

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter makes an introduction to the study by explaining how I, as a researcher, developed an interest in 'reflection' as a research area and combined it with portfolio construction in pre-service teacher education course. I also attempt to provide reasons for choosing this area as a research topic by exploring problems with the literature. I will also provide a background to the study by elaborating on 'reflection in teacher education' and 'the learning portfolio' as the two significant concepts in this study. I will also explain why reflection is considered to be essential in teacher education and why portfolios are regarded as tools fostering reflection. This chapter also presents the research context, research aims and definition of terms by closing up with the structure of the dissertation.

1.1 How I developed an interest in 'Reflection' as a concept: Reasons for choosing to explore this area

I have been very much concerned about the assessment procedures of student teachers as a lecturer at Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus. Student teachers are expected to prepare a portfolio based on the tasks they are assigned by their supervisors in order to be assessed and complete EDUC 420 – Practice Teaching course. However, I had my interns continuously complaining about the content of the portfolio they were preparing and the processes involved in it. They were complaining about the guidelines provided, the tasks and the reports given in that these did not provide them with opportunities to examine themselves as teacher candidates and their teaching

practices deeply and that they were not able to follow their progress. Moreover, I had my personal observations that reflective reports were not written on time, and were postponed to the end of the semester, and the content of the reports were mostly consisted of the descriptions of their practices rather than a critical and reflective analysis ending in repetitions.

I have become even more concerned about the issue while working on the 'development of a framework for analysis' task during the 2005 Contexts for Teacher Education Module on the EdD course at the Nottingham University. This was a whole group discussion centring on eight critical issues forming a basis for the potential areas for research in teacher education through the discussions on the bulletin board. One of the critical issues was about assessment and my colleagues provided data on how student teachers in their national education programmes are assessed in order to be qualified as teachers before they graduate. 'Portfolios' turned out to be the widely used tools both for assessment and professional development. I have been further interested in the issue when I analysed the teacher education programmes in my own context realising that there are some weaknesses regarding the whole process when considering the issue from a global perspective. I decided that this topic is worth exploring in depth by searching the related literature to inform my local context of the assessment procedures/alternatives that might be incorporated into our own assessment procedures.

While carrying out the analysis of my national teacher education programme through applying the 'framework for analyses' which was developed as a

product of collaboration and reflective thinking in the 2005 Contexts for Teacher Education module, I have also become very much aware of the importance of reflective and critical thinking skills in almost all research areas on the teacher education agenda. When I started reviewing the literature about 'reflection' and 'reflective thinking skills', I realised that reflection was mostly associated with the teaching portfolios and there was an extensive literature in favour of 'portfolios as tools stimulating reflection' (Mansvelder-Longayroux et al., 2006). Portfolios as "purposeful, collaborative, self-reflective collections of work" (McRobie, 1992, p.1 cited in Guillaume and Yopp, 1995, p.93) are considered to be the appropriate tools for assessing student teachers' performances because they do not only provide a more complete, situated view of teachers' skills, knowledge and commitments for assessment purposes but they also enrich teaching and learning processes contributing to the learning processes of student teachers by encouraging student self-assessment and reflection. One of the views claims that the concept of 'portfolio' is not taken as an assessment vehicle used to assess teacher performance alone, rather as an approach to teaching and learning process wherein assessment becomes part of the learning process. Thus, student teachers play a larger role in constructing their own knowledge and judging their own progress which help them develop their self-regulative and reflective thinking skills in return.

The latest discussions in the related literature consider portfolios as a tool for promoting reflection and reflective practice (Wade & Yarbrough, 1996; Borko et al., 1997; Groom & Maunonen-Eskelinen, 2006; Mansvelder-Longayroux et al., 2007). Theoretical support for portfolios as reflective tools is also strong (Wolf,

Whinery, & Hagerty, 1995 cited in Borko et al., 1997) and they are often promoted as an important means for developing reflective thinking. It is claimed that portfolios can provide an effective means to focus student thinking on key issues and guide students in revisiting and revising their ideas over time. Olson (cited in Wade and Yarbrough, 1996) observed that “the major motivation for portfolio use in teacher education seems to be the potential for the development of reflective thinking and inquiry in students” (p.64). Educators view portfolios largely as a form of alternative assessment or as a strategy for enhancing reflective thinking because they provide students with opportunities to document and reflect on their learning. Portfolios show evidence of self-reflection (Mills-Courts & Amiran, 1991; Paulson, Paulson & Meyer, 1991; Sunstein, 1992 cited in Wade and Yarbrough, 1996). It is claimed that portfolios provide students with opportunities to examine their work and reflect on it to set further goals. They can look back at early efforts and compare with later products to see how they have changed. Proponents claim portfolios provide an opportunity and a structure for teachers to document and describe their teaching; articulate their professional knowledge; and reflect on what, how and why they teach (Loughran & Corrigan, 1995; Wolf et al, 1995; Borko et al., 1997). Being influenced by the positive impact of portfolios on reflection, I started questioning about the portfolio procedures we apply in the Practice Teaching course in my own context as follows:

- Do the components of the portfolio and the process student teachers go through in the construction of the portfolio engage them into reflective critical inquiry?

- Does the portfolio which student teachers compile in my own context promote student teachers' reflective and critical thinking skills? Does it include elements or processes which provide ongoing reflective assessment?
- Do the components of the portfolio we assign contribute to the development of the reflective thinking skills of the student teachers in my context?

My questioning about the portfolio procedures adopted in the practice teaching course led me to believe that the current portfolio practices in my own context hardly engage student teachers with reflective and critical thinking tasks.

Moreover, despite a large amount of theoretical support for portfolios as tools for enhancing reflection, the empirical support for these claims is sparse. There have been few published empirical studies of portfolios arguing that they foster teacher reflection. Much has been written about the value offered by the portfolio as a tool for stimulating reflection in the context of the professional development of student teachers. However, most of these works have been narratives describing experiences of using portfolios on teacher-education courses (Wade & Yarbrough, 1996; Mansvelder- Longayroux et al., 2007).

Recently, more and more publications have appeared on systematic research into the portfolio; however, Zeichner and Wray (2001) indicated that there is a need for systematic research into the nature and quality of reflection in portfolios. Realizing that there is a need for systematic research into the nature and quality of reflection in portfolios, I developed a stronger interest in studying whether the current process of constructing a portfolio in my own context

prompts student teachers to reflect and contribute to the development of their reflective thinking skills.

1.2 Critique of the literature

An examination of the literature reveals a general assumption that reflection in professional behaviour is desirable, but very little guidance as to how confidently to determine that reflective behaviour actually exists. Although, the concept is discussed extensively, it is still not well analysed or defined (Goodman, 1984; Boud et al., 1985; Zeichner, 1986; Richert, 1990; Coopeland et al, 1993; Russell, 1997; Loughran, 2002;).

Reflective practice has become a goal in most of the teacher education programmes acting as an underlying principle and the ability to engage in reflective practice has become an important skill which both new and experienced teachers need to demonstrate. It is considered to be essential for the maximizing of teacher growth. However, there is little consensus on precisely what reflective practice is or indeed on the conditions required to promote it (Francis, 1995; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Richert, 1990). Hence, the problematic nature of the concept of 'reflection' stimulated me to explore the critical issues surrounding the notion of reflection in teacher education, take into account the favourable aspects of it regardless of the difficulties and criticism and use those aspects as a ground to formulate a conceptual framework for a reflective portfolio construction tool. In order to better understand the concept of 'reflection' and 'reflective practice' and frame a portfolio construction tool appropriate for my own context, I aimed at having a closer look at the concept

and the ways in which it is believed to be promoted. In achieving this aim, I attempted to answer the following questions drawing from the existing literature:

- What is meant by reflection? How is it defined by different scholars, researchers and practitioners? What do I mean by reflection?
- Why reflection is considered significant in Teacher Education? Why do teacher educators choose to include it in their educational programmes? Why do I wish to include it as a teacher educator?
- Why is a portfolio considered as an important tool for promoting reflection? (Purposes and possible benefits of portfolio use in teacher education)

1.3 Why reflection is considered to be essential in TE

It has been acknowledged that learning to teach cannot be achieved only through the subject-matter knowledge or practising teaching but involves “learning to reflect on teaching in a characteristically systematic way” (Moran and Dallat, 1995) and has become a key concept in teacher education programmes. Over the past two decades, reflection and reflective practice have been regarded as standards towards which teachers and teacher educators must strive (Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Laboskey, 1994; Rodgers, 2002; Orland-Barak, 2005).

As teachers, we bring certain beliefs, assumptions, knowledge, attitudes and values to teaching. However, teaching takes place in a social setting that has its own unique characteristics, opportunities and constraints. Reflective practice requires us to explore the implications of all these complex factors with the intention of understanding and improving our practice (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). The assumptions, beliefs, knowledge and values we bring into class might not fit the dynamic, ever changing and complex nature of the classroom. Engaging in critical reflection assists us in moving beyond the acquisition of

new knowledge and understanding, into questioning of existing assumptions, values and perspectives (Cranton, 1996, p.76 cited in Imel, 1998). Brookfield (1995) indicated that part of the critical reflective process is to challenge the prevailing social, political, cultural or professional ways of acting. It enables adults to interpret and create new knowledge and actions from their ordinary and extraordinary experiences. It helps the practitioner create new understandings, knowledge constructions and new behaviours by making conscious the social, political, professional, economic and ethical assumptions constraining or supporting one's action in a specific context (Ecclestone, 1996; Mackintosh, 1998 cited in Stein, 2000). Teacher educators believe 'reflective practice' plays an important role in this respect. Most of the time, we are constrained with our beliefs, values and assumptions as well as the theoretical knowledge that we acquire throughout our course of study. We act in the light of our beliefs and values putting into action the theoretical knowledge we learnt in an "appetitive, blind and impulsive" manner as explained in Dewey's terms (1964 cited in van Manen, 1995). Owing to the complexity of a dynamic situation with multiple interactions in the classroom, we are more conscious of some things than others. Engaging in reflective practice and reflective thinking "enables us to know what we are about when we act. As Livingstone (2006) pointed out teaching is a complex and ever-changing task which requires existing knowledge to be questioned and new knowledge constantly to be found. Considering the changes, demands and challenges of the environment, he emphasized that it is necessary for teachers to have learning opportunities that start in initial teacher education and are sustained throughout their career.

It is impossible to prepare student teachers for all situations that can possibly occur in teaching.

Korthagen (2001) sees reflection as a condition for 'growth competence', the ability to steer one's own development as a teacher after initial teacher education. This is one of the reasons why reflective practice is increasingly being recognized as being essential to good teaching and having a central role in the learning life of the effective teacher (Day, 1993, p.83). The assumption is that since teaching and learning are complex processes and since there is not necessarily one right approach (Loughran, 1996), deliberating among competing versions of good teaching and recasting past understandings and current practices (Grimmet et al, 1960 cited in Leitch & Day, 2000) are likely to lead improvement. Without a capacity to evaluate assumptions, teachers will be more inclined to remain prisoners of their programs (Argyris & Schön, 1976, cited in Leitch & Day, 2000). The second is that engaging in reflective practice is a means of helping individuals towards greater self-knowledge and self-challenge – 'a useful way of achieving personal development' (Johnston and Bradley, 1996 p.5) through, for example, an analysis of the personal values and theories that underlie teaching. Teacher education institutes increasingly focus on the experiences of the student teachers themselves because of the gap student teachers perceive between the theory offered by the university and their teaching practice. In particular, attention is paid to the perception of these experiences by student teachers. Reflection is seen as an important way to make explicit these often tacit conceptions, also called 'subjective theories', and to restructure them, if necessary, using 'objective theories' from scientific

insights (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Korthagen, 2001). Therefore, the notion of reflective practice becomes an element to be gained by the novice teachers during their pre-service teacher education because this will continuously contribute to their personal development.

Since the beginning of this century, Dewey (1916) argued that teachers needed to see themselves as more than classroom ‘technicians’ and should move beyond the goal of ‘technical rationality’ towards being a ‘reflective teacher’. He differentiated routine action from reflective action defining reflection as an “*active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends*” (italics in original, p.6). Dewey understood the implications of depriving teachers of this cycle of reflection. He frequently referred to the intellectual dependency teachers have on other authorities (e.g., school boards, textbook publishers, principals, superintendents) to make their decisions for them. In 1904, Dewey criticized

the willingness of our teaching corps to accept without inquiry or criticism any method or device which seems to promise good results. Teachers.... flock to those persons who give them clear-cut and definite instructions as to just how to teach this or that. (p.152)

He consistently cites the need to develop teachers’ professionalism. Such professionalism, he argued, grows out of a scientific (reflective) approach to education. As with any learner, teachers who are given a chance to reflect systematically on their experience can come to an understanding of what their students do and why they do it. With these understandings in hand, they are better equipped to articulate their needs and their students’ needs, to take stands, and to propose actions, both inside and outside the classroom walls.

Francis (1995) also points out the belief that teaching is overwhelmed with uncertainty, and attended by ambiguity emphasizing the essential part of professional growth that we have to confront 'practical theory', to make it explicit, to clarify and extend it by articulating and by subjecting it to the challenge of others. She argues that there is no one best method of teaching and there is frequently a lack of consensus about what schools ought to be doing, whose interests they are serving, and about what they are achieving. Francis claims that pre-service teachers need to develop the attitudes, skills and confidence to frame their own agendas, use their puzzlement to drive useful inquiry, and to influence policy and educational thinking beyond the classroom context. They need to develop a voice. She believes that teacher education programmes should encourage individual construction of knowledge which includes critical challenge. It is assumed that reflection plays an important role in the construction and integration of the personal practical knowledge of teachers.

Core and Zeichner (1991) also argue that teachers should not be regarded as 'technicians' who are required to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations uncritically. Zeichner et al. (1987) suggest factors which students experience before they begin a course and by which they may be heavily influenced, each of which undermine the impact of any course might have. These life-time experiences of the function and structure of education are likely to have contributed towards a definite conception of teaching roles and relationships to which the students cling. Johnson (1999) adds that teachers'

pre-existing views of teaching and learning are so pervasive that unless directly challenged, any attempt to alter teaching styles is ineffectual. Ely (1991, cited in Calderhead and Gates, 1993) believes “greater self-knowledge can help us to separate our thoughts and feelings from those of others, to be less judgmental, to appreciate others’ experiences and thus to go beyond our own understandings and to develop professionally”. Tann (1993 in Calderhead and Gates, 1993) argues that unless we engage students at a personal level they cannot make sense of the programme content: it does not connect. She believes that we need to consider the growing interest in personal theory by incorporating ‘reflection’ into teacher education programmes.

1.4 Why portfolios are considered as tools fostering reflection

A wide variety of approaches and strategies has been employed in an attempt to foster reflection in student teachers; still, there is little research evidence to show how effective they are. The following strategies are widely believed to promote reflection:

- i) Action research projects (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Zeichner, 1986; Harrison, Lawson & Wortley, 2005)
- ii) Case studies and Ethnographic Studies of students, teachers, classrooms and schools (Sparkes, 1991; Stoiber, 1990; Ross, 1989 cited in Hatton & Smith, 1995)
- iii) Micro-teaching (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991; Zeichner, 1986; Cruikshank, 1985; l’anson, Rodrigues & Wilson, 2003)

- iv) Reflective journal keeping/writing (Hatton & Smith, 1994; Francis, 1995; Stein, 2000; Weiss & Weiss, 2001; Orland-Barak, 2005; Martin 2005; Chitpin, 2006)
- v) Supervised Practicum Experiences/ Group discussions following practicum experiences/mentoring and coaching strategies (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991; Zeichner, 1986; Cruikshank, 1985; Hatton & Smith, 1994; Weiss & Weiss, 2001;)
- vi) Portfolios (Guillaume and Yopp, 1995; Wade & Yarbrough, 1996; van Niekerk, 1998; Weiss & Weiss, 2001; Orland-Barak, 2005; Mansvelder-Longayroux et. al. 2007)
- vii) Critical incident method (Francis, 1995; Harrison, Lawson & Wortley, 2005)

Recent approaches to teacher preparation and professional development have also been influenced by the current research on learning, which points to the need for learners to take an active role in the construction and application of new knowledge and skills (Piaget, Vygotsky, cited in Santrock, 2001; Schön, 1986; Francis, 1995; Glaserfeld, 1989). It accepts the belief that learning is best facilitated when it occurs in authentic contexts in which learners work together over time to solve real world problems (Vygotsky cited in Santrock, 2001; Corcoran, 1995 cited in Wolf and Dietz, 1998). Education has moved from being a traditional teacher-centred process to one that is student-centred. According to cognitive researchers, meaningful learning is reflective, constructive and self-regulated (Piaget cited in Santrock 2001; Kolb, 1984; Herman, 1992, p.75 cited in Davies and Wavering, 1999). Grant and Huebner

(1998) also support this view of learning indicating that powerful learning is an active, self-regulated, reflective as well as collaborative process. This current view of learning required educators and instructors in higher education to review the ways they monitor and evaluate students' progress since teaching and assessment are inextricably intertwined. In order to make assessment compatible with contemporary views of learning, alternative assessment procedures have been developed. Similarly, there has been a shift away from assessing knowledge towards a more competency/ performance-based assessment. Portfolios – as “purposeful, collaborative, self-reflective collections of work” (McRobie, 1992, p.1 cited in Guillaume and Yopp, 1995, p.93) are considered to be the appropriate tools for assessing student teachers' performances because they do not only provide a more complete, situated view of teachers' skills, knowledge and commitments for assessment purposes but they also enrich teaching and learning processes contributing to the learning processes of student teachers in many respects. The 'portfolio' is not taken as an assessment vehicle used to assess teacher performance alone but is taken up as an approach to teaching and learning process wherein assessment becomes part of the learning process. Thus, student teachers play a larger role in constructing their own knowledge and judging their own progress which help them develop their self-regulative and reflective skills in return. Portfolio is considered as the agent promoting the connections between teaching, learning, reflection and evaluation (Barton & Collins, 1993; Wolf, 1996; Zidon, 1996 cited in Johnson, 1999).

The call to prepare teachers to be reflective about their practice is a dominant theme in recent teacher education literature. Richert (1990) claimed that the ability to think about what one does and why – assessing past actions, current situations, and intended outcomes – is vital to intelligent practice, practice that is reflective rather than routine. As the time in the teaching process when teachers stop to think about their work and make sense of it, reflection influences how one grows as a professional by influencing how successfully one is able to learn from one's experiences (p. 525). Portfolios have recently received increasing attention as tools to promote reflection among both experienced teachers and student teachers (Wade & Yarbrough, 1996; Borko et al., 1997; Groom & Maunonen-Eskelinen, 2006; Manswelder-Longayroux et al., 2007). Theoretical support for portfolios as reflective tools is also strong (Wolf et al., 1995 cited in Borko et al., 1997). Portfolios are often promoted as one means for developing reflective thinking. Proponents claim that portfolios provide an opportunity and a structure for teachers to articulate their professional knowledge and reflect on what, how and why they teach (Loughran & Corrigan, 1995; Wolf et al., 1995). They provide an opportunity for teachers to systematically examine their practice and gather information on their practice, their students and their schools; and create a meaningful context in which to link the university and its research-based knowledge with the classroom and its practical demands (Borko et al., 1997). Wade & Yarbrough (1996) emphasized the potential of portfolios for providing effective means to focus student teachers on key issues and for guiding them in revisiting and revising their ideas over time. It is claimed that it provides student teachers with opportunities to examine their work and reflect on it to set further goals. They can look back

at early efforts and compare with later pieces to see how they have changed. Klenowski (2000) claimed that portfolios have been developed to support the student teachers to undertake a more active and critically reflective approach to the role of the teacher. The portfolio of collated evidence and reflection can enable the student teacher to develop skills to self-assess and critique their experiences within a format that reflects, and more authentically portrays the complex process of teaching and learning.

