language proficiency.

Recognition of personal growth

Setting personal goals

5) Questions about teaching

Asking for reasons

6) Teachers' feelings

Asking if their feelings may affect their performance.

Table 7 shows that only 72 (or 44.4%) out of 162 references that were analyzed in Table 6 can be considered as an evidence of traits of reflectivity. ST1, ST4, ST8, ST9 did not show great commitment with reflection. The ten of them were problem-focused, but only ST3 and ST9 did questions about how to better the teaching-learning process. In Table 6, 25 references are related to student teachers' feelings; however, they just explained how they felt, but they did not ask how they could change the situations that made them feel that way. Only 1 out of the 10 student teachers (ST6) manifested reflectivity through most of the categories.

Table 7. Frequency of traits occurrence of critical reflectivity in each category

Category	TF	MF	ST1	ST2	ST3	ST4	ST5	ST6	ST7	ST8	ST9	ST10
1. Evaluating teaching	52	5.2	3	9	6	3	7	11	2	3	4	4
2. Theories of teaching	6	0.6	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0
3. Approaches and methods	5	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0
4. Self - Awareness	4	0.4	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
5. Questions about teaching	5	0.5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
6. Teachers' feelings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	72		4	9	8	3	9	19	6	3	7	4

If we take into consideration the previous results, all the elements of the cycle proposed by Bartlett (1994) are not clearly perceived in the ten student teachers' entries. In most of the cases, they limited themselves to describe their problems, but only a few of them engaged in a deeper level of reflection and thought about making plans for future action.

DISCUSSION

Collection of evidence about one's teaching

One of the first concerns English teachers should tackle in reflective teaching is to collect information about their own teaching. Reflective teaching is not a matter of thinking for its own sake, it should be linked to understanding and intervening one's own teaching reality. In the questionnaire applied to 40 student teachers, there were 18 references to this particular aspect. When discussing the usefulness of diary-keeping, student teachers stated journals are useful to record what was done in class or to collect data. In the analysis of student teachers' journals, all the subcategories classified as descriptive or procedural are, according to Ho and Richards (1993), primarily concerned with Bartlett's phase of mapping (i.e., observation and the collection of evidence about our own teaching). These subcategories had 90 references (56%) out of the 162. It is worth mentioning some of these:

- Expressing a belief or conviction
- Applying theories to practice

- Describing the content of a lesson
- Describing an approach or procedure
- Seeking solutions to problems
- Testing
- Asking for advice or suggestions

As can be seen, most of the references analyzed here are mainly descriptive; they fall short of the reflectivity of the other categories described by Bartlett (1994). Initially, this fact could be due to the lack of training in or exposure to more meaningful reflective teaching experiences.

Finding out the meaning of one's teaching

Having mapped their images and ideas about their teaching, English teachers are expected to look for *meaning* behind the maps (Bartlett, 1994). Concerning this particular aspect, the surveyed student teachers wrote 7 (out of 48) references about *self-evaluation* and 5 (out of 48) references about *awareness-raising* as benefits of diary-keeping. Student teachers also enhanced *self-evaluation* with 12% of their references, when talking about the importance of reflective competences in the practicum,. In their diaries, student teachers wrote 34 out of 162 references which suggest their *self-awareness*, that is, their own recognition of achievements and learning difficulties, along with the expression of some personal feelings such as disappointment, frustration, enjoyment/excitement, fear and desperation. The analysis of this category corroborates the fact that most student teachers were not aware enough of the theoretical meaning of what they did in class.

Questioning one's views of teaching

According to Ho and Richards (1993), teachers show evidence of being reflective when they ask for reasons of their teaching experience, that is they "move away from the "how to" questions to the "why" questions" (Bartlett, 1994). The results in the student teachers' diaries illustrate a low frequency of this type of questions; 7 out of 162 references, where students asked for reasons, confirmed that they were not fully engaged in a reflective teaching process. On the other hand, in the

questionnaire, only 1 out of 48 references specifies that the student teacher took advantage of the dialogue between he/she and the supervisor or cooperating teacher to ask them questions in order to enrich his/her teaching experience. As Bartlett points out, "it is through *contestation* that we confront and we begin to dislodge the complex system of reasons (theory) for our teaching actions ... and this is most effectively achieved through sharing with our colleagues" (p. 211). However, most of the student teachers did not have a favorable opinion about the way the group discussion meetings are being held in the practicum of the Foreign Language Program. They gave arguments such as lack of organization, meaningfulness and reflectivity. As can be seen, those practicum group discussion meetings have not been undertaken as opportunities to engage student teachers in a constructive and reflective dialogue about their teaching experiences.