In order to be able to reflect on practice, (student) teachers need to make their teaching visible both for themselves and others. The portfolio is one of those reflective tools that has been and still is used to support and guide teachers in making their practice visible (Berrill & Whalen, 2007). A portfolio is not a compilation of documents; but, is a systematic process which requires the individual to construct it throughout a long period of time based on his/her practice or experience. Portfolios are considered to be particularly effective as a support for *focused reflection*, rather than vague generalized thinking about one's practice, through structures that are prescribed components of teaching portfolios.

The first articles on the use of portfolio in teacher education assumed that by working on their portfolios student teachers are prompted automatically to reflect on their own learning process and to reach a better understanding of teaching. Results from recent research into the portfolio as a tool for reflection indicate that student teachers do not automatically reflect on their experiences as a result of working on a portfolio (Borko et al., 1997; Krause 1996; Lyons,

1998; Mayer & Tusin, 1999; Wade & Yarbrough, 1996). It has to be focused, systematic, ongoing, and collaborative and supported by continuous feedback. Zeichner and Wray (2001) indicated that there is a need for systematic research into the nature and quality of reflection under different conditions of portfolio use. My interest into researching the current portfolio processes in my own context originated from the curiosity of how effective our portfolio procedures were in fostering reflective thinking. Reading from literature on the concept of reflection and the role of portfolio as a tool fostering reflection as well as the need for systematic research into the nature and quality of reflection in portfolios stimulated me as a researcher to examine and evaluate whether the portfolio components and the portfolio construction process adopted in my context contribute to the growth of the student teachers by engaging them in reflective inquiry processes: Do the components of the portfolio and the process student teachers go through in the construction of the portfolio contribute to the development of their reflective thinking skills?

1.5 Research Context

The research will be conducted in the Department of Educational Sciences at Eastern Mediterranean University which is a well-established tertiary institution in North Cyprus, accredited by Higher Education Council in Turkey and at the cooperating state schools functioning under the Ministry of Education and Culture.

This study will focus on the EDUC 420 Practice Teaching course which is a 5-credit, fourth-year course in B.A in English Language Teaching (ELT). This

practicum course is offered to student teachers in their final year in the last semester just before they graduate. Prior to this course, starting from their junior year, they take pedagogical courses in order to be specialised as English Language Teachers. The course is scheduled for 3 hours per week for 14 weeks at the university. It offers student teachers 10-12 weeks of field experiences, comprising 4 hours of observations, 4 hours of mini-teaching and 6 hours of formal teaching opportunities in actual language classes in secondary schools. Each cooperating teacher and supervisor (tutor) is expected to formally evaluate the student teacher's formal teaching sessions in class after the student teacher completes all mini-teaching sessions.

The Practice Teaching Course, conceived as a bridge between the ending of pre-service professional preparation and the first year of teaching, provides student teachers with intensive field-based opportunities to develop their teaching skills and professional understanding by introducing them to the nature, structure and organization of secondary schools through hands-on experience. The Practice Teaching course is realised within the framework of the faculty-school partnership system. The partner schools in this system provide student teachers with a good variety of opportunities ranging from guided and gradual introduction to classroom teaching to actual teaching experiences so that they can develop the spirit of 'being a reflective English teacher'. The Department of Educational Sciences works collaboratively with the partner schools in Famagusta to augment the effectiveness of the field-based experiences of English language student teachers.

The course generally aims at developing in students the levels of knowledge, dispositions, and skills of professional competence through practical field-experiences in authentic language classroom contexts. It also aims at promoting student teachers' reflective thinking attitude towards their own instructional processes by involving them in continuous professional development. Upon completing the Practice Teaching course, student teachers should be able to

- plan lessons with appropriate aims,
- put theory into practical experiences to develop their professional competences,
- develop their professional growth by getting involved in observations, peer micro-teaching, mini-teaching, and formal teaching processes
- enhance their self-critical thinking through meeting sessions and reflective tasks
- develop their self-evaluation skills by being involved in oral and written reflective thinking processes
- become familiar with classroom and school procedures (EDUC 420 Practice Teaching Handbook)

The currently implemented portfolio construction tool includes the Familiarization Task (see Appendix A) which is to be completed by asking the cooperating teacher questions to be further informed about the school, the classroom and the student characteristics; the Class Profile (see Appendix B) and Lesson Planning tasks (see Appendix C) which are to be completed by observing the class the student teacher is assigned. After the observations, the

student teacher is gradually incorporated into the classroom in two or three mini-teaching sessions (15-20 minutes), in which s/he will work collaboratively with the cooperating teacher and teach the assigned task. The mini-teaching sessions aim to enable student teacher to scrutinize his/her own teaching in order to discover the strengths and weaknesses and assume a greater degree of responsibility for the succeeding instructional processes.

Having completed all mini-teaching sessions, the student teacher is expected to give four formal teaching sessions on different teaching points, preferably on different skills, to be designated by the cooperating teacher and the student teacher together. Three of these formal teaching sessions are to be observed and evaluated by the cooperating teacher and one by the supervisor using the Formal Teaching Appraisal form (see Appendix D). The student teacher is expected to write a Reflective Report after each formal teaching experience considering the points which could be seen in Appendix E.

The Practice Teaching course aims at promoting the reflective practice of the student teachers through two-way and three-way meeting sessions held before and after all their teaching experiences either between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher or between the student teacher and the supervisor or among the three parties to share and discuss the pre-instructional and instructional processes of the student teachers.

The stages of two-way meeting sessions are as follows: pre-observation session, observations and post-observation session. During the pre-observation session, the student teacher discusses his/her lesson plan both with

cooperating teacher and the supervisor separately. The supervisor and/or the cooperating teacher observe the student teacher in action in the classroom and fills out the Formal Teaching Appraisal Form by writing his/her comments in the boxes provided. During post-observation sessions, the cooperating teacher provides feedback to guide student teacher in the development of more effective teaching strategies for the succeeding lessons. Three-way meetings take place among the student teacher, the cooperating teacher and the supervisor just after the supervisor's observation of student teacher. These sessions focus on the evaluation of the teaching performance of the student teacher.

By the end of the program, the student teacher writes Practice Teaching Final Report which can be referred in Appendix F by summarizing his/her teaching and learning experiences in the school focusing on each question separately in the form.

1.6 My Research Aims

The study broadly aims to examine how to make the practice of portfolio construction by student teachers a practice conducive to reflective thinking and self-assessment through using student teachers' perceptions of their experiences of constructing a portfolio.

The study specifically aims to develop insights into reflection and reflective practice by examining student teachers' experiences of their portfolio construction based on their perceptions and views. Their views on their

teaching performances and portfolio construction experiences; how the portfolio construction tool affects their reflective thinking skills and teaching performances and what aspects of the portfolio construction tool they consider as effective in improving their reflective thinking skills will be explored in this study.

I make no generalisation about the experiences of this group to the rest of the cohort – the other four supervisor groups of similar size. Rather, I seek to explore the effectiveness of the new portfolio construction tool that I will develop in a context that I understand well and increase my understanding of the complexity of the process of reflection. I am also interested in how that exploration and reflection might inform the development of my future practice, the practice of the other course instructors as supervisors and our overall approach to design and delivery of the course.

This study will consist of three phases and will adopt action research as its methodology which is to be explained in detail in chapter 3 Methodology. During the first phase, I, as the researcher, will attempt to identify the student teachers' perceptions regarding the components of the currently used portfolio and its construction processes in supporting or enhancing reflective thinking skills and the development of self-assessment skills. I will attempt to diagnose the problematic areas of the currently implemented portfolio construction tool as well as its strengths based on the student teachers' perceptions of their experiences in order to develop a more reflective portfolio construction tool.

In the second phase of the study, as the researcher, I will attempt to improve the current portfolio construction processes into a reflective tool based on the student teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the portfolio in terms of reflection. The new portfolio tool which I plan to develop will be based on a conceptual framework drawing mostly from the literature on the criteria for reflection in the light of the problematic areas student teachers will report empirically based on their perceptions of the current portfolio construction experiences they go through. The strengths of the current portfolio tool will also be integrated into the new tool as reported by the student teachers.

The third phase of the study will be concerned with the implementation of the newly developed portfolio construction tool in the Spring 2008 semester with a new group of student teachers in the Practice Teaching course. As the researcher, I will implement the newly developed portfolio construction tool to examine and interpret student teachers' perceptions of the impact of the newly designed strategies on the development of their reflective thinking skills through interviews, end-of-semester reflective essays and the final reports which the student teachers will produce as a component of the portfolio. In order to achieve the above explained aims; as the researcher, I will focus on the following research questions for the first and the third phases of the study:

1. How do the student teachers define portfolio based on their experiences of the currently implemented and newly developed portfolio construction tools? (What are the student teachers' perceptions of the purpose of the portfolio construction?)

2. What do the student teachers report on the effectiveness of the components of the currently implemented and newly developed portfolio construction tools in terms of promoting reflective thinking skills and providing opportunities for professional development?
3. What do the student teachers report on the effectiveness of the processes of the currently implemented and newly developed portfolio construction tools (feedback sessions) in terms of promoting reflective thinking skills and providing opportunities for professional development?
4. What do the student teachers suggest as modifications to the currently implemented portfolio tool?

1.7 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organised as follows: Chapter 1 introduces the research area and interest, research context, research aims and questions. It also attempts to underline the importance of reflection and portfolio in teacher education. Chapter 2 provides an initial review of the literature related to the definition of the concepts 'reflection' and 'reflective practice' and the significance of reflection in teacher education as well as the portfolio as a tool for promoting reflection. It also provides a theoretical foundation for the portfolio instrument/ model the researcher has developed to be implemented. Chapter 3 presents the researcher's personal philosophical stance; the methodology of the study; data collection methods and instruments adopted and the participants of the study. Chapter 4 involves the presentation and discussion of the findings of the currently implemented portfolio construction tool which is the first phase of the study and chapter 5 presents the elements and the processes

of the newly developed portfolio construction tool with a graphical representation of the tool as the second phase of the study. Chapter 6 focuses on the presentation and discussion of the findings of the newly developed portfolio construction tool which is the third phase of the study. Chapter 7 summarizes the findings of the newly developed portfolio tool under the research questions and discusses the conclusions of the findings of the newly developed portfolio construction tool with respect to crucial elements of the tool stimulating reflection and the vital attributes it promoted. The chapter concludes with implications for practice and for further research closing with what I have learnt by undertaking this research.

1.8 Definition of Terms

The following covers the key terminology adopted in this study to enable readers better understand the terms as they read the dissertation:

Practice Teaching Course (EDUC 420) is a 5-credit course taken by fourth-year students who have successfully completed EDUC 410 School Experience II course in order to receive BA in English Language Teaching. The course is scheduled at the university for 3 hours per week for 14 weeks. It offers student teachers 10-12 weeks of field experiences, comprising 4 hours of observations, 4 hours of mini-teaching and 4-5 hours of formal teaching opportunities in actual language classes in secondary schools.

Practice Teaching Portfolio is the collection of the predetermined documents/reports compiled by fourth year student teachers enrolled in the Practice Teaching course (EDUC 420). The Practice Teaching Portfolio serves

as a comprehensive guide to provide the means for an in-depth self-examination of the student teacher's teaching practices through written documentation and the formative and summative evaluation processes, and shows the student teacher's personal and professional development in teaching and learning issues.

Student teacher is an undergraduate student in his/her senior year enrolled in the Practice Teaching course (EDUC 420) at the Department of English Language Teaching. Student teacher is the equivalent term for 'pre-service teacher' in the literature.

Supervisor is the experienced teacher, who has specialized in ELT and teaches EDUC 420 Practice Teaching course in the Faculty of Education. The supervisor supervises and visits the student teachers in the partner schools for the purpose of observation, guidance and evaluation. Supervisor is the equivalent term for 'tutor' in the related literature.

Cooperating teacher is the teacher who permits student teachers to practice teaching in his/her class at the partner schools and provides guidance and feedback for the development of the student teacher. Cooperating teacher is the equivalent term for "mentor" in the related literature.

Currently implemented portfolio construction tool is the established portfolio tool which is regularly and currently used in EDUC 420 Practice Teaching course as a form of assessment for the student teachers taking this course.

The data in the first phase of the study will be collected after the regular implementation of this portfolio tool.

Newly developed portfolio construction tool is the portfolio construction tool developed by the researcher based on the findings relating to the currently implemented portfolio construction tool as well as on the theoretical and empirical knowledge in the related literature. This portfolio tool was developed in the second phase of the study and implemented in the third phase. The conclusions and implications for practice were made based on the findings gathered on this newly developed tool.

Continuous supervision involves continuous and systematic guidance and feedback provided by the supervisor, cooperating teacher and the peer partner during the feedback sessions throughout the whole construction process.

Partner Peer is the student teacher who is paired with another student teacher to conduct all the peer collaboration tasks such as peer observation, peer feedback sessions and peer reflective journals during the construction of the portfolio. Partner peer is expected to collaborate by acting as a 'critical friend' during lesson plan preparation, observations and feedback sessions.

Reflection is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking, with its roots in scientific inquiry. It constitutes "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1910, italics in

original, p.6). Schön (1983) views reflection-on-action as teachers' thoughtful consideration and retrospective analysis of their performance in order to gain knowledge from experience. Valli (1997) described reflective teacher as the one who "...can look back on events; make judgments about them; and alter their teaching behaviours in the light of craft, research and ethical knowledge" (p.70). Loughran (1996) and Goodman (1984) defined reflection as 'the deliberate and purposeful act of thinking which centers on ways of responding to problem situations' (p.14). Thus reflection is associated with thinking and is judged to involve the cognitive processes of both 'problem finding' and 'problem-solving' (Leitch & Day, 2000). Johnston & Bradley (1996) defined reflective practice as the 'acquisition of a critical stance or attitude towards one's own practice and that of one's peers' (p.4).

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, I attempt to review and discuss what reflection is by identifying the most widely accepted six key characteristics of it which I believe characterise the concept of reflection for my research purposes. All the key characteristics I review and discuss in this chapter serve the purpose of integrating reflective practice into the portfolio construction in my own study. I also discuss why reflection is significant and integrated into teacher education programmes. The reason why portfolios are used and how reflection and portfolios are closely associated with each other are also reviewed and discussed. The chapter ends with my personal philosophical belief in portfolio as a tool stimulating reflection for the development of student teachers.

2.1 Definition of reflection: what is meant by ‘reflection’ and ‘reflective practice’?

The literature on the topic of reflection is considerable, and the possibilities for variation in the definition and construction of reflective teacher education programmes are equally varied and extensive. Thus the first task for a teacher educator wishing to design and implement ‘a reflective portfolio construction tool’ situated in a Practice Teaching course is to answer the two related questions:

- What do I mean by reflection?
- Why do I wish to include it?

I attempted to answer the two questions considering the Practice Teaching course as the basis and context for reflection. I explored the issue of reflection within the context of pre-service teacher education and intended to define it by searching the widely accepted characteristics of it within the same context. The justification behind my wish to include reflection in my Practice Teaching course is also grounded on the reasoning why it is essential for teacher preparation which is discussed later towards the end of this chapter.

Reflection is considered as a goal in many teacher education programmes but its definition and the ways it might be fostered are problematic issues (Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Loughran, 2002; Rodgers, 2002).

Although there is a lack of clarity with its definition and reflection is vaguely and loosely used in numerous different ways, the concept has a seductive nature capturing the attention of most of the educators, scholars, practitioners, teacher education programmes, commissions and boards, standing out as something useful and essential. Although there are warnings that 'reflection' is in danger of becoming devalued as a 'given' in any teacher education course, I agree with the idea that as thinking professionals we have a role to play in making the meaning of reflection explicit and of articulating and sharing our understanding. Though the works of many pioneering figures (Dewey, 1910, 1938; Schon, 1986, 1995; Kolb, 1984 and Carr & Kemmis, 1986) have played an influential and formative role in the evolution of our understanding of reflective practice, and given that one single definition does not exist, I support the idea that it is not desirable that there should be one. As thinking educators, we should try to make explicit our own 'situated' interpretation of reflection and

reflective practice rooted in our own particular context.

(<http://webct.nottingham.ac.uk/webct/ContentPage>

ServerServlet/Ed_DFundamentals/P) Reflection becomes meaningful and useful when it is practiced in a particular way in particular contexts; since what one reflects on and the outcomes of such reflection will vary according to the realities of each specific context.

As individuals we bring certain beliefs, assumptions, knowledge, attitudes and values to teaching. However, teaching takes place in a social setting that has its own unique characteristics, opportunities and constraints. Reflective practice requires teachers to explore the implications of all these complex factors with the intention of understanding and improving their practice (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). The assumptions, beliefs, knowledge and values that student teachers bring into class might not fit the dynamic, ever changing and complex nature of the classroom. Hence, engaging in critical reflection assists student teachers and novice teachers in moving beyond the acquisition of new knowledge and understanding, into questioning of existing assumptions, values and perspectives (Cranton, 1996, p.76 cited in Imel, 1998). As Brookfield (1995 cited in Stein, 2000) indicated 'part of the critical reflective process is to challenge the prevailing social, political, cultural or professional ways of acting' (p.3). It enables student teachers or novices to interpret and create new knowledge and actions from their ordinary and extraordinary experiences. It helps the practitioner create new understandings, knowledge constructions and new behaviours by making conscious the social, political, professional, economic and ethical assumptions constraining or supporting one's action in a

specific context (Ecclestone, 1996; Mackintosh, 1998 cited in Stein, 2000). I believe 'reflective practice' plays an important role in this respect. Student teachers or beginning teachers are mostly constrained with their beliefs, values and assumptions, the theoretical knowledge that they acquire throughout their course of study as well as what the political authorities prescribe about education and teaching. They act in the light of their beliefs and values putting into action the theoretical knowledge they learnt and the political views they are prescribed. The aim of reflective practice is thus to support a shift from routine actions rooted in common-sense thinking to reflective action stemming from professional thinking (Pollard, 2008, p.26).

It is also long-known that beginning teachers typically encounter problems in the interactive reality of teaching in spite of an excellent preparation for teaching. Upon entering the classroom, the new teacher discovers that somehow the hard-won knowledge base of subject-matter, teaching skills, educational theories and curriculum programmes still does not meet the demands of the pedagogical life in the classroom. Beginning teachers often seem to feel the tension or the poor fit between what they learnt about teaching and what they discover is required in the practice of teaching. Teacher educators have generally become quite aware that the tried "knowledge into practice" model of teacher training falls short of effective professional preparation (van Manen, 1994). Engaging in reflective practice and reflective thinking "enables us to know what we are about when we act. It converts action that is merely appetitive, blind and impulsive into intelligent action" (Dewey, 1964 cited in van Manen, 1994, p.1). Reflective thinking enables beginning

teachers to question their beliefs, to identify their weaknesses, to produce solutions and strategies and to put these into action in order to become more aware of who they are as teachers. They become more conscious of themselves; what they lack, how they can perform in certain situations by consciously thinking and evaluating their performances. A proper sequencing of such reflective steps makes up reflective experience which in turn can lead to analysis and evaluation, and then to further reflective action (van Manen, 1994).

The above discussion raises two questions as follows: “How do adults learn to be critically reflective?” and if so “Can critical reflection be taught?” Brookfield (1998 cited in Stein, 2000) identified four elements or processes central to learning to be critically reflective: assumption analysis, contextual awareness, imaginative speculation and reflective scepticism. Willis (1999, cited in Stein, 2000) also proposed three stages similar to the ones proposed by Brookfield. All these reflective processes require the ability of learners to confront their individual beliefs about a situation from different perspectives such as assumption, contextual, imaginative, dispositional and experiential. However, they did not refer to any tools which would enable learners to confront their beliefs about a situation. The questions “What tools do we currently have that may be used to help learners confront their beliefs?” and “How effective are these tools in different contexts with different students?” still remain to be answered. My aim is to attempt to develop one of those reflective tools –the portfolio - and to examine and discuss its effectiveness in my own context by implementing it with my own students.

2.1.1 Reflection as a consequence: a meaning-making process

The origins of `Reflection` can be traced back to the ideas of Dewey who is acknowledged as a key originator of the concept. 100 years ago, in his book titled as 'How We Think' (1910), John Dewey identified several modes of thought among which 'reflection' was the one in which he was most interested. In this book, he proposes some criteria that characterize his concept of reflection. In her article titled "Defining Reflection: Another Look at John Dewey and Reflective Thinking", Rodgers (2002) distilled some of these criteria under four headings which helped me in interpreting Dewey's conception of reflection. Reading from his original work and Rodger's interpretation of the concept has contributed to my understanding of the concept a great deal.

One of the basic criteria Dewey (1910) offers for reflection is that reflective thought is consecutive, not merely a sequence. He elaborates on the idea as "reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a consequence – a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each in turn leans back on its predecessors. The successive portions of the reflective thought grow out of one another and support one another; they do not come and go in a medley". (pp. 2-3) Rodgers (2002) elaborates on this criterion of Dewey defining reflection as "a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with a deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas. It is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible, and ensures the progress of the individual and, ultimately, society. It is a means to essentially moral ends" (p.845). Based on this notion of consequence, Dewey

(1910) offers five distinct phases which comprise reflection all together as: (i) a felt difficulty; (ii) its location and definition; (iii) suggestion of possible solution; (iv) development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion; (v) further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection; that is the conclusion of belief or disbelief (p.72).

'Experience' is the key notion in this meaning making process and needs to be understood very clearly in order to understand Dewey's criterion of "Reflection as a consequence". According to Dewey (1938), experience is more than simply a matter of direct participation in events. What is important in experience is that there is interaction between the person and his environment. An experience is not an experience unless it involves interaction between the self and another person, the material world, the natural world, an idea or whatever constitutes the environment at hand. Dewey also points out that because an experience means an interaction between oneself and the world, there is a change not only in the self but also in the environment as a result. The effect is dialectical with implications not just for the learner but for others and the world. Through interaction with the world, we both change it and are changed by it.

Interaction is the first important element of experience. The second is the continuity. In its narrower sense, continuity means something very close to what Piaget meant by schema building. That is, we make sense of each new experience based on the meaning gathered from our own past experiences, as well as other prior knowledge we have about the world – what we have heard

and read of others' experiences and ideas (Rodger, 2002). Dewey (1938)

writes:

What (an individual) has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue. (p.44)

He considers interaction and continuity as the x and y axes of experience.

Without interaction learning is sterile and passive, never fundamentally changing the learner. Without continuity learning is random and disconnected, building toward nothing either within the learner or in the world. Dewey claims that experiences alone, even educative ones, are not enough. What is critical is the ability to perceive and then weave meaning among the threads of experience. Experience is not primarily cognitive, Dewey further asserts. That is, an experience is not the same as thought. Rather, it is the meaning that one perceives in and then constructs from an experience that gives that experience value. An experience exists in time and is therefore linked to the past and the future. This takes us to Schön's notions of reflection in action and reflection on action. When there is a lull in the interaction or in the activity of teaching, the teacher can momentarily stop participating in and step away from the classroom situation in order to reflect on what needs to be done next and take action while 'live' in class (van Manen, 1994). Hence, the reflection in action also emphasizes that the measure of the value of an experience lies in the perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads up to. Some beginning teachers receive the strong message that they should not only be reflective in the pre-teaching and post-teaching stages but that teachers should

be constantly thinking about why and what they are doing while they are doing it; constantly considering alternatives to their aims and methods; constantly being prepared to alter course midstream; constantly taking into consideration alternative interpretations of what is going on with students socially and psychologically in their learning of subject matter in the thick of classroom action (van Manen, 1994) which all require perceiving in and constructing from an experience. Therefore, the function of reflection is to make meaning out of experiences: to formulate the relationships and continuities among the elements of an experience, between that experience and other experiences, between that experience and the knowledge that one carries, and between that knowledge and the knowledge produced by thinkers other than oneself (Rodgers, 2002). This is also explained in Piaget's notions of 'assimilation' and 'accommodation'. In order for an individual to construct their knowledge and understanding of an experience; first, they assimilate the new experience by applying an existing capability without modification to various situations. Sometimes, existing strategies or experiences do not work in new situation. In such cases, the individual modifies existing schemes to better fit new experiences (Santrock, 2001). Therefore we make sense of each new experience based on the meaning drawn from our past experiences through reorganization and reconstruction of experiences.

Therefore, in order for the student teachers to make meaning out of their experiences, they need to reflect on their experiences. They need to go into an interaction with the elements that constitutes the environment wherein the experience is taking place. Moreover, they need to link that experience both to

the past and the future; they have to perceive the continuities it is linked to and it leads up to. They need to link that experience to their past experiences and prior knowledge they have about the world by linking it to what they have heard or read of others' experiences. They need to relate it to the theoretical knowledge produced by thinkers in order to make meaning out of it and is changed by it in order to change others around. Thus, in order to enable student teachers make meaning out of their experiences, we need to encourage them to reflect on their experiences. As teacher educators, this is what we should aim at doing through our teacher training programmes and portfolio construction processes.

This characteristic of reflection as 'the consequence: meaning making process' is relevant and significant for my study because the participants in the first phase of the study reported that there is lack of continuous supervision, follow up and monitoring which has a negative impact on the construction of portfolio in steps continuously and this causes uncertainty about the quality of production. This lack of continuous follow up and monitoring leads to a lack of bridging between previous and present performances preventing the improvement of weak areas as well. Thus, the elements and related processes as well as the tasks and activities for the student teachers in a pre-service teacher education course are to be designed in such a way that enable the student teacher as well as the supervisor/cooperating teacher to make connections or build relationships with the current and former experiences. It should lead the student teacher to move from one experience into the next one with an understanding of its relationship with the former and future ones.

Therefore, this aspect of reflection sheds light upon the interaction and continuity aspects of reflection and the significance of integrating these into their teaching experiences to promote reflective thinking processes.

Copeland et al., (1993) attempted to offer what they claim to be a set of assumptions which guided their development of the critical attributes of reflection which are:

- (i) engaging in reflective practice involves a process of solving problems and reconstructing meaning;
- (ii) reflective practice in teaching is manifested as a stance towards inquiry;
- (iii) the demonstration of reflective practice is seen to exist along a continuum;
- (iv) reflective practice occurs within a social context (pp.348 – 349).

These assumptions clearly display that they consider reflection as a meaning-making process happening consecutively along a continuum because they cast reflection as an ongoing process of solving problems which requires interaction with others as stressed by Vygotsky in his social cognition view of learning.

Vygotsky asserts that individuals learn much through interactions with surrounding culture and social agents which emphasize cooperative learning. His theory has stimulated considerable interest in the view that knowledge is situated and collaborative. This suggests that knowing can best be advanced through interaction with others in cooperative activities (Santrock, 2001). This leads us to design tasks which require the collaboration and interaction of supervisor, cooperating teacher and peers during reflective practice.

Copeland et al. have developed 12 critical attributes that indicate a teacher's stance towards reflection and thus which would be present in the reflective process of a teacher, as follows:

- (i) a problem is identified;
- (ii) the problem derives from a concrete situation in practice;
- (iii) the problem, by whomever it is identified, has meaning for the practitioner;
- (iv) the problem can be said to be one of import for successful teaching/learning in the context in which it is identified;
- (v) possible solutions to the problem are generated;
- (vi) solutions are generated from or are grounded in theories, assumptions, or research findings which are explicitly held and understood by the practitioner;
- (vii) the generation of solutions engages the teacher in a critical examination of his or her own professional actions and its link to target actions in others;
- (viii) The solutions sought are expected to have positive consequences in terms of student learning;
- (ix) a solution to the problem is selected;
- (x) the chosen solution is implemented;
- (xi) the solution is weighed as to its effect on the target actions and the consequences of these effects in terms of student outcomes;
- (xii) the reflective process leads to an enhancement of the teacher's understanding used to give meaning to the professional context in

which the problem was identified. The first four attributes emphasize the importance of problem identification, the next four are related with generating solutions while the following three stress the testing of solutions in the process of reflective practice and the last one underlines the importance of learning from the reflective practice by incorporating new knowledge into the teacher's previous understanding. These attributes by Copeland et al. (1993) also emphasize that reflection involves consequence – a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome while each in turn leans back on its predecessors.

Francis (1995) developed a reflective model involving six key activities for the pre-service teachers to enable them restructure experience through reflection as follows:

- (i) framing real, specific events: selecting features to which attention will be given;
- (ii) tapping existing beliefs and values (own and others);
- (iii) collaborative questioning of assumptions in relation to goals and beliefs;
- (iv) identification of social, political, cultural constraints and/or facilitators;
- (v) collaborative generation of alternatives;
- (vi) anticipation of short and long term consequences.

Francis also emphasized the importance of a problem/issue (selection of features to which attention will be given) which is worth considering; which has a meaning for the practitioner. Similar to the processes developed by Copeland et al., the issue has to derive from a concrete situation in practice (framing real, specific events). Another step required from the practitioner is to make use of the existing beliefs and values of oneself and others on the way producing solutions which is also present in Copeland et al.'s model. They suggest that solutions are grounded in theories, assumptions or research findings. Both have a stage of generation of alternatives/solutions, though the model by Francis stresses it to be collaborative which takes us to Vygotskian view of social cognition in teacher learning; that learning can best be advanced through interaction with others in cooperative activities. Both models require that the consequences of solutions are weighed and anticipated as to their effects in terms of student outcomes. This model by Francis also casts reflection as a consequence – a consecutive ordering of experiences each determining the next as its proper outcome.

Handal (1990, cited in Day, 1993) claimed that teachers have to formulate and develop their own personal practical theory, have the skills necessary to do this and the skills to share them with others. He split the concept of 'reflective practice' into three hierarchical levels under the name of Practical theory as Actions Level (P1), Practical and Theoretical Level (P2) and Ethical Justifications Level (P3) in leading teachers to construct their personal practical theories. According to the research he conducted, teachers are usually at the level of action planning what to do, when to do it and how to do it. Citing from

Carr and Kemmis' s action research planning cycle of planning- acting, observing and reflecting – Handal concluded that at schools an incomplete 'self-reflective' spiral is encouraged. In most situations, teachers spend most of their time planning and acting (constructing practice) at the P1 level and spend less on observation and reflection (deconstructing experience).

According to Smyth (1991 cited in Day, 1993), in order to develop and sustain a critical form of teaching; teachers need to be concerned with four processes as given below. Francis (1995) also interpreted Smyth's stages for personal and professional empowerment by adding the fifth dimension to emphasize the importance of action in reflection:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 1. DESCRIBING | WHAT DO I DO? Detailed observational description without judgment |
| 2. INFORMING | WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? Search for patterns or principles underpinning the described practice |
| 3. CONFRONTING | HOW DID I COME TO BE THIS WAY?
Examination of the broad historical, social and cultural context |
| 4. RECONSTRUCTING | HOW MIGHT I VIEW/DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY?
Consideration of alternative views and generation of goals for future critical action |
| 5. CHALLENGING | TAKING ACTION |

In both Handal's three and Smyth's four stages, reflection seemed to be the central part of the learning cycle. Day (1993) argued that in reflecting upon action, the teacher-researcher focuses, observes, selects, synthesises and interprets. Griffiths and Tann (1991 cited in Day, 1993) observed that "reflection relies on ability to uncover one's own personal theories and make them explicit". There is very little research on ways of uncovering and making explicit the personal theories that frame the issues for reflection. Griffiths and Tann (1991 cited in Day, 1993) identified a 'five level' model of reflective practice as follows:

1. rapid reaction (instinctive, immediate);
2. repair (habitual, pause for thought, fast, on the spot);
3. review (time-out to re-assess, over hours or days)
4. research (systematic, sharply focused, over weeks or months)
5. re-theorise and re-formulate (abstract, rigorous, clearly formulated, over months or years)

According to Handal's, Smyth's and Griffiths & Tann's models for reflective practice, reflection is also considered to be in a consecutive ordering in such a way that each stage or level determines the next as its proper outcome, while in turn leaning back on its predecessors. The successive portions of the reflective thought grow out of one another and support one another. These authors all consider it as a meaning-making process and the stages offered are designed in such a way as to help the teacher formulate the relationships and continuities among the elements of an experience, between that experience and other experiences, between that experience and the knowledge one carries, and

between that knowledge and the knowledge produced by thinkers other than oneself. This is to help the teacher form a solid foundation for the critical examination and analysis of one's experience in terms of one's own assumptions and existing assumptions other than the self and for the consideration of alternative views and generation of actions to be taken for the reformulation and reconstruction of the personal theories. They all emphasize that reflective practice should be taken for the reformulation of actions to be taken which in turn will lead to the reconstruction of personal practical theories. Copeland et al.'s (1993) assumptions also stress that engaging in reflective practice involves a process of problem solving which leads to reconstructing meaning. They indicate that reflective teachers not only perceive and define problems and generate and apply solutions, but that they also use this process to modify and enhance their understanding of professional practice. As a result of confronting problems, their understanding is reconstructed.

All the above mentioned cycles of reflection are significant to my study because they all represent different models/processes about how student teachers can be guided in thinking reflectively and suggest alternative ways through which activities or processes they can be guided to provide continuity in learning by helping them make meaning out of their experiences.

2.1.2 Reflection as a systematic, rigorous and disciplined way of thinking

Based on Rodgers' interpretation (2002), another criterion of Dewey's reflection is that "reflection is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking, with its roots in scientific inquiry" (p.845). According to Dewey (1910), reflection is a

particular way of thinking and can not be equated with mere haphazard 'mulling over' something. Such thinking, in contrast to reflection, is, in a word, undisciplined. Reflective thought, in contrast, comprises "definite units that are linked together so that there is a sustained movement to a common end" (p.5)

Reflection, in contrast to acceptance of conventional belief, constitutes "*active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends*" (Dewey, 1910, italics in original, p.6). In other words, it requires a systematic, rigorous and disciplined way of thinking. To sustain this system and discipline, he claims two certain sub-processes which are required in every reflective operation. These are: (a) a state of perplexity, hesitation, doubt; and (b) an act of search or investigation directed toward bringing to light further facts which serve to corroborate or to nullify the suggested belief (p.9). That is, reflection begins when an individual is perplexed or uncertain about an idea or situation and ends with a judgment. In between the person carries out an active exploration, including the identification of the nature of the problem, the generation of several potential solutions, and a means-ends analysis of the alternatives. The most important aspect of Dewey's theory supporting this systematic and disciplined way of thinking is *the notion of grounded belief*. Reflection thus implies that something is believed in (or disbelieved), not on its own direct account, but through something else which stands as witness, evidence, proof, voucher, warrant; that is, as ground of belief (p.8). For the purposes of this inquiry, Dewey (1910) defined thinking accordingly as

that operation in which present facts suggest other facts (or

truths) in such a way as to induce belief in the latter upon the ground or warrant of the former” (pp.8-9).

Such thought processes require an “attitude of suspended conclusion” (1910, p.13) which means one must never accept suggestions uncritically and must always suspend judgment during the necessary period of inquiry. The definition by Kemmis (1985) is noteworthy because it emphasizes the element of interaction and this notion of suspended judgment by Dewey:

Reflection is a dialectical process; it looks inward at our thoughts and thought processes, and outward at the situation in which we find ourselves; when we consider the interaction of the internal and the external, our reflection orients us for further thought and action. Reflection is thus ‘meta-thinking’ (thinking about thinking) in which we consider the relationship between our thoughts and action in a particular context... We pause to reflect because some issues arise which demand that we stop and take stock and consider before we act. We do so because the situation we are in requires consideration: how we act in it is a matter of some significance. We become aware of ourselves, in some small or large ways, as agents of history. (p.141)

According to Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) “reflection in the context of learning is a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations” (p.19). They emphasize the importance of consciousness in the process which is again through the period of suspended judgment. In order for experiences to lead to new understandings, they believe these ideas must be brought to consciousness and be grounded before one can be an active decision maker.

Loughran (2002; 2006) also emphasizes this notion of ‘suspended judgment’ naming it differently as ‘framing and reframing’, borrowing the idea from Schön

(1983; 1987). Loughran claims that seeing the same event from different perspectives is the essence of framing and reframing. He considers it as a most important aspect of reflective practice as it influences the subsequent actions in practice. He argues that a problem is unlikely to be acted on if it is not viewed as a problem. This ability of framing and reframing helps student teachers develop a range of ways of seeing a problem. He adds that they offer ways of considering how alternative perspectives might be developed and, importantly, create possibilities for challenging one's taken-for-granted assumptions. Chak (2006) points out that 'framing and reframing' is possible through 'distancing' the individual self from the situation. It is like the image of a person simultaneously splitting into two roles: self-in-action and self-as-observer, with the observer at a distance looking at the self in the momentary situation. This is a strategy which enables the practicing teacher to look at his/her performance like a third person observing oneself in action and brings awareness and a different perspective to one's teaching creating different opportunities for the self to challenge his/her existing beliefs and assumptions. By distancing himself/herself, the teacher has a chance to reframe his/her teaching with different alternatives in mind.