Search for alternative courses of action

Even though the highest frequency of references presented in Table 6, based on the analysis of the diaries, is concerned with diagnosing problems (38), not all the student teachers proposed plans of action to sought solutions to them. Only 24 out of 162 references deal with proposals aimed at overcoming their particular difficulties. In some cases the student teachers just mentioned the action (e.g. "Next week I'm going to teach more dynamic classes" or "To improve the internet tasks"); nevertheless, they did not suggest a plan or a particular strategy to carry out the intended action.

Evidence of changes

In the previous analysis we stated that not all the student teachers came up with plans of action to solve their particular problems. Based on the answers they reported in the questionnaires, most of them tried to resolve the classroom difficulties just talking to students; few of them applied the school code of conduct and in 2 cases, they talked about reflecting on the class incidents. On the other hand, student teachers rarely made comments on how the plan was going on. This fact does not enable us to verify if meaningful changes are taking place, or if any other strategy should be designed.

CONCLUSIONS

Data collection and data analysis showed that most student teachers were not aware enough of the principles of reflective teaching and, consequently, their practice teaching did not seem to be committed with this approach. This commitment implies rearranging our teaching practice after mapping what we do, unearthing the reasons and assumption for these actions, subjecting these reasons to critical scrutiny, appraising alternative courses of action, and then acting (Bartlett, 1994).

However, what has been found is that student teachers have not undertaken their practice teaching from a reflective perspective in an integral way. Some of them have in fact kept a journal of their lessons, but they do not seem to have visited their own entries to identify what is worth changing, reinforcing or improving. They do not show evidence of having gone beyond a descriptive account of what is going on in their classes.

Several hypotheses can be stated as an explanation for this situation. One of them is that they are still novice teachers, and what is required is that they accumulate more teaching experience to start reflecting. Another may be that student teachers have not been trained in reflective teaching during their pre-service education. An alternative rationale could be that the practicum at the Foreign Language Program does not have a proper conceptual framework which promotes a more systematic reflective teaching practice. The lack of proper guidance from the practicum supervisors can also be claimed as a possible cause for the student teachers' insufficient reflectivity.

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Appendix

Cuestionario dirigido a profesores practicantes

Estimado estudiante:

El presente instrumento tiene como propósito conocer tus percepciones sobre la aplicabilidad de la enseñanza reflexiva en la práctica docente del Programa de Lengua Extranjera. La información que proporcionas es de suma importancia para evaluar la calidad del proceso formativo de la práctica docente.

Gracias por tu colaboración.

I PARTE: DATOS PERSONALES

(Marca con una X)

Sexo: ☐ M ☐ F
Edad: ☐ 18-23 ☐ 24-28 ☐ Más de 29 años

II PARTE: ASPECTOS GENERALES SOBRE LA PRÁCTICA

(Marca con una X)

Estoy realizando mi práctica docente en:

☐ Básica secundaria ☐ Básica primaria ☐ Programa API

III PARTE: CONCEPCIÓN SOBRE ENSEÑANZA REFLEXIVA

La intención de los siguientes interrogantes es conocer tus concepciones sobre enseñanza reflexiva:

¿Qué significa para ti poseer competencias reflexivas?

¿Qué importancia pueden tener estas competencias reflexivas en la práctica docente?

IV PARTE: EXPERIENCIA REFLEXIVA EN LA PRÁCTICA DOCENTE

El propósito de las siguientes preguntas es conocer la implementación de algunas estrategias de enseñanza reflexiva, a partir de tus experiencias en la práctica docente.

1. ¿Llevas un diario de tus clases en la práctica docente? SÍ ____ NO ____

2. ¿En tu opinión, es útil llevar un diario en la práctica docente? ¿Por qué?

3. ¿Cómo evalúas las reuniones generales que realiza la coordinación de práctica del programa?

4. ¿Cómo solucionas las situaciones-problema que se presentan en el aula?