In his book on 'How We Think', Dewey (1910) proposes five logically distinct steps in reflection: (i) a felt difficulty; (ii) its location and definition; (iii) suggestion of possible solution; (iv) development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion; (v) further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection; that is, the conclusion of belief or disbelief (p.72). Kolb (1984) offers a similar cycle for his experiential learning model which is as

follows: (i) concrete experience; (ii) reflective observation; (iii) abstract conceptualization; (iv) active experimentation. This learning cycle involves four processes that must be present for learning and places 'experience' in the centre as the source of learning and development. According to Kolb (1984) "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping experience and transforming it" (p.41).

In his book 'Democracy and Education' (1916/1944) Dewey writes of five slightly different phases; however, he does make it clear that a reflective thinker moves deliberately from the data of the experience to formulating a theory, to testing his theory about the experience (Rodgers, 2002). His insistence on depicting reflection consisting of phases is to emphasize that reflection is a systematic, rigorous and disciplined activity which is to occur in a consecutive order over a period of time. Below, I attempt to provide an elaboration of his steps:

- A felt difficulty

(The occurrence of a problem: the perplexity or problem)

The impulse to reflect is generated by an encounter with, and the conscious perception of, the potential significance inherent in an experience. The process of reflection, Dewey claims, (1916/1944) moves the learner from a disturbing state of perplexity (also referred to by him as disequilibrium) to a harmonious state of settled-ness (equilibrium). Perplexity is created when an individual encounters a situation whose "whole full character is not yet determined". That

is, the meaning of the experience has not yet been fully established. The internal experience for the learner is one of disequilibrium and unsettledness. It is a yearning for balance that in turn drives the learner to do something to resolve it – namely, to start the process of inquiry, or reflection. An additional source of motivation for reflection is curiosity, without which there is little energy for the hard work of reflection: “Until we understand, we are, if we have curiosity, troubled, baffled, and hence moved to inquire” (Dewey, 1933, p.132). Rodgers (2002) claims that as soon as one is in an experience, as well as after an experience, spontaneous interpretation of what is going on follows. Ideas would possibly leap to mind which would lead to an action. Dewey (1933) argues that basing our action on a spontaneous interpretation of the experience could be inappropriate, or even a harmful, one because interpretations are subject to “the person’s own preferences, desires, interests, or even his immediate state of passion” (p.96). It requires discipline and patience because time to reflect is essential. There is a need to slow down the interval between thought and action in this phase of reflection, especially with the novice. This leads us to the second step which is the location and definition of the problem.

- Its location and definition

(Definition of the difficulty)

In cases of unusual perplexity, the difficulty might present itself at first as a shock, as emotional disturbance, as a more or less vague feeling of the unexpected, of something strange, ‘funny’ or disconcerting. In such instances, there are necessary observations deliberately calculated to bring to light just what is the trouble, or to make clear the specific character of the problem.

Dewey calls this process of thought intellectualization or locating the problem. This is not a casual process but a systematic and disciplined one that demands that the individual should continually ground his or her thinking in evidence and not overlook important data that may not fit his or her evolving ideas. The discipline of description as distinct from interpretation can bring these facts to light. This phase also demands that the student teacher align those data and the questions he or she poses – that is, is the question relevant to the data, the text of one's experience? Is there, in other words, integrity to the inquiry process?

Rodgers (2002) defines this step and the preceding one as phases of observation and description of the experience. She compares this process of distancing of the problem to getting enough distance to backing away from a painting to see the whole picture. She argues that one's first emotional reaction, along with the visible facts of an experience, becomes an object of thought. This starts the process of intellectualizing what at first is merely an emotional quality of the whole picture. This leads to the formulation of the problem which is the most challenging aspect of reflection. The formulation of the problem by the student teacher depends directly on the completeness and complexity of the data or description that s/he has gathered and generated. Therefore the tasks of reflection teacher educators assign to student teachers are expected to contribute to the student teacher's ability to observe, pay attention, perceive and be open to all that is happening and has happened in the classroom.

- Suggestion of possible solution
(Generating possible explanations)

Suggestion is the first phase of the analysis. It is the very heart of inference; it involves going from what is present to something absent (Dewey, 1910, p.75). In this phase the individual returns to the suggestions that arose in step 2, either refining them so they are more like probabilities or rejecting them as improbable. Since the suggested solution is not accepted so far, it only tentatively constitutes an idea which Dewey calls 'hypothesis' (p.75). Since this period of suspended belief depends partly on the presence of opponent suppositions or probable evidences to favour, the generation of a variety of alternative suggestions is an important factor in good thinking (Dewey, 1910, p.75).

Stein (2000) argues that critical reflection blends learning through experience with theoretical and technical learning to form new knowledge constructions and new behaviours or insights. Learning to be a reflective practitioner includes not only acquiring technical expertise, but also the ability to engage in dynamic professional relationships with peers, the supervisor and the cooperating teachers and to establish meaningful connections between theory and practice, providing a rationale for action (Orland-Barak, 2005). The characteristic emphasized in all these definitions is the ability to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical experience in order to provide a foundation for action.

- Development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion (the rational elaboration of an idea)

Acceptance of the suggestion in its first form is prevented by looking into it more thoroughly (Dewey, 1910, p.76). Reconstructing or reorganizing experience means more than just taking swipes at the obvious elements of an

experience. It means spending enough time with the data of an experience, with the texture, density and grain of it, so that it can emerge in all its complexity. What might have been a reaction based on a simple-minded analysis (step 3) is thus transformed into a possible reflective response based on a full knowledge of its ramifications. This step provides a platform of reason and understanding from which one can take the next step, intelligent action.

- Further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection; that is, the conclusion of belief or disbelief (corroboration of an idea and formation of a concluding belief)

Most of the authors who write about reflection will often stop before this point, forgetting that for Dewey, reflection comes full circle only if action is taken. Dewey considers reflection as cyclical which requires one to take an intelligent and qualitatively different action from routine one because of the thought that has preceded it. He makes it clear that the action one takes is not definitive; that, it is an experiment, a testing of one's theories, hypotheses. This is what makes the reflective process a cyclical one; the testing becomes the next experience, and experiment and experience becomes synonymous. This final phase of reflection is the one that offers the possibility of settled-ness, a resolution to the disequilibrium; which, in Piagetian terms, is the foregoing force before the completion of the adaptation process without which learning never takes place. One finally feels that the meaning one has ascribed to an experience fits, makes sense, and can be relied on in future experiences. Once one has tested one's theories in action, it is very probable that more questions, more problems, more ideas arise.

This criterion that reflection is a systematic, rigorous and disciplined way of thinking is significant because the idea here is closely associated with the findings of the study in the first phase. Participants in the first phase of the study stated that there was a lack of continuous monitoring and follow up and no discipline in submitting the components or conducting the processes such as feedback sessions. This lack of discipline and system had a negative impact in terms of enabling them follow up their own progress and improve their weak areas. They also reported that there was a lack of depth, diversity and perspective in the components they produced and processes they conducted while constructing their portfolios. This key characteristic of reflection claims that reflection is a systematic, rigorous and disciplined way of thinking suggesting ways, phases and different notions from different scholars and researchers regarding how thinking can be made disciplined, rigorous and systematic to transform it into reflective thinking.

2.1.3 Reflection as a way of taking action to construct personal theories and as a way of constructing personal theories that guide actions

Schön (1983; 1987) elaborates on the notion of `reflection` as a way in which teachers construct the meanings and knowledge that guide their action underlying the value of the professional knowledge embedded in teachers' own interpretations of their experience rather than "technical rationality" based on theory (Francis, 1995). According to Schön, teachers, like other practitioners, do not apply theories, but construct them from their practice, through an active dialogue with the materials which constitute their field of action. Schön's reflection is bound up with action. Rather than attempting to apply scientific

theories and concepts to practical situations, he holds that professionals should learn to frame and reframe the often complex and ambiguous problems they are facing, test out various interpretations, then modify their actions as a result (Hatton and Smith, 1994). His arguments for reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action provide us with a perspective which values teachers' constructs, implicit theories and strategies for action.

Both of his forms of reflection involve demanding rational and moral processes in making reasoned judgements about preferable ways to act. His reflection-in-action implies conscious thinking and modification while on the job – “thinking on your feet” and “keeping your wits about you”. It suggests not only that “we can think about doing something but that we can think about something while doing it” (Schön, 1983 cited in Manen, p.34). It involves simultaneous reflecting and doing, implying that the professional has reached a stage of competence where he or she is able to think consciously about what is taking place and modify actions instantaneously (Hatton and Smith, 1994). His reflection-on-action involves contemplation taken after the practice is completed – looking back upon action some time after it has taken place. Schön uses the word ‘action’ however, in a different sense than Dewey. He uses it to mean ‘the actual teaching practice of the teacher’ – the teaching experience of the teacher. He refers to conscious thinking and modification while on the job or contemplation taken after the practice is completed for modification of the practice/experience again. Both forms of his reflection involve taking action to modify practice and construct personal theories. Dewey also spoke of ‘reflective action’; however, he uses it for the final end-product of an active and

deliberative cognitive process over the solution of the problem or the felt difficulty experienced by the individual. He spoke of reflective action addressing the implementation of solutions once problems had been thought through. Most of the proposed reflective processes are concerned with the complete cycle of professional doing coupled with reflection which then leads to modified action (Noeffke & Brennan, 1998; Gore and Zeichner, 1984 cited in Hatton & Smith, 1998).

For Dewey, reflective action is bound up with persistent and careful consideration of practice in the light of knowledge and beliefs so reflective thinking seems to gain more emphasis over reflective action. Dewey puts the emphasis on *'thinking about action'* in the sense of *'thinking about the experience'* since his process of reflective inquiry requires analyzing current experiences in the context of prior knowledge to find their meaning and significance and an elaboration of the hypothesis before deciding on a plan of action and taking an action. Thinking about action provides insights in terms of a clearer understanding of the relationships between what took place, the purposes intended and difficulties which arose viewed within broader cultural or professional perspectives. Those who claim that for Dewey, reflective thought is more important than action, fail to see that action is one of the elements of his reflective cycle. For him, reflection must include action; however, he does not see it as definitive but rather as an experiment; a testing of one's theories. Kolb's (1984) learning cycle from his experiential learning model also includes 'action' in the form of 'active experimentation' as the fourth stage which evolves from concrete experience, reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation

which does not provide; however, for the desirable reflective generation of professional knowledge which in essence problematises a given situation.

Action, in Dewey, is taken for a possibility of settledness, which he considers a resolution to the disequilibrium. In other words, it is implied in his theory that problem solving is also an aspect of reflective practice. Since he considers it as a possibility for settled-ness and a way of solving practical problems; he argues that the consequent action to be taken has to be 'intelligent' and "qualitatively different from routine action" because this is going to lead to the conclusion of belief or disbelief resulting in the reconstruction of the personal theory. This explains the reason why he puts so much emphasis on the thought (suspended judgement) that precedes it. Copeland et al. (1993) also underlines the importance and necessity of problem solving and personal theory build up for reflective teaching through their assumptions "engaging in reflective practice involves a process of solving problems and reconstructing meaning" (p.348). In order for the student teacher to reconstruct his/her meaning, s/he needs to go through the process of solving problems by taking action on the basis of alternative solution.

By encouraging student teachers to elicit and articulate their personal theories it allows access to their ways of conceptualizing teaching, learning and the curriculum. Goodman (1984) argues that we need to engage with these personal theories so that students can be aware of their own interpretive frameworks and be able to contrast theirs with both their peers and colleagues as well as with those educationalists who offer their personal theories publicly

through publication or lecturing. In this way it may be possible to encourage students to 'connect' with alternative theories, to juxtapose personal and public theory and expand or clarify their own through the challenge of comparison and contrast and thus to overcome the 'limitations of experience' (Zeichner and Liston, 1987). I believe that engaging student teachers with the process of writing 'Progressive Reflective Reports', may enable them to articulate and then examine their common-sense hunches, so they can engage in theorizing by identifying their rationale, making their reasoning explicit, exploring alternatives through problematising and hypothesizing, extracting general principles and be ready to test reformulations against future practice. All these features can be considered to contribute towards becoming a reflective practitioner (Tann cited in Calderhead and Gates, 1993).

Handal (1990), Smyth (1991), Griffith and Tann (1991) also emphasize that reflective practice should be taken for the reformulation of actions which in turn will lead to the reconstruction of personal practical theories

Teachers are expected to leave their role of being a 'technician' behind and stop serving the needs of the authorities and the politicians. Educators need to encourage teachers to develop professionalism because teaching is overwhelmed with uncertainty, and attended by ambiguity. Pre-service teachers need to develop the attitudes, skills and confidence to frame their own agendas, use their puzzlement to drive useful inquiry, and to influence policy and educational thinking beyond the classroom context. They need to develop a voice. I believe that this criterion of 'taking action to construct personal theories'

is significant in changing the role of the teacher from being a technician to the role of being a reflective teacher. We should encourage individual construction of knowledge by guiding student teachers to take action to construct their own theories and to construct personal theories which will guide their own actions. In the portfolio construction tool I intend to develop, I will attempt to encourage the student teachers to put their solutions into action to observe how things work in their own classrooms and to support them construct their personal theories which will help them clarify the uncertainties and ambiguities they confront in everyday classroom.

2.1.4 Reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with others

Dewey claimed that just to think without ever having to express what one thought is an incomplete act. He indicated that having to express oneself to others discloses both the strengths and the holes in one's thinking so that others can truly understand one's ideas. He points out to the importance and benefits of sharing experience with others to help the individual grow reflectively:

....One has to assimilate, imaginatively, something of another's experience in order to tell him intelligently of one's own experience. ... A man really living alone (alone mentally as well as physically) would have little or no occasion to reflect upon his past experience to extract its net meaning. (1916/1944, p.6)

He also stated that 'the act of sharing' broadens one's field of experience:

In so far as we are partners in common undertakings, the things which others communicate to us as the consequences of their particular share in the enterprise blend at once into the experience resulting from our own special doing. (1916/1944, p.186)

Rodgers (2002) identified at least three factors that highlight the benefits of collaborative reflection: 1) affirmation of the value of one's experience: In isolation what matters can be too easily dismissed as unimportant; 2) seeing things "newly": Others offer alternative meanings, broadening the field of understanding; 3) support to engage in the process of inquiry: The self-discipline required for the kind of reflection that Dewey advocates, especially given the overwhelming demands of a teacher's day, is difficult to sustain alone. When one is accountable to a group, one feels a responsibility toward others that is more compelling than the responsibility we feel to only ourselves. As Rodgers have pointed out, it is beneficial for the student teachers to provide them with conditions in which they will reflect collaboratively on their experiences. Richert (1987), for instance, found that the content of reflection varied when students reflected with and without partner-observers and with and without artifactual records of their teaching. Bolin (1987) found that reflective journals helped to shape student thinking only when the supervisory feedback was tailored to the thinking processes and content of the individual writer. The conditions under which reflection is supposed to occur make a difference; structural features matter because a kind of framework or criteria such as guiding questions or checklists are required to guide student teachers to carry out reflective practice. Some have proposed that reflective thinking can be promoted in a group setting (Applegate & Shaklee, 1992; Hullfish & Smith, 1961; Kemmis, 1985; McCaleb, Borko, & Arends, 1992; Oja, Diller, Corcoran, & Andrew, 1992; Schön, 1983; Zeichner and Liston, 1987). If designed and implemented appropriately, these group sessions are meant to enhance reflectivity by bringing more minds and multiple perspectives to bear on

educational issues and by forcing individuals to bring to the surface and articulate to others their own ideas and reasoning processes. This is also proposed in Vygotsky's Social Cognition Theory that knowledge is situated and collaborative. His theory emphasizes the social contexts of learning and that knowledge is mutually built and constructed. He states that individuals construct knowledge through social interaction with others; that we should establish many opportunities for students to learn with the teacher and more-skilled peers (Santrock, 2001).

Another frequently recommended interactive process in reflective teacher education is one-on-one conferencing with a supervisor, colleague, peer, or "coach". (Laboskey, 1994, p.14-15) Most suggest that the partner needs to be supportive and skilful in detecting and fostering the skills of reflection. This takes us back to Vygotsky's (cited in Santrock, 2001) scaffolding technique through which a more skilled person (supervisor, partner as a peer or the cooperating teacher) provides support during collaborative feedback sessions. Similarly, Tanner et al. (2000) indicated that more individual supervision of the trainees during pre-service teacher education course will help to improve reflection suggesting that a small number of trainees get together and discuss regularly their themes in progress with a teacher educator. They believe these meetings will help trainees improve their depth of reflection and choice of appropriate themes helping them focus more precisely on available resources and make more explicit links between theory and practice. A composite picture of the various proposals seem to favour a safe environment for such collaborative sessions, preferably over a long period of time, in which the two

can frame and reframe interpretations of classroom events witnessed by both. The aims of these interactions can be for student teachers to increase their pedagogical knowledge and/or to improve their ability to reflect on their own (Laboskey, 1994).

Francis (1995) attempted to model both the collaborative approach to learning and a respect for individual construction of knowledge which includes critical challenge. Her work indicates that individual reflection is enhanced by group and paired collaboration. Along with collaboration, s/he introduced the notion of 'critical friend', asking pre-service teachers to think of themselves as 'critical friends' to one another. Francis reports that articulating to others helps shape and clarify ideas. The group has more resources to call on than do individuals. This can stimulate reconstruction of existing beliefs and, when trust and mutual support are held at a premium, pre-service teachers are more likely to risk expressing partly formed ideas, questions, lack of understanding and challenge to fellow learners (including lecturers) in the small group context. Francis observes that the process of sharing develops confidence in oneself as a learner and the positive reaction of peers contributes to valuing of personal experience and confidence in capacity to generate knowledge. Barocsi (2006) also reported that cooperative learning promotes confidence and security. Tanner et al., (2000) also underline the importance of collegiality among trainees in enhancing reflection among student teachers. They suggest that trainees are stimulated to work more formally together as their portfolios take shape and to become more constructively critical of each other's work.

In addition to the above mentioned benefits of collaboration for the promotion of reflective thinking skills, I also consider this characteristic of collaboration significant and intend to integrate it into the new portfolio construction tool because participants in the first phase underlined the importance of feedback and guidance; the importance and lack of multiple perspectives in guidance and the importance/necessity of peers in observations and discussions with their experiences of the previous portfolio.

2.1.5 Reflection as a set of attitudes: Reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others

Most of the student teachers indicated that they had difficult times or experienced some critical incidents which stimulated negative emotions either during their teaching or during the pre-and post-teaching sessions. As a result of these they were stressed, worried or unhappy but they could not express their feelings in the portfolio. When they experienced critical incidents in class or when they were demotivated or discouraged due to some external factors or had a lack of communication with their cooperating teachers, they wanted to express their feelings either in writing or by sharing them orally but they were not given the opportunity for that.

To speak of reflection as solely an intellectual part of human beings, is to fail to see the role that '*affect*' plays in learning. Dewey was quite aware of what educators call the affective dimension of learning and underlined its importance in learning as follows:

Human beings are not normally divided into two parts, the one emotional, the other coldly intellectual – the one matter of fact, the other

imaginative. The split does, indeed, often get established, but that is always because of false methods of education. Natively and normally the personality works as a whole. There is no integration of character and mind unless there is fusion of the intellectual and the emotional, of meaning and value, of fact and imaginative running beyond fact into the realm of desired possibilities. (Dewey, 1933, p.278)

Dewey believed that the attitudes the individual brought to bear on the act of reflection could either open the way to learning or block it. He argued that awareness of our attitudes and emotions, and the discipline to harness them and use them to our advantage, is part of the work of a good thinker. He recognized the tendency in all human beings to see what we wish were true, or what we fear is true, rather than to accept what evidence tells us is so. There are also those of us who tend to believe the worst – that which we fear most. When desire, fear, need, or other strong emotions direct the course of inquiry, we tend to acknowledge only the evidence that reinforces that premise, causing learning to become tightly confined. In contrast, reflection that is guided by whole-heartedness, directness, open-mindedness and responsibility, though more difficult, stands a much better chance of broadening one's field of knowledge and awareness. Of course, one is seldom wholly open-minded, whole hearted and so forth, or wholly fearful or needy. We are usually a combination of many of these.

Dewey was very aware that reflective work and especially work in reflective communities demanded particular attitudes. Below, I explore how the attitudes Dewey proposed – whole-heartedness, directness, open-mindedness, responsibility and readiness tend to affect the reflective process.

2.1.5.1 Whole-heartedness

Whole-heartedness indicates a genuine enthusiasm about one's subject matter. Curiosity about and enthusiasm for that subject matter is essential to good teaching. Without them a teacher has no energy, no fuel, to carry out reflective inquiry – much less teaching itself. This kind of total engagement is what Dewey meant by whole-heartedness. Without whole heartedness, there exists indifference, and the energy to observe and gather information about learners and their learning, one's teaching and so forth is not there. It is therefore essential to reflective thinking.

The implications of whole-heartedness are also well-articulated by Goodman (1991):

This attitude gives individuals the strength to move beyond abstract notions and put their ideals into practice. Many pre-service teachers express fears of making mistakes, being criticized, disturbing traditions and making changes. These fears often prevent them from acting within a given classroom or school. However, as previously mentioned, one cannot be truly reflective unless she or he is willing to take risks and act. Wholeheartedness enables pre-service teachers to work through their fears and insecurities, and thus provide a basis for action. (p.59)

Most of the student teachers interviewed expressed their feelings, emotions, worries, disappointments upon experiencing certain critical incidents in the classes they have taught and their feelings originating from lack of communication with their cooperating teachers. They criticized the fact that there was not any report, task or meeting which would enable them to express and share their feelings, worries, fears. They could not express their emotional states and the difficulties throughout the programme. So I consider this as a weakness of the portfolio construction processes and as Dewey suggested that

the attitudes the individual brought to bear on the act of their experiences could either open the way to learning or block it. Therefore, not being able to express their emotional states might block student teachers way to reflecting on their experiences and limit their awareness of themselves. It might also lessen their enthusiasm and energy to carry on with the practice teaching programme.

2.1.5.2 Open-mindedness

Dewey considers open-mindedness as 'hospitality' to new ways of seeing and understanding. Open-mindedness means the individual would not accept all ideas blindly without intelligent critique. In his words, open-mindedness is an "active desire to listen to more sides than one; to give heed to the facts from whatever source they come; to give full attention to alternative possibilities; and to recognize the possibility of error even in the beliefs dearest to us" (1933, p.30) In other words, it means a willingness to entertain different perspectives, coupled with an acceptance of the possibility of error even in the beliefs that we favour a lot and acknowledgement of the limitations of one's own perspective. Goodman (1991) supports this notion of open-mindedness by indicating that pre-service teachers need to "examine the rationales that underlie what they and others may initially take for granted as right and natural in schools" (p.59). This notion of open-mindedness indicates that student teachers should be encouraged to be open to criticism of their ideas, beliefs and performances and that they must keep their beliefs and values ever open to reconsideration. That student teachers should be open to alternative points-of-view, perspectives, outlooks, biases, orientations. We can achieve this attitude of open-mindedness in student teachers through demanding evidences and support from theoretical

knowledge and empirical research. They will also have pre-and post-teaching meetings, supervisory feedback seminars, peer feedback sessions systematically and continuously to make them be open to different ideas, perspectives, points of view and outlooks from different people.

2.1.5.3 Responsibility

Responsibility is the act of asking and questioning “what are the real-life implications of my thinking?” It means that reflective teachers must consider long range-goals as well as immediate issues. They must be willing to acknowledge that their decisions and actions have an effect on the future, but that any future is not acceptable. Dewey (1933) wrote that to be intellectually responsible:

is to consider the consequences of a projected step; it means to be willing to adopt these consequences when they follow reasonably from any position already taken...(Learners must ask) for the meaning of what they learn, in the sense of what difference it makes to the rest of their beliefs and to their actions (p.32)

In other words, being responsible means to dare to take decision upon soundly grounded beliefs and experiences, and then to take the risk of putting these decisions into action to see the consequences of them on the teaching and learning processes. At the end of this, the one should be willing to acknowledge the effect of this action on his/her beliefs to perceive the difference it makes to the rest of his beliefs and actions.

2.1.6 The importance of emotions for cognition and action: for reflection

Dewey is not the only one who emphasized the importance of emotions on cognition and action. Researchers like Clandinin (1985); Liston & Zeichner (1990); Noordhoff & Kleinfeld (1990); Richert (1992) remind us of the important role emotions and emotional states can play in reflective thinking and also in learning to teach. Theoretical and empirical work on the psychology of emotions has long argued for a connection between cognition and human emotions (Frijda, 1987; Leventhal & Scherer, 1987; Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 1987; Schulman & Carey, 1984 cited in Laboskey, 1994). Izard (1977) gives emotion a central function in the thoughts and deeds of the individual. He sees “the emotions as the chief determinants of the quality of life and as the main provider of blueprints for cognition and action”. He suggests that the emotional process is initiated first and then the cognitive system comes very quickly into play. The two systems interact to oppose or complement each other. “In either case emotion alters perception and cognition. It is proposed that certain emotion states deautomatize or otherwise alter the structures or contents of consciousness in such a way as to preclude cognitive processes as they usually operate” (Izard, 1977). The balance between the two systems helps to determine the effective functioning of the person, but optimal balance is not a fixed commodity – it varies with and is determined by the particular social context. Thus it is not only initial emotional states that are important; their changes must also be acknowledged and monitored (Laboskey, 1994). Many emotion theorists suggest that emotions not only influence motivation, they ‘constitute the primary motivational system for human beings’ (Izard, 1977).

Hence, an understanding of student teachers' emotional states and traits becomes critical to reflective teacher education.

2.2 Reflection and its significance in Teacher Education

2.2.1 Why do teacher educators choose to include 'reflection' in their educational programmes?

Changing times lead to changing needs in society and hence in education. Changing needs in education brings with itself interpretation, processing and use of knowledge in a different way along with different skills and attitudes since the existing knowledge/strategies or the current schemas as described by Piaget (1952) does not meet the demands of the new educational environments. Within this context of change, learning according to cognitive and social constructivists (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1960 cited in Santrock, 2001; Glasersfeld, 1989; Schön, 1987; Stenhouse, 1975 cited in Keiny 1994) is considered to be an active process wherein students actively discover and construct meaning; associate and link information with existing knowledge in meaningful ways; think reflectively, critically and creatively, develop self-monitoring skills, and apply what they learn to real-world situations.

The changing approaches to knowledge as well as to the demands of the new society point to new directions in teacher education as well. Professional teacher education and training was first based on the craft (apprenticeship) model – the young trainee learning by imitating the expert's techniques and by following the expert's instructions and advice (Wallace, 1991). However, this began not to meet the demands of the profession since it satisfied essentially

the needs of a static society. In this model, student teachers apply what they observe and what they are told by the master teacher; it is based on experiences on the job. Behaviour modification takes place taking the teacher as a role model without analysis, evaluation and criticism. As John Dewey (1933) argued: `We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience` (p.74), that is, the experience alone does not lead to learning. It is the reflection on the experience that enhances learning.

Following the craft model was `the applied science model` through which the findings of scientific knowledge and experimentation are conveyed to the trainees by those who are experts in the relevant areas. It is up to the trainees to put the conclusions from these scientific findings into practice. If the trainees fail, it is perhaps because they have not understood the findings properly, or because they have not properly applied the findings (Wallace, 1991). This model alone has not been helpful for the trainees either because development in the professional science brings about changes in the practice element as well; however, the scientific knowledge or the experimental bases practitioners have are not sufficient to establish these changes; so they remain confused. In the article by Max van Manen titled `On the Epistemology of Reflective Practice`, the example is given that a novice teacher with an excellent pedagogical preparation might still encounter a great frustration upon experiencing the interactive reality of the classroom. The novice teacher realizes that the hard-won knowledge base of subject matter, teaching skills, educational theories, and the curriculum programs still does not fit the demands of the pedagogical life in the classroom. It is at this point when the importance

of 'reflective practice' is perceived. A teacher who is trained to be a reflective practitioner would know that s/he needs to question the effectiveness of his /her teaching practices and look for ways of refining his/her teaching strategies to meet the needs of the students and the dynamic nature of the particular classroom. It has been acknowledged that learning to teach cannot be achieved only through subject-matter knowledge but involves 'learning to reflect on teaching in a characteristically systematic way' (Moran and Dallat, 1995). This continuing concern with the teacher education recurrently leads educationalists to argue for alternative approaches to the preparation of teaching and for variable conceptions of the role of the teachers. Over the past two decades, reflection and reflective practice have been regarded as standards towards which teachers and teacher educators must strive (Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Laboskey, 1994; Rodgers, 2002). The NBPTS's fourth proposition of accomplished teaching exemplifies many of these standards: "Teachers must be able to think systematically about their practice and learn from experience. They must be able to critically examine their practice, seek the advice of others and draw on educational research to deepen their knowledge, sharpen their judgment".

Dewey (1910/1916) and Schön (1983,1987) argued that teachers needed to see themselves as more than classroom 'technicians' and should move beyond the goal of 'technical rationality' towards being a 'reflective teacher'. Dewey (1910/1916) differentiated routine action from reflective action defining reflection as an "*active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the*

further conclusions to which it tends" (italics in original, p.6). Dewey understood the implications of depriving teachers of this cycle of reflection. He frequently referred to the intellectual dependency teachers have on other authorities (e.g., school boards, textbook publishers, principals, superintendents) to make their decisions for them. In 1904, Dewey criticized:

the willingness of our teaching corps to accept without inquiry or criticism any method or device which seems to promise good results. Teachers.... flock to those persons who give them clear-cut and definite instructions as to just to teach this or that. (p.152)

He consistently cites the need to develop teachers' professionalism. Such professionalism, he argued, grows out of a scientific (reflective) approach to education. As with any learner, teachers who are given a chance to reflect systematically on their experience can come to an understanding of what their students do and why they do it. With these understandings in hand, they are better equipped to articulate their needs and their students' needs, to take stands, and to propose actions, both inside and outside the classroom walls.

This constructivist and reflective notion of knowledge is emphasised by Schön, (1983); von Glasersfeld, (1989) and Keiny, (1994) who have described professional development as a process of generating personal theories-of-action. According to Schön (1987), teachers, like other practitioners, do not apply theories, but construct them from their practice, through an active dialogue with the materials which constitute their field of action as he explains it below:

They (practitioners) are in transaction with their practice worlds, framing their roles and constructing practice situations to make their role-frames operational... When practitioners respond to the intermediate zones of

practice by holding a reflective conversation with the materials of their situations, they remake a part of their practice world and thereby reveal the usually tacit processes of world making that underlie all of their practice (p.36)

Von Glasersfeld (1989) deliberately discards the notion that knowledge is, or should be a world-in-itself, independent of the view of an observer, and replaces it with the proposition that knowledge is a construction of the individual's subjective reality. Keiny (1994) also stresses the notion that knowledge cannot simply be "transferred" from teacher to learner but conceives knowledge as "something" that is actively constructed by the learner in a process that involves him or her subjectively. Keiny (1987) proposes *developmental teacher* as an alternative model of teacher education against the *instrumental teacher model* in which a teacher's role is to develop his or her students as learners who are able to construct their own conceptual structures. The general orientation and the education of the teachers in the model are based on the notion of reflective practice.

Francis (1995) also points out the belief that teaching is overwhelmed with uncertainty, and attended by ambiguity emphasizing the essential part of professional growth that we have to confront 'practical theory', to make it explicit, to clarify and extend it by articulating and by subjecting it to the challenge of others. She argues that there is no one best method of teaching and there is frequently a lack of consensus about what schools ought to be doing, whose interests they are serving, and about what they are achieving. Francis claims that pre-service teachers need to develop the attitudes, skills and confidence to frame their own agendas, use their puzzlement to drive

useful inquiry, and to influence policy and educational thinking beyond the classroom context. They need to develop a voice. S/he believes that teacher education programmes should encourage individual construction of knowledge which includes critical challenge. It is assumed that reflection plays an important role in the construction and integration of the personal practical knowledge of teachers.

Gore and Zeichner (1991) also argue that teachers should not be regarded as 'technicians' who are required to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations uncritically. Zeichner & Liston (1987) suggest factors which students experience before they begin a course and by which they may be heavily influenced, each of which undermine the impact which any course might have. These life-time experiences of the function and structure of education are likely to have contributed towards a definite conception of teaching roles and relationships to which the students cling. Johnson (1988) adds that teachers' pre-existing views of teaching and learning are so pervasive that unless directly challenged any attempt to alter teaching styles is ineffectual. Ely (1991, cited in Calderhead and Gates, 1993) believes "greater self-knowledge can help us to separate our thoughts and feelings from those of others, to be less judgmental, to appreciate others' experiences and thus to go beyond our own understandings and to develop professionally". Tann argues that unless we engage students at a personal level they cannot make sense of the programme content: it does not connect. She believes that we need to consider the growing interest in personal theory by incorporating 'reflection' into teacher education programmes (Calderhead and Gates, 1993)

2.3 Portfolio as a tool for promoting reflection

2.3.1 Purposes and possible benefits of portfolio use in teacher education programmes

Barton and Collins (1993) indicated that any new approach to evaluating prospective graduates of a teacher education programme should take into account the kinds of experiences they encounter and the professional duties they will be called upon to perform in the schools. They stated that the ongoing nature of the portfolio development process gives both students and faculty an opportunity to reflect on student growth and change throughout the course of a programme – an opportunity that does not exist with a one time, exit-oriented exam. Such static assessment instruments have the inability to capture growth of student knowledge in teacher education programmes. As Guillaume and Yopp (1995) indicated they allow student teachers to tell the stories of their growth as teachers. Similarly, different versions of teaching portfolios have been in use as part of an alternative assessment system for teachers (Wolf and Dietz, 1998).

The portfolio allows faculty to view student work in the context of teaching as a complex activity with interrelated elements. A brief set of exam questions, no matter how carefully structured, cannot capture this complexity. Through a consistent emphasis on relating the parts to the whole, the portfolio provides a larger context to structure each piece of evidence it contains. Advisement is strengthened by this process as each portfolio entry helps the faculty advisor to focus on students' overall professional development, not just their course work and personalities (Barton and Collins, 1993). Similarly, Wolf (1996) indicated

that portfolios are attractive because they appear to be robust and flexible enough to capture the complexities of teaching as well as promote the professional development of teachers.

The development of a portfolio shifts the ownership of learning onto the student. In an exam situation, students respond to the concerns of the faculty. With a portfolio, students create, with input from faculty, their own assessment documentation to explore their own concerns (Barton and Collins, 1993). The use of portfolios leads to the development of skills such as independent learning and self-evaluation (Klenowski, 2000). It helps students grow and develop their own philosophy of teaching and learning (Grima & Chetcuti, 2001). The study conducted by Strijbos et al. (2007) reported that the portfolio promotes students' general self-regulation. However, students lack orientation towards new objectives within the learning process on an independent basis.

Portfolios help students become more articulate. The abundance of collegial sharing and collaboration built into portfolio development helps free students from the imposed isolation of a written comprehensive exam. The exams offer, at best, limited opportunities for sustained feedback to students about their overall performance in a given programme. Portfolio development, on the other hand, hinges on interaction with faculty and peers during each stage of the review process. Students share their portfolios with a committee composed of their advisor, other faculty members and at least one currently practising teacher as well as with each other for suggestions and support. Thus teaching becomes a collaborative event, with discussion based on evidence, not

personality. The review process gives students a forum to explore their ideas in a supportive environment and become more articulate about their profession which leads ultimately to a strong sense of personal accomplishment (Barton and Collins, 1993; Loughran and Corrigan, 1995; Wolf, 1996).

Teacher education programmes emphasize practice and expose students to a variety of practical techniques that have been shown to work successfully with learners. Some programmes seek to go a step further and link these practices with theories of learning, development and cognition – although some often fail to make these linkages. The development of a portfolio begins with an act of establishing purposes. Students, with the help of an advisor, develop purposes for their studies by establishing what they need and want to learn in order to become master teachers. Once they establish these purposes, students seek to find and create practices that meet the needs. Because the portfolio emphasizes purpose, students have real reasons to look for connections between theory and practice. During the course of developing their portfolios, students integrate theory with practice in the pursuit of the purposes they have established for themselves (Barton and Collins, 1993; Borko et al., 1997). The tasks in the portfolio help students develop an awareness of the links between theory and practice (Grima & Chetcuti, 2001).

The literature reviewed on portfolios indicates that portfolios help students acquire the skills to carry out reflection, self-evaluation and critical analysis. Teaching portfolios have recently received increasing attention as tools to promote reflection among both experienced and novice teachers (Wolf et al.,

1995, 1998; Wade and Yarbrough, 1996). Portfolios provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on what, how and why they teach. It helps pre-service teachers become more reflective and improve their classroom practices. Portfolios are considered to provide an avenue for reflection helping students in examining their experiences as a whole. By reflecting on their teaching at a number of levels and gathering them into a portfolio, students connect experiences and extract meaning from their experiences (Loughran and Corrigan, 1995; Wolf, 1996; Guillaume and Yopp, 1995; Borko et al., 1997; Wolf and Dietz, 1998; Klenowski, 2000; Tanner et. al., 2000). In their comparative study of two teacher training providers in the UK and Finland in the use of portfolios to support reflective practice in teacher education programmes, Groom and Maunonen-Eskelinen (2006) underlined the importance of portfolios as a tool for the student teachers to develop skills to self-assess and critique their own teaching and learning experiences. Students reported that they were more aware of how their understanding and awareness had changed over time; how they were more aware of the process of their own learning and how this related to developing their students' learning and how they evaluated their own performance and development as teachers via using portfolio as a tool.

The study conducted by Strijbos et al. (2007) reported that the portfolio assignment is a tool which can be used to improve students' general capacity for reflection. However, the particular portfolio programme they used in their study did not teach students to reflect on their own evaluation and orientation. This leads us to further examine the taken-for-granted potential of the portfolio as an effective tool for enhancing the reflective practice. Even though there are

both theoretical and empirical support on portfolio as an effective tool promoting reflection and reflective practice; the quality of reflection associated with portfolio practice in different teacher education contexts needs to be explored and the constraints need to be identified for the improvement of the portfolio construction practices. Although the study conducted by Orland-Barak (2005) has shed light on the potential of portfolio practice for professional development, it also suggests that within a centralised system of accountability and contrived collegiality, the documentation of reflection at critical level is problematic remaining mostly at technical levels. This raises the issue that the dynamics of the portfolio programme that we implement and the education system (the institutional context) it is implemented might cause some constraints which affect the level of reflection.

2.3.2 What is my personal philosophical belief in portfolio as a tool stimulating reflection for the development of student teachers?

2.3.2.1 Critical Theory and Reflective Portfolio Construction

I wish to design a reflective portfolio construction tool because the logic of portfolio is based on the premises that the critical theory claims in general. Critical theory threatens the status quo and questions the legitimacy of the existing power. Critical theorists would argue that the positivist and the interpretive paradigms are essentially technicist, seeking to understand and render more efficient a situation, rather than to question or transform it (Cohen et al., 2000). I believe that teachers should stop seeing themselves as 'technicians' who apply the existing methods and techniques without questioning. Schön (1990) stated that teachers tend to see the truth lying

outside them, and regard theoretical and abstract knowledge as pertaining to a higher order. I believe that as teacher educators we can provide student teachers with an opportunity to challenge and question the theoretical and abstract knowledge as holding the supreme power through an effectively designed reflective portfolio tool. Reflective portfolio tool borrows from critical theory as one of its underlying philosophy because it is expected to guide student teachers to challenge the prevailing social, political, cultural or professional ways of acting. It helps the practitioner create new understandings, knowledge constructions and new behaviours by making conscious the social, political, professional, economic and ethical assumptions constraining or supporting one's action in a specific context (Ecclestone, 1996; Mackintosh, 1998 cited in Stein, 2000). Critical theory challenges the view of the scientific theory/positivism which claims that scientific knowledge is objective and it is the only valid way to handle out problems. Similarly, reflective portfolio tool aims at challenging the intellectual dependency teachers have on other authorities (e.g., school boards, textbook publishers, principals, superintendents, politicians) to make their decisions for them by making them aware that they have the power to construct their own knowledge and make their own decisions for the interests of the participants in their own contexts. Similar to the critical theory, reflective portfolio tool aims at emancipating the teacher from his/her disempowered status to a cognitively free status to question, examine and reconstruct his/her own strategies or personal philosophies in a way that transforms him and his students. In other words, by constructing a reflective portfolio, a student teacher creates his own agenda to follow for his professional development rather than being given one to follow unquestionably.

2.3.2.2 Constructivism, the notion of reality and reflective portfolio construction

Constructivism can be associated with portfolio construction due to its perception of reality. Constructivist theorists reject the notion that scientific truths exist and await discovery and verification. Rather than viewing knowledge as truth, constructivists construe it as a working hypothesis. Knowledge is not imposed from outside people but rather formed inside them. A person's constructions are true to that person but not necessarily to anyone else. This is because people produce knowledge based on their beliefs and experiences, which differ from person to person. All knowledge, then, is subjective and personal and a product of our cognitions (Schunk, 2004). Portfolios are in line with this view of constructivists since they aim at encouraging and guiding (student) teachers to construct their own realities based on their beliefs, views, techniques and the experiences they confront in real classroom settings. Once teachers realize that there can be no single correct representation of reality, but that reality is what the different persons involved in the situation, perceive and construct conceptually, reality ceases to constitute one objective truth and is conceived instead as complex, multifaceted, and multidimensional. Portfolios aim at awakening this realization of 'no single correct representation of reality' through engaging (student) teachers in reflective tasks and activities to help them or guide them develop their own subjective reality under given conditions.

2.3.2.3 Dialectical (Blended) Constructivism and Reflective Portfolio Construction

Portfolios are considered as important tools in helping student teachers extract meaning out of their experiences by engaging them in reflective practices, hence reflective thinking processes. Construction upon practical knowledge is possible through reflecting on one's own practice. Aldous Huxley (cited in Kegan, 1983) indicated that "Experience is not what happens to you; it's what you do with what happens to you" (p.11). Dewey, on the other hand, said that experience is what happens to you; what you do with what happens to you is directly dependent on the meaning that you make out of it. Therefore, in order to make sense out of our experiences, we need to consider and reconsider our experiences to weave meaning out of them. Though the experiences that happen to us may be out of control, the meaning that we make of them is not. I believe that portfolios enable student teachers to blend their experiences in real classroom contexts with the workings of the mind. Constructing a portfolio provides interactions between the student teachers and their environments (teaching experiences). Constructions are not invariably tied to the external world nor wholly the workings of the mind. Knowledge is not a mirror of the external world acquired through experiences only by teaching (Exogenous constructivism) nor a result of the workings of the mind (Endogenous constructivism) (Bruning et al., 1999 & Piaget, 1970 cited in Schunk, 2004). Dialectical constructivism holds that knowledge derives from interactions between persons and their environments. Knowledge reflects the outcomes of mental contradictions that result from one's interactions with the environment (Schunk, 2004). This perspective on learning is often associated with

'contextualism' where "... thought and experience are inextricably are intertwined with the contexts or settings where learning occurs" (Bruning et al., 1999 cited in Schunk, 2004 , p. 217) Portfolios provide student teachers with opportunities to construct their own knowledge and understanding by engaging them with reflective cycles of thinking to examine and improve their teaching experiences. Experiences alone even the educative ones are not enough, claims Dewey. What is critical is the ability to perceive and then weave meaning among the threads of experience since it is the meaning that one perceives in and then constructs from an experience that gives that experience value (Dewey, 1944). Thus, knowledge is not a mirror of the external knowledge acquired through teaching nor develops through cognitive abstraction. It is the process of the reconstruction and reorganization of experience through the workings of the mind which can be made possible through construction of a reflective portfolio. Therefore, when involving student teachers in to the process of constructing their portfolios, we should not only involve them into the process of learning to teach, describing the events or compiling the documents but with the process of interpreting experiences during the production of the portfolio through internal and external mental interactions which also highlights the importance of social interactions in constructing knowledge which is to be discussed below.

2.3.2.4 Vygotsky's Social Constructivism (Sociocultural Theory) and reflective portfolio construction

Vygotsky's Social Constructivism emphasizes the social contexts of learning and that knowledge is mutually built and constructed (Santrock, 2001).

Vygotsky considered the social environment critical for learning and thought that social interactions transformed learning experiences (Schunk, 2004). For Vygotsky, individuals construct knowledge through social interaction with others. The major implication of his theory on teaching is that we as the educators should establish many opportunities for students to learn with the teacher and more-skilled peers. I believe that the experience of constructing a reflective portfolio creates opportunities for student teachers to construct knowledge and meaning through socially interacting with others such as the supervisor, cooperating teacher and partner peer. The portfolio engages the student teacher into feedback sessions with the supervisor both before and after the actual teaching to discuss the lesson plan first and the teaching performance afterwards. The student teacher discusses his/her teaching performance with the cooperating teacher and the partner peer both separately and collectively with the supervisor as well. During these feedback sessions, the student teacher has the opportunity to view his/her performance from different perspectives which provides multiplicity of voices in the form of critiques, ideas, suggestions, solutions. These multiple perspectives on one's teaching enhances reflective thinking skills since it broadens the field of understanding by encouraging individuals to bring to the surface and articulate to others their own ideas and reasoning processes. Francis also states that peer collaboration helps shape and clarify ideas and stimulate reconstruction of existing beliefs since partner peers are more likely to express partly formed ideas, questions, lack of understanding and challenge to fellow learners; all of which transforms and facilitates mental activity.

2.3.2.5 Constructivism, self-regulation and reflective portfolio construction

Learners construct not only knowledge but also ways for acquiring and applying it. One of the instructional goals of constructivism is to enable learners achieve self-regulation. As Perkins (1991b) explain it, “Students are not likely to become autonomous thinkers and learners if they lack an opportunity to manage their own learning” (p.20). Therefore, it is important to facilitate student ownership in learning. I believe encouraging student teachers to construct a reflective portfolio is one of the effective ways of creating conditions for an ownership in learning. The components and the processes integrated into the construction of the portfolio are all useful tools which enable student teachers to do self analysis by identifying their weaknesses and strengths, to produce solutions and to put them into action to have self improvement. They continuously do self assessment and self monitoring for the betterment of their skills and techniques. They attempt to define their own route by actively being involved in determining what their needs/weaknesses are and how those needs can best be satisfied and the weaknesses can best be improved. Thus, reflective portfolio construction as a tool is also based on the self-regulatory aspect of constructivism.

Much has been written about the value offered by the portfolio as a tool for stimulating reflection in the context of the professional development of student teachers. However, most of these works have been narratives describing experiences of using portfolios on teacher education. It is difficult to find studies offering strategies, techniques or tasks which could be adopted in portfolios to promote reflection in student teachers. Zeichner and Wray (2001) indicated that

there is a need for systematic research into the nature and quality of reflection in portfolios. This thesis attempts to examine the nature and quality of reflection in portfolios by examining the perceptions of student teachers regarding the effectiveness of the current portfolio in enhancing their reflective thinking skills in the form of action research. Moreover, it aims to go further and meet a need for systematic research into how reflection can be enhanced via portfolios within teacher education. It attempts to develop a new portfolio tool offering some techniques and tasks in the form of components and processes regarding how reflection can be promoted in student teachers. It intends to answer the question “How reflection can be promoted via portfolios?” by offering a concrete tool which can be adapted or modified to be used in other teacher education contexts.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The first section of this chapter attempts to develop a basis for the philosophical research stance I will adopt in this study starting with my personal views on research paradigms. I will also try to build up relationship between constructionism which is the research paradigm I adopt in this study and reflective portfolio construction which is the purpose of this study. In this section, I also intend to draw parallelism between constructionism and action research which is the research methodology used in this study. I will define and present different variants of action research as well. In the second section of this chapter, I will present about the data collection and data analysis procedures, methods and instruments which will be adopted in this study.

3.1 The Philosophical Research Stance I will adopt in this study

In this section, I intend to develop a foundation for the research stance I will adopt in this study by presenting my personal views on research paradigms and building up relationships between the research paradigm which is to be adopted in this study and aim of the study drawing parallelism between constructionism and action research.

3.1.1 Constructionism as my personal philosophical research paradigm

Constructionism claims that there is no objective truth waiting to be discovered. According to constructionism, meaning is not discovered but constructed. Truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. Therefore, different people may construct meaning in

different ways, even when the same phenomenon is under consideration (Crotty, 1998). Similarly, as Guba and Lincoln (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) indicated below:

realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions (p.206)

I agree with what Guba and Lincoln implied here because the reality of one context or culture might be different from the reality of another context and it is the participants/ members of that context or culture making up that reality. There are different social contexts and dynamics involved in each social setting which makes the reality of that particular place unique. For example, there are different rules and regulations in each context with different conventions and traditions embedded into the life of that social setting. The beliefs, ideologies, philosophies as well as the educational and socioeconomic backgrounds of the participants that make up the population of the setting are also significant factors/characteristics contributing to the reality of that context and forming up its culture. That is why I believe that the reality in the social world cannot be observed in the way as it is observed in the physical world because it cannot be looked and seen in one specific way. Moreover, subjectivists would argue that the physical world cannot be observed directly either. When two people look at the same 'physical' object they see it differently according to the experiences they have had during their lives. Therefore, the researcher can not totally isolate himself/herself from the situation in order to interpret the reality because the reality might not be as it is seen from the outside. Reality is created or constructed when the members of that context communicate, negotiate or

share with each other. It is these social forces at work that makes up the reality of that context. Thus, the social reality would not exist independently of the individuals who make up those personal creations. So the researcher without being involved within this social world, without becoming a part of it and without negotiating or communicating with the participants would not be able to understand the dynamics, the social forces and the structures of that context as well as the intentions of the participants which form a basis for the human behaviour. I agree with Pring (2000) that it is not possible to give an account of what people do without reference to the intentions which make that behaviour comprehensible.

My beliefs about the nature of reality, of knowledge, what can be known and the possible ways of knowing it are mostly in line with the basic belief systems of constructionism and its prevailing views of perceiving reality and knowledge and the possible ways of dealing with it or constructing it. Based on my beliefs about reality and knowledge, and the nature of the research topic I decided to adopt 'constructionism' as my personal philosophical stance.

3.1.2 My personal philosophical research paradigm and its relationship to reflective portfolio construction (Constructionism and the study's aim)

3.1.2.1 Aim of inquiries done in accordance with constructionism as an epistemology and the aim of my study

I aim at focusing on student teachers' perceptions of their experiences of constructing a portfolio to develop a more reflective portfolio construction tool in my own context which is the Practice Teaching course. Hence the purpose of the prospective inquiry matches with the aim of inquiries done in accordance

with constructionism which deals with the understanding and reconstruction of the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold, aiming towards consensus but still open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improves (Guba and Lincoln cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Assumptions identified in constructionism or Naturalistic Inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) hold that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants (Cresswell, 2003). As the researcher, I intend to understand the portfolio construction processes and the reflection involved in it as it is practised in the Practice Teaching Course that I offer as a last year course. My aim is to understand the experiences my student teachers go through as they construct their portfolios in partial fulfilment of the course with an intention to improve the practices associated with portfolio construction; therefore EDUC 420 Practice Teaching Course is the context of this study.

3.1.2.2 Meaning and reality in constructionism as an epistemology and in my study

According to constructionism, the individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences and these meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meaning into a few categories or ideas (Cresswell, 2003) as it is proclaimed in Positivism. Similarly, in this study, I will conduct interviews, encourage student teachers to write end-of-the-semester reflection essays and will also use final reports as another source of data to allow variation and multiplicity in the

meanings of the experiences of the participants. I will then draw my own meanings from what I perceive to be their meanings as it is expected in constructionism. The goal of research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied. The questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons (Cresswell, 2003). The findings and the realities in this study will heavily rely on the participants' views/perceptions of their experiences of portfolio construction processes and to what extent these processes promote reflective thinking through interactions which will be achieved by the interviews and the document writing (end-of-the-semester reflection essays, final reports). The meaning associated with reflective portfolio construction processes is also constructed socially via interaction and discussion of the student teacher with the supervisor, his/her cooperating teacher and partner peer continuously and systematically.

3.1.2.3 Data collection methods in constructionism and its relationship with my study

Semi-structured interviewing and end-of-the-semester reflection essays as well as private/personal documents from the portfolio, which are considered as appropriate data collection methods in constructionism (Scott, 1990; Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2003; Bryman,2004) , will be used as primary sources of data collection. This will enable the investigator and the object of investigation to be interactively linked so that the findings will be literally constructed by the researcher and the participants as the investigation proceeds. The knowledge

and the meaning will be created in interaction among investigator and respondents. The researcher believes that the meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. In this study, meaning will be constructed out of the interviews between I as the researcher and the participants as well as of the end-of-the-semester reflection essays and the final reports in the portfolios. In the constructionist paradigm, realities can be understood in the form of multiple mental constructions, are socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions.

Without interacting with the participants, I would not be able to understand the realities involved because it is the members of that community – the student teachers and the researcher herself – holding the meaning of constructions. The individual constructions (portfolios) will be elicited and refined through interaction between and among investigator and respondents through the feedback sessions which will be held continuously, the interviews to be held and the end-of-the-semester reflection essays to be written. Analyzing the portfolios will help me as the researcher construct ‘knowledge about reality, not the reality itself’ about portfolio construction processes in the Practice Teaching Course from the respondents’ perspective (emic insights into the data) because as Neimeyer (1993, cited in Patton, 2002) indicated I believe that “humans do not have direct access to a singular, stable, and fully knowable external reality. All of our understandings are contextually embedded, interpersonally forged, and necessarily limited” (p.96) .As Pike (1982 cited in Allright and Bailey, 1991) defined it ‘emic interpretation’ uses categories, concepts or frameworks derived

from within a particular culture. The emic data will contribute to my understanding of the multiple realities about portfolio construction processes better because they will be provided by the members of the community holding the constructions who are the student teachers in the Practice Teaching Course.

3.1.3 My personal philosophical research paradigm (Constructionism) and its relationship to 'action research' as my research methodology

Epistemologically, the study has a constructionist orientation. Methodologically, the researcher will adopt action research since the phases of the study best suits to the nature of action research. Nevertheless, action research as a methodology is in line with constructionism in many respects.

According to constructionism, meaning is not discovered but constructed. Truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world (Crotty, 1998). Action research basically involves a spiral process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting more carefully and more systematically (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, 1998 quoted in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) to understand and improve the rationality of educational practices in a specific context. Hence, in action research there is no objective truth out there to be discovered as well but meaning arises out of social situations and is handled through interpretive processes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) mostly through regular critical reflection at each cycle because the researchers regularly and systematically critique what they are doing so as to better construct the meaning in their own context.

Reality is created or constructed when the members of that context communicate, negotiate or share with each other. Thus, the social reality would not exist independently of the individuals who make up those personal creations.

In order to understand the meanings and motives of the participants in a context in constructionism, the researcher should be a part of that world in order to construct the meaning by taking into account the meanings and motives of the participants and this is possible only through our engagement with the realities. Similarly, in action research, the researcher is a part, a member of the social world being investigated and continuously engages with the realities by negotiating and communicating with the participants at each cycle of the research to understand the dynamics, the social forces and the structures of that context as well as the perceptions of the participants. As Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) indicated it is a self-reflective inquiry undertaken by the participants in order to understand and improve the rationality of their educational practices. It is not research done on other people.

In constructionism, behaviour, and thereby data, are socially situated, context-related, context-dependent and context-rich. To understand a situation researchers need to understand the context because situations affect behaviour and perspectives. Similarly, data in action research are also context-related, context-dependent and context-rich because action research is undertaken for the purpose of increasing knowledge about practices and contexts of practices. It seeks to understand particular complex situations in one's own context

(McKernan, 1991 cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). The realities to be constructed in the Practice Teaching course in my study are multiple and rich based on the classroom situations each student teacher will experience depending on the context they are going to practise their teachings. So the situations will affect their perceptions and the experiences they will go through. Inquiry is influenced by the values that inhere in the context in constructionism (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000); similarly, the inquiry is also affected by the values that exist in the context in action research because it is undertaken for the purpose of understanding and improving the context so the values are taken as constructs contributing to the meaning making up that context.

The basic generation of meaning is always social in constructionism, arising in and out of interaction with a human community; hence, constructionism adopts a qualitative approach to research. Qualitative methods sit more comfortably than quantitative methods with the notion of the human-as-instrument (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Similarly, words are the common currency of much discussion in action research. Words tend to produce qualitative information. So that it is accessible to participants, therefore, action research tends to be qualitative (Dick, 2002). It is dialogical and celebrates discourse (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000).

Data in constructionism are analysed inductively with constructs deriving from the data during the research; similarly action research uses feedback from data in an ongoing cyclical process. It is formative, such that the definition of the problem, the aims and methodology may alter during the process of action

research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). So the process of research is largely inductive, with the researcher generating meaning from the data collected during each spiral cycle.

3.1.4 Action Research as the methodology of the study

Theoretically, this study will have an interpretivist perspective which is informed by constructionism. A naturalistic, exploratory approach will be taken. The aim is to gain a holistic picture of the student teachers' experiences with constructing a portfolio tool and its effect on improving their reflective thinking skills. I desire to be able to pursue important issues as they emerge with the student teachers and to use their words to explore their perspectives and to come to a deeper understanding of those perspectives (Martin, 2005) regarding portfolio construction and its impact on reflection. Nevertheless, I will adopt action research methodologically since as the researcher I desire to examine the student teachers' perceptions of their experiences with the currently used portfolio and interpret both the weaknesses and the strengths of the portfolio tool in the first phase. Then, I want to develop a more reflective portfolio construction tool based on the emerging themes from the first phase and the literature reviewed in the second phase. In other words, I desire to come up with a plan of action which I believe will be effective in improving student teachers' reflective thinking skills. In the third phase of the research, I intend to put this new tool into action and explore the student teachers' experiences with the new tool by collecting data regarding their thoughts and ideas. The phases of the study best suits to the nature of action research. Below, I will present the

major characteristics of action research by attempting to explain why they are in line with my choice of action research as the methodology of my study.

3.1.4.1 Major characteristics of action research

It is concerned with understanding and improving practices

Action research is the process through which practitioners study their own practice to solve their personal practical problems (Corey, 1953). It is a form of 'self-reflective inquiry' undertaken by participants in order to understand and improve the rationality of their educational practices as well as the understanding of these practices so as to reform their practices in a specific context. (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988 cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). It is defined as a form of disciplined inquiry, in which a personal attempt is made to understand, improve and reform practices (Cohen and Manion, 2000). I, as the researcher, have been observing student teachers' dissatisfaction, comments and suggestions about the components of the currently used portfolio tool and the processes associated with it during their enrolment in EDUC 420 Practice Teaching course. As one of the supervisors in EDUC 420 course, I want to examine the student teachers' perceptions and views on their experiences of the portfolio construction in order to have an understanding of the educational practices taking place during the construction of this tool. Therefore, I want to adopt the role of the researcher as the supervisor of the course to collect and analyze data on the practices to have a scientific interpretation of these practices with an aim to improve them.

It is concerned with changing the system

Nunan (1992) considers action research situational, being concerned with the identification and solution of problems in a specific context. It is derived from a real problem in the classroom or in a context which needs to be confronted to improve the current situation. It is motivated by an inquiry to improve and understand the world by changing it and learning how to improve it from the effects of the changes made. Thus, it is concerned with changing the system; namely, the individuals, the culture of the groups, institutions and societies to which they belong (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Freebody, 2003). After developing some understanding of the practices related with portfolio construction based on the findings, I believe that I need to take some action to change the situation in portfolio construction. Thus, I will attempt to develop a more reflective portfolio construction tool based on the findings in the first phase and on the theoretical and empirical findings from the literature to change portfolio construction applications and practices in EDUC 420 Practice Teaching course with an intention to change both myself as the supervisor and the student teachers professionally. I am concerned with improving my student teachers' reflective thinking skills and develop them into more reflective teacher candidates before they enter into the field of teaching profession. I will also change and become more aware of the elements and processes which are desirable and associated with improving reflective thinking skills in student teachers in pre-service education.

It is concerned with a self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, reflecting and preplanning for further implementation

One of the most apparent principles of action research is that it develops through the self-reflective spiral: a spiral of cycles of planning, acting (implementing plans), observing (systematically), reflecting and then re-planning, further implementation, observing and reflecting (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000).

However, there are several ways in which the steps of action research have been analysed. Different researchers offered slightly different stages (procedures) for carrying out action research. Blum (1959) casts action research into two simple stages: a diagnostic stage in which the problems are analysed and the hypotheses developed; and a therapeutic stage in which the hypotheses are tested by a consciously directed intervention or experiment in situation. The steps I am planning to take in my study are very similar to Blum's since I have a diagnostic stage during which I am planning to analyse the problems associated with the currently used portfolio and then develop a more reflective one which is the hypothesis building and put it into action to observe its effects as the therapeutic stage. The stages I have developed myself very much reflects the self-reflective spiral of action research.

3.1.4.2 Proposed cycle of steps/stages in action research

Lewin (1946, 1948) codified the action research process into four main stages: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) propose a similar but powerful cycle of steps for the action research; which are (1) a field of action, (2) a 'reconnaissance' of the circumstances of the field, (3)

a general plan of action, (4) the first action step is planned, (5) the first step is taken, (6) the effect of the action is evaluated (7) the general plan is then revised

McKernan (1991) elaborates on Lewin's model of action research proposing a series of spirals each of which incorporates a cycle of analysis, reconnaissance, reconceptualization of the problem, planning of the intervention, implementation of the plan, evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention. Zuber-Skerritt (1996) sets emancipatory (critical) action research into a cyclical process of: "(1) strategic planning, (2) implementing the plan (action), (3) observation, evaluation and self-evaluation, (4) critical and self-critical reflection on the results of (1) and (3) and making decision for the next cycle of research".

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) set out an eight-stage process of action research that attempts to draw together the several strands and steps of the action research undertaking as follows: (1) identification, evaluation and formulation of the problem, (2) discussion and negotiations among the interested parties, (3) a review of the research literature, (4) a modification or redefinition of the initial statement of the problem, (5) selection of research procedures, (6) choice of the evaluation procedures, (7) implementation of the project itself, (8) interpretation of the data; inferences to be drawn and the overall evaluation of the project (Woods, 1989).

Although different authors proposed different variants of action research with different number of steps involved within their cycles, they all have some major steps in common which are as follows:

- Identification of a problem or field of action about which some kind of improvement or change is desirable (Problem identification)
- Some kind of strategic planning to be made by collecting data from the field/context and literature (Planning)
- A plan of action to be developed and implemented based on the data collected (Intervention)
- Monitoring and evaluating the action implemented (Reflection)
- A revised plan for the next cycle of research (Decision-making)

3.1.4.3 How I will adopt the cycle of steps in action research

The phases of the current study very much fits with the spiralling cycles of the action research approach. In general, the steps of the current action research consist of three major phases; nevertheless, there are some sub-phases within each major phase as well which are similar in nature to the steps/stages of the action research models proposed by the authors presented above.

1. The first phase will involve the *identification, evaluation and formulation of the problem*, I perceive the components of the portfolio and the construction processes associated with it in the Practice Teaching Course – EDUC 420 as critical.

(a) *Identification of the problem*: I identified some problems upon comparing some of the portfolio construction processes and the strategies claimed to be reflective in the Practice Teaching course with the characteristics of the

reflective processes discussed in the related literature. As a result of this analysis, I believe that there is a need for a systematic research into the nature and quality of reflection in portfolios currently constructed by the student teachers in the Practice Teaching Course. Therefore, as the researcher, I am concerned with the identification, evaluation and formulation of the problems regarding portfolio construction processes adopted in my own context with the intention of improving the current situation. (b)

Evaluation and formulation of the problem: In the second sub-phase of the study, I will collect and analyse empirical data on student teachers' perceptions of their experiences with the components and the construction processes of the currently used portfolio tool to find out whether the process of constructing a portfolio prompts student teachers to reflect. This sub-phase of the study will report on the effectiveness – basically on the weaknesses of the currently used portfolio components and the construction procedures from the student teachers' perspectives. I will evaluate the situation by diagnosing the problematic areas of the currently implemented portfolio construction processes based on the student teachers' perceptions of their experiences to better formulate the problem for the development of a more reflective portfolio construction tool.

2. The second major phase of the study will involve *developing a plan of action* (planning of the intervention) to be implemented in the last phase of the study. This phase consisted of (a) *review of the research literature* to find out what could be learnt from the comparable studies and the related theories and (b) *development of a reflective portfolio construction*

tool as an intervention to be implemented. I will attempt to improve the currently used portfolio construction processes into a reflective portfolio tool based on the student teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of the portfolio in terms of reflection to be gathered and on the theoretical and empirical support as to be reviewed from the related literature. The newly developed portfolio construction tool will be based on a conceptual and theoretical framework by drawing mostly from the literature on the criteria for reflection in the light of the problematic areas which the student teachers will report in the first phase of the study based their portfolio construction experiences. Then, 'A Practice Teaching Portfolio Handbook for the Student Teachers' will be prepared for the student teachers (participants) of the study to follow during the implementation of the new tool in the third phase of the study. At the beginning of the third phase, an orientation seminar will be held both for the student teachers and the cooperating teachers separately to inform them of the content and the procedures of the newly developed portfolio construction tool with the help of the handbook. All the student teachers and the cooperating teachers will be provided with a copy of the handbook to refer to both during the orientation seminar and the semester (the implementation period). The handbook will contain information about the aims and objectives of the Practice Teaching Course; student teachers' responsibilities during the course; aims and objectives of the practice teaching portfolio; components of the practice teaching portfolio with descriptions of the processes supporting the construction of the Newly developed Portfolio Tool (feedback sessions). It will include detailed

appendices containing guidelines and related forms for all the components to be prepared and processes to be conducted.

3. The third major phase of the study will involve *implementation of the action plan, data collection and analysis on the action plan, interpretation of the data, and overall evaluation of the implemented model for the outcomes to be reviewed and the recommendations to be made*. As the researcher, I will implement the newly developed portfolio construction tool in the Spring 2008 semester with a new group of student teachers in the Practice Teaching course and collect data regarding their perceptions on the effectiveness of the new portfolio construction processes in enhancing reflective thinking and self-assessment skills. I intend to examine student teachers' perceptions of the impact of the newly designed strategies on the development of the reflective thinking skills through interviews, end-of-the-semester reflection essays and the reflective journals/final reports included as components of the portfolio. After the analysis of the collected data, the newly developed portfolio construction tool will be evaluated for the outcomes to be reviewed, some implications to be made for future practice and for further research to improve the tool and re-implement it with the new students enrolled in the Practice Teaching course for the coming semesters.

3.2 Data Collection Methods:

This section presents about the data collection and analysis procedures, methods and instruments.

3.2.1 Data Collection Procedures

The study adopted three data collection methods with the student teachers both in the first and third phases of the study. Data collection began in the Spring 2007 and was extended over Spring 2008 into the third phase of the study. Semi-structured interviews, end-of-the-semester reflection essays and some components of the portfolio such as reflective journals/final reports (personal documents) were used as data collection methods both at the end of the first and the third phases to examine whether there have been any changes in the perceptions of student teachers of their experiences with the portfolio construction processes.

As Martin (2005) emphasised the timing of data collection is particularly important. I was the supervisor of the student teachers involved; I was therefore particularly keen to ensure that they were able to express opinions without fear of those opinions indicating that it did not affect any assessment of their performance on the course as a whole. All the data was collected at the end of the semester after the submission of the portfolios and even after the submission of the letter grades; thus, student teachers did not feel themselves obliged to take part unless they were willing to do so. In this way, I aimed to reassure the student teachers that they could be honest and frank about their feelings in relation to constructing their portfolios.

First, the student teachers were given some information about the research and distributed the 'Information Sheet for the Prospective Research Participants' which could be consulted in Appendix G. Those who agreed to take part in were given the 'Participant Consent Form' for signature which can be seen in

Appendix H. On the same day after the consent forms were signed, student teachers were given an explanatory document including instructions for the end-of-the-semester reflection essay with some guiding questions and were asked to write approximately a two-page long reflection essay on their experiences of the portfolio construction process at home during their free time and were given a week to complete this. Then, upon completion of these, they were scheduled for a 30-45 minute interview to be conducted by their supervisor on a time and day suitable for them. The atmosphere in the interview is important in terms of gathering authentic data (Martin, 2005). Their past professional connection with one another and with me, allowed me to capitalise on a history of mutual trust and respect as Martin (2005) also stressed. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) underlined the importance of this close rapport with participants in creating possibilities for more informed research. There was a high level of trust and honesty between I as the researcher and the student teachers, which might have created a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere for the interactions during the interviews. This was also recognised by Moran and Dallat (1995) in their study about promoting reflective practice in initial teacher training. This could have also contributed to the trustworthiness (reliability) of the study.

3.2.2 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

The data were derived from three sources both in the first and third phases of the study : semi-structured interviews, end-of-the semester reflection essays and components of the portfolio as personal documents (final reports). In order to increase validity/trustworthiness and strengthen reliability, I used

triangulation of methods, triangulation of sources, (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Cohen et al. , 2000; Creswell, 2003; Martin, 2005; Wray, 2007) prolonged and persistent engagement and peer debriefing as strategies (Cohen et al. , 2000; Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2003). Similarly, recent researchers (Klenowski, 1998; Martin, 2005; Lee, 2005; Wray, 2007; Kuter, 2009) adopted triangulation of similar methods claiming that it increased the validity/credibility and trustworthiness of the data by helping to spot consistencies and inconsistencies in findings.

The languages in which the interviews were conducted and the end-of-the-semester reflection essays were written were mainly in English but partially in Turkish. Student teachers were informed both for the interviews and the end-of-the-semester reflection essays that they had the freedom to code switch to Turkish whenever they had difficulty in expressing their views. The reason for preferring to collect data in English was that the participants were fourth year English Language Teacher students whose English levels were very good. Moreover, they had all their pre-and post-teaching discussions at schools in English and written their portfolio in English so they had a command of the related terminology in English. The collected data were mainly in English but a substantial amount of data was also collected in Turkish upon the preferences of some of the participants so as not to lose significant data and/or cause a misunderstanding by communicating a wrong message which might cause wrong interpretation of the data and threaten the reliability/trustworthiness of the study.

3.2.2.2 Semi-structured interviews:

The aim of the study is to examine student teachers' perceptions of their experiences of constructing a portfolio to develop a more reflective portfolio construction tool; therefore, interview seems to be the most suitable method to elicit views and opinions from the participants. Semi-structured interviewing allows respondents to express themselves at length, but offers enough shape to prevent aimless rambling. It allows both the interviewer and the interviewee to hold the interview and discuss the topics in a more flexible way so this may create the respondent with a comfort and relaxing atmosphere to express himself/herself without a tight schedule. It also allows the interviewer to skip the questions or topics already answered by the respondent without creating the feeling of boredom and repetition on the respondent's behalf. As Creswell (2003) pointed out, it permits the researcher "control" over the line of questioning.

The timing of the interviews will be considered very carefully so as to elicit the perceptions of the student teachers on their experiences of portfolio construction in the best possible manner. The interviews will be held after the submission of portfolios by the participants and the letter grades by the supervisor to enable them to express their ideas or perceptions as freely as possible without feeling obliged to participate in the interview or to get a good mark from the lecturer. Another major reason for the interviews to be conducted right after the submission of the portfolios is to enable student teachers to complete the experience of the portfolio construction process and have a chance to evaluate this experience in an overall manner - to provide the student

teachers with an opportunity to see the whole picture of the portfolio construction experience in retrospect.

The questions in the interview have been prepared after careful review of the related issues in the literature in the light of the purpose of the research and the research questions posed. The content and applied processes in the literature regarding reflective portfolio construction have been reviewed both empirically and theoretically and questions have been developed accordingly to obtain and examine student teachers' perceptions of their own experiences regarding portfolio construction in terms of reflective thinking skills. The following criteria proposed by Patton (2002) were taken into account in formulating the questions for semi-structured interviews in this study:

- Distinguishing types of question (experience and behaviour questions, opinion and values questions, feeling questions)
- The time frame of questions (past, present and future)
- Sequencing questions
- Wording questions
- Asking truly open-ended questions
- Asking singular questions
- Probes and follow-up questions (pp. 348-374)

The interview questions focus on the student teachers' initial responses to the idea of constructing a portfolio; its value and impact on the development of reflective thinking and self-assessment skills. The interview includes questions both on the components and the activities/processes conducted during the construction of the portfolio and student teachers' perceptions of their impact on

the development of their reflective thinking skills which can be seen in Appendix I.

After the interview questions were formed, they were piloted with two steps. The interview questions were passed on both to 2 professors who are specialised in especially teacher education programmes and to the 4 senior lecturers who act as supervisors in the Practice Teaching course. Based on their comments and suggestions, the questions were modified. Then, the interview were piloted with 6 typical student teachers who were taking the Practice Teaching course and responsible for preparing portfolios. During the pilot interviews, the researcher determined the sections or the questions which the student teachers had difficulty understanding and developed some alternative ways of asking the same issues in a different way which could help with better understanding.

3.2.2.3 End-of-the-semester reflection essays:

Participants will also be asked to reflect on their experience of constructing a portfolio and its impact on the development of their reflective thinking skills and professional development by writing a reflection essay at the end of the semester. Participants will be given the freedom to structure their essay as they choose but will also be given some guiding questions which may be found in Appendix J to respond to by focusing on the issues that seem pertinent to them. End-of-the-semester reflection essay can be an important source of document type of data since it represents data that are thoughtful, in that participants have given attention to compiling (Creswell, 2003). Private documents such as end-

of-the-semester reflection essays or practice teaching final reports can provide valuable data since participants are given time to focus their attention and express their ideas, opinions and feelings in a more comfortable manner since “people are not equally articulate and perspective” (Creswell, 2003). The data from the reflection essays can consolidate the data that might not be freely and comfortably expressed or explained during the interviews (Wade and Yarbrough, 1996; Martin, 2005). To increase the reliability of the data provided through the end-of-the-semester reflection essays, Scott’s (1990 cited in Bryman, 2004) criteria for assessing the quality of documents will be taken into consideration during the design and implementation of the essays. To increase the authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning of the essays produced, participants will be given some instructions and guiding questions for the evidence to be authentic and representative and will be told that they will discuss their ideas during the interview for the evidence to be credible and clear in meaning.

3.2.2.4 Components of the portfolio tool

Practice Teaching Final Report and reflective journals as components of the portfolio will also be used as important sources of data as part of private documents since they provide valuable insights regarding the evaluation of the effectiveness of the portfolios which the participants prepare.

3.3 Data Analysis Methods

The qualitative data which will be gathered from the interviews, end-of-the semester reflection essays and from some of the components of portfolio tool both in the first and third phases of the study will be analysed through content analysis method. Content analysis involves identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying and labelling the primary patterns/occurring themes in the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). In identifying and categorizing the emerging themes Allwright and Bailey's (1991) the following criteria for data analysis have also been used:

- Frequency of mention: the frequency a topic/issue is identified in the essays or mentioned during the interviews
- Distribution of mention: the distribution of different people who mention a topic/issue in the essays or during interviews

While doing the analysis, I will also borrow from Kvale's 'Meaning condensation' and 'Meaning categorization' approaches and Creswell's (2003) 6 step generic process of data analysis which includes the following steps:

- Organize and prepare the data for analysis
- Obtain a general sense of the information and reflect on its overall meaning
- Begin detailed analysis with a coding process.

- Use the coding process to generate a description of the categories or themes for analysis. Then, use the coding to generate a small number of themes or categories. These themes are the ones that appear as the major findings in qualitative studies.
- Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative. The most popular approach is to use a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis.
- A final step in data analysis involves making an interpretation or meaning of the data. “What were the lessons learned” captures the essence of this idea (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Guidelines for analyzing qualitative data can be found in abundance, and studying examples of qualitative analysis can be especially helpful, as in the Miles and Huberman (1994) sourcebook. But guidelines, procedural suggestions, and exemplars are not rules. Since each qualitative study is unique, the analytical approach used will be unique as well. Because qualitative inquiry depends, at every stage, on the skills, training, insights, and capabilities of the inquirer, qualitative analysis ultimately depends on the analytical intellect and style of the analyst (Patton, 2002, p.433). Even though I will adapt from the existing approaches to qualitative data analysis, I will come up with my own way of analysis, which I attempt to describe in the findings chapter, based on the purpose of the study and the research questions I posed.

3.4 Participants

The participants in the first phase of the study are 15 fourth year student teachers enrolled in the Practice Teaching course during Spring 2007, the researcher herself (teacher educator/supervisor) who is responsible for the coordination of the supervision to be provided for student teachers during their teaching practices and 8 cooperating teachers (mentors) at the partner (state) schools responsible for the mentoring. Fourth year student teachers attend three lecture hours weekly at the university and visit schools for practice teaching in real classrooms during the second semester of their last year at the university. The researcher will conduct the study in her own group in the first phase; therefore, the participants of the study will be her own students and the cooperating teachers who are responsible for the mentoring of these students at the partner schools.

The participants of the study in the third phase will be 12 fourth year student teachers enrolled in the Practice Teaching course during Spring 2008, the researcher herself (teacher educator) who is responsible for the coordination of the supervision to be provided for student teachers during their teaching practices and 7 cooperating teachers (mentors) at the partner (state) schools responsible for the mentoring. However, the cooperating teachers are excluded from the study as participants and no data will be collected from them since they are not willing to provide data for the study. They indicated that they consider interviews on any topic as a threat since they might find themselves in a position to discuss issues concerning the policies and activities imposed by the Ministry of Education which might be used against their jobs or positions.

They only accepted to function as the cooperating teachers for the student teachers in the study and provide guidance and feedback during the mentoring of the student teachers as both portfolio construction tools (current one and the newly developed one) require.

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide both an epistemological and methodological basis for the study incorporating the three phases of the study. The data collection and analysis methods as well as the procedure for collecting and analysing the data have also been explained. In the following chapter, I will present and discuss the findings on the currently implemented portfolio construction tool after its regular use in the first phase of the study. I implemented the currently used portfolio as the supervisor of the course without changing anything or interfering at all and collected data at the end of the semester to examine student teachers' perceptions of it.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE CURRENTLY IMPLEMENTED PORTFOLIO CONSTRUCTION TOOL- PHASE

1

This chapter attempts to describe how the analysis of the end-of-the-semester reflection essays and the transcribed interviews regarding the currently implemented portfolio tool were carried out. It also aims to present and define the major categories that emerged as a result of the analysis. The chapter proceeds by presenting and discussing the findings of the currently implemented portfolio construction tool as the first phase of the study. Data in Phase 1 was collected to determine the weak and strong aspects of the currently used portfolio tool to feed into the development of a more reflective portfolio construction tool.

4.1 Analysis of end-of-the-semester reflection essays and the transcribed Interviews

This section involves both the presentation and discussion of the findings collected on the currently implemented portfolio construction tool after its regular use at the end of the Spring semester 2007. When I started the analysis of the end-of-the-semester reflection essays and the transcribed interviews, I first read all the essays and the transcriptions two times without taking any notes but only underlined the parts that struck me as significant and interesting in terms of my research topic. Then, I started reading through each essay and transcription one by one but this time began to make marginal notes about significant remarks paying attention to the key words and themes that emerged

naturally (which may be consulted in Appendices K and L) based on the literature related to reflective thinking and portfolio writing. While doing this, the frequency which the significant remarks were made and the distribution of different people who made these remarks helped me in identifying the themes (Allwright and Bailey, 1991). I read the essays and transcriptions comparing and contrasting the themes that occurred and attempted to generalize the themes into major categories. When I reread the main ideas that I noted down in the left and right margins, I realised that some similar topics occurred regarding the purpose of portfolio, student teachers' reactions to the experience of portfolio construction and suggestions regarding the improvement of it which I attempted to categorize into the following general categories:

- 1) Student teachers understanding of the purpose of portfolio construction (PPC)
- 2) Reactions/feelings to the experience of portfolio construction in terms of:
 - Benefits of portfolio construction in promoting reflective thinking skills (B)
 - Weaknesses of the portfolio construction process in terms of promoting reflective thinking skills (W)
- 3) Suggestions for modification of the currently used portfolio (S/M)

4.2 Defining major categories

Analysing the data yielded three major categories regarding the effectiveness of the currently implemented portfolio construction tool as given above. Each of the categories represents the feelings, attitudes, reactions, thoughts, and views of the student teachers (as the participants) as their perceptions regarding the components of the portfolio as a construction tool and the sessions they were involved in as a support for the whole process of the portfolio construction.

Purpose of portfolio construction refers to the student teachers' understanding of the purpose of portfolio as well as their expectations from the portfolio as a tool. Reactions to the experience of portfolio refer to the benefits or opportunities which the participants reported the portfolio provided and the weaknesses they stated the portfolio has as drawbacks. Suggestions for modifications refer to the recommendations student teachers offered for improving the tool. In Diagram 4.1 below, I attempted to summarise the thematic categories in a mind map:

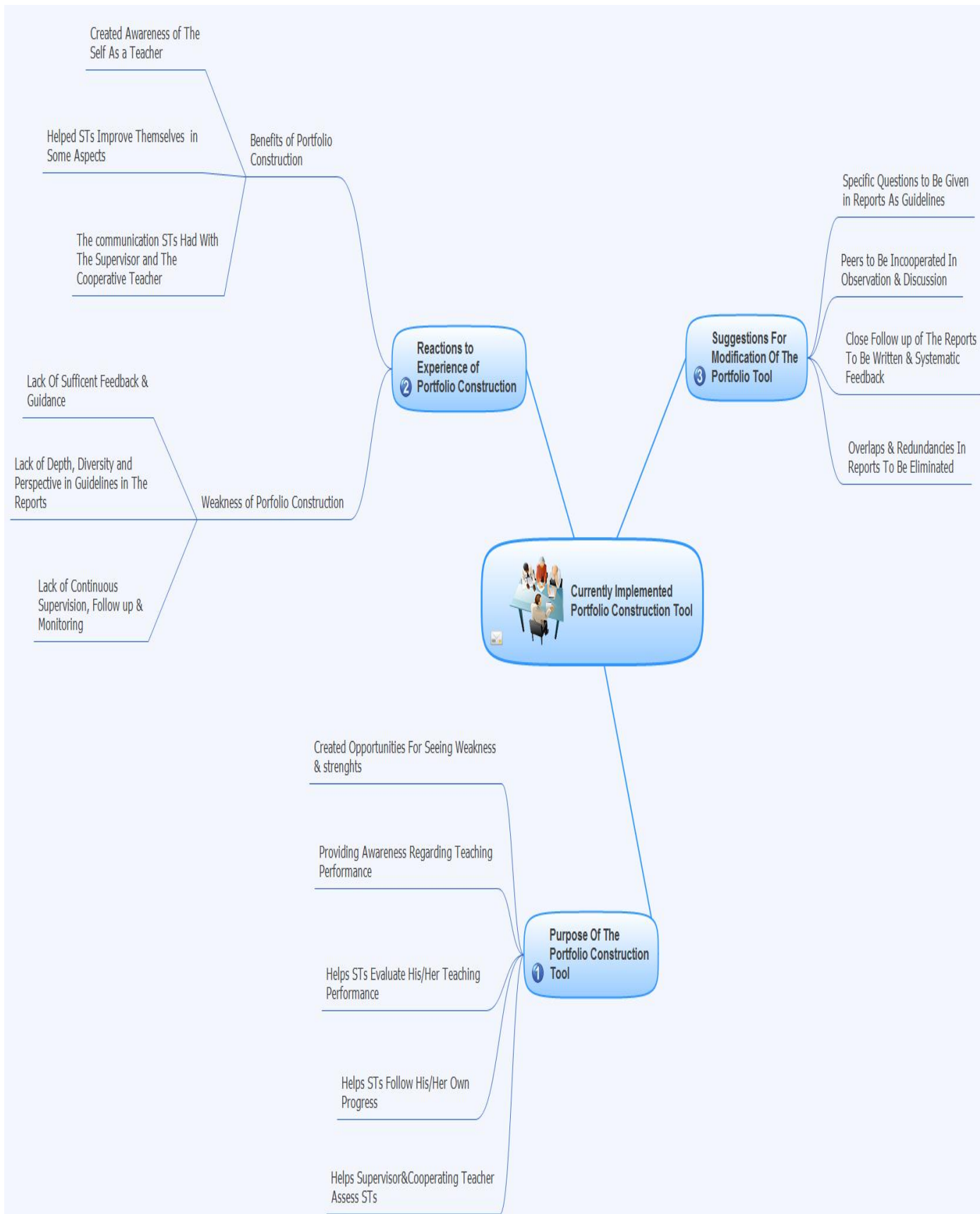


Diagram 4.1 Visual representation of the thematic categories for the currently used portfolio tool

4.3 Presentation of the Categories and Themes

Data in Phase 1 was collected to determine the weak and strong aspects of the currently used portfolio tool to feed into the development of a more reflective portfolio construction tool. Therefore, the research questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 were all predetermined to gather their perceptions in this respect. Question 1 was developed to collect their perceptions regarding the ways they define portfolio in relation to its purpose. Questions 2 and 3 were developed to gather their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the components and processes of the current portfolio in terms of reflection. Question 4 was developed with an intention to determine student teachers' suggestions as modifications to the currently implemented portfolio tool for the development of the new one. At the beginning of the writing up process, I came up with many research questions including the issues I attempted to question. During the analysis of the first phase, I realised that those questions were too specific to be answered so I reduced them into 4 by generalising them in such a way to cover all the other issues I intended to ask separately.

Research Question 1: How do the student teachers define the currently implemented portfolio construction tool? What are the student teachers' perceptions of the purpose of the portfolio construction?

4.3.1 Category 1: Student teachers' understanding of the purpose of portfolio construction (PPC)

Student teachers' own definition of this construction process could present some useful data regarding their understanding of the whole process or could provide us, at least, how they perceive it or how they expect the construction

process to occur. Responses given to related questions both during the interview and in the end-of-the-semester reflection essays yielded the following themes:

4.3.1.1 Theme 1: Enables ST to see their weaknesses and strengths

Most of the student teachers in the first phase of the study reported that they consider portfolio as a tool enabling them to see their weaknesses and strengths as given below:

Criticism of oneself

ST5: "By constructing a portfolio, we had a chance to criticize ourselves as a teacher. In other words, we saw our good points and bad points, or what areas we were good and what areas we were bad"

In this quotation, being able to see one's good and bad points is considered to be able to criticise oneself. Student teacher 5 considered that portfolio provided her with a chance to criticise herself so she found out what areas she was good and bad. It could be said that the skill of self-criticism is limited with the identification of the weak and strong points. Dewey (1910), Schön (1983, 1987), Francis (1995), Copeland (1993), Loughran (2002, 2006) stated that identification of a problem or weak area is just the beginning step of reflective thinking and self-criticism. Confining self-criticism with only identification of the weak and strong points led me to pose two questions: Does the student teacher 5 define portfolio as a tool for self-criticism which helps see good and bad points? Or does the experience of portfolio construction make student teacher 5 perceive portfolio as a tool for self-criticism which is only limited with seeing good or bad points? It is worth taking student teacher's 5 understanding of the purpose of portfolio into consideration for the improvement of the portfolio tool.

The student teacher 13' perception of the purpose of the portfolio below confirms student teacher 5's 'confined' understanding of the portfolio since realising 'the areas one is successful and is not successful' is considered to be the important point of constructing a portfolio.

4.3.1.2 Theme 2: Develops awareness and consciousness regarding teaching performance

Some of the student teachers expect from the portfolio to develop awareness and consciousness regarding teaching profession at further levels rather than seeing their weaknesses and strengths. The comment below suggests that the portfolio as a tool is expected to help student teachers develop some beliefs after implementing certain things in the classroom:

Awareness regarding teaching style and beliefs about teaching

ST1: "It is supposed to construct awareness and consciousness in prospective teachers' teaching style....It is to provide better awareness whether the aims and objectives you implement in class are beneficial for students or not" (See Appendix MA.1 and 2)

However, some student teachers report that portfolio is expected to provide awareness regarding one's teaching by going through some steps such as being aware of strengths and weaknesses, of areas to be developed, by reasoning on those areas through how and why questions. The following quotations exemplify this expectation of the portfolio:

Awareness regarding some steps to be covered while constructing portfolio

ST9:"There are many points that should be covered such as strengths, weaknesses, developmental areas, feelings and how(s)/why(s) while constructing a portfolio"

The steps expected in this and another quotation (See Appendix MA. 2)

identify with the steps of the reflective thinking process proposed by many authors including Dewey (1933), Schön, (1987), Pugach and Johnson (1990), Copeland et al. (1993), Eby and Kujawa (1994), Francis (1995), Lee (2000), Rodgers (2002) and Loughran (2002, 2006).

4.3.1.3 Theme 3: Helps evaluate one's teaching experience (self-evaluation)

Some student teachers reported the portfolio as a self-evaluation tool helping one evaluate methods, techniques and strategies as indicated below:

A tool for evaluating methods, techniques and strategies

ST4: "It is a tool helping evaluate your teaching experience, methods, techniques and strategies you tried implement in class"

But, for some student teachers, the portfolio should not only help for an academic evaluation but help them express and evaluate their feelings and emotions after their implementation of the techniques and methods as stated by the student teacher 14 below:

A tool for evaluating feelings and satisfaction

ST14: "The purpose is for the student teacher to see what s/he has done and whether s/he has achieved doing it effectively, whether s/he is happy of what she has done and whether s/he feels satisfied after her lessons"

The importance of the emotional state of the student teacher after teaching experience is underlined in this excerpt. Student teachers should not only be given an opportunity to evaluate their techniques and strategies but also to evaluate their feelings and emotions; their happiness and satisfaction regarding their own implementations. As both Dewey (1933) and Izard (1977) indicated there is no integration of character and mind unless there is fusion of the

intellectual and the emotional. They considered emotions as the main provider of blueprints for cognition and action. Many emotion theorists suggest that emotions not only influence motivation, they 'constitute the primary motivational system for human beings' (Izard, 1977; Laboskey, 1994). Hence, an understanding of student teachers' emotional states becomes critical to reflective teacher education.

4.3.1.4 Theme 4: Is a tool facilitating progress and helping student teachers see their progress

Most of the student teachers consider portfolio as a tool helping them see their progress making the achievements and problems specific for them throughout the process as indicated by the student teacher 2 below:

A tool showing what one lacks and achieves

ST2: "Constructing portfolio is a very efficient technique for showing the students' development.... A portfolio should supply us to see our developments in the semester but it did not do as I hoped because I couldn't specifically see what I achieved and what I lacked"

Therefore, seeing progress means 'being able to see what one achieves and lacks specifically'. Moreover, the speed and level of improvement should be clear as well. Student teachers expect the portfolio to make them see what aspects of their teaching is improving and how, in what ways they are improving as stated below:

A tool showing the aspects and ways one has improved

ST6: "I think that the main reason of constructing a portfolio is for us to see our speed and level of improvement. How we are improving, what our strengths and weaknesses are and in what ways we are improving"

Moreover, student teachers consider portfolio construction as a process which should proceed continuously in steps as stated by the student teacher 7 below:

A tool involving step-by-step process

ST7: "In addition, portfolio construction is a process that should be continued step by step to reflect observable performance on one's self-development"

Assumptions on reflection also underlines this step-by-step aspect of reflection displaying it as a meaning-making process happening consecutively along a continuum because they cast reflection as an ongoing process of solving problems (Dewey, 1910; Copeland et al. 1993; Rodgers, 2002).

A tool for comparison and motivation

Student teacher 8, on the other hand, underlines two different aspects of portfolio: portfolio as a tool for comparison between the previous and present performance and as a tool for motivation as he indicates in the excerpt below:

ST8: "Portfolios should help the student teacher to look back at the work s/he has done and compare the point the student was at the beginning of the semester to the point the student has reached by the end of the semester. Thus, portfolios are expected to have the potential to give the student a strong sense of accomplishment and as a result improve the overall motivation of the student"

To gain a sense of one's own development, one needs to compare and contrast his/her own performance at the beginning with his/her performance at the end to see the change or progress. Thus, portfolio is expected to have such a function. As Wade and Yarbrough (1996) stated "As we reflect, past experiences are reconsidered in light of new information. Reflection allows us to draw conclusions about our experience and develop new insights that we can apply to our future activities". (p.64) Hence, portfolio is expected to provide the opportunity for reconsidering past experiences by revisiting them to see

progress and plan for the next practice. This is also in line with Zeichner and Liston (1996) who conceived reflection as a looking back on practice to improve it. Student teacher 8 attributes the portfolio a psychological aspect as having the potential to give student teachers a sense of accomplishment creating an overall motivation for the act of teaching.

4.3.1.5 Theme 5: Is an assessment tool for supervisors and cooperating teachers

Portfolio is also considered as an assessment tool for supervisors and cooperating teachers in evaluating the performances of the student teachers as indicated in the following quotation:

A tool for assessing student teachers' ideas and developments

ST12: "Also, I think that the portfolio we have constituted is very helpful for our supervisors in the university because thanks to the portfolio, they can evaluate our process and they can see our developments during the whole term"

The themes under this category displays that student teachers in the first phase of the study are quite aware of the portfolio as a learning tool in addition to it as an assessment tool for the supervisors which could also be seen *in Appendix MA. 3*. Moreover, they reflect their perceptions in the form of their expectations from the portfolio as a tool.

The following table summarizes the findings regarding student teachers' perception of the purpose of the portfolio construction tool:

Category 1: Purpose of the portfolio construction tool
Theme 1: Creates opportunities for seeing weaknesses and strengths Sub-themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criticism of oneself
Theme 2: Provides awareness regarding teaching performance Sub-themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness regarding teaching style, aims and objectives, lesson planning, beliefs about teaching • Awareness regarding some steps to be covered while performing
Theme 3: Helps student teacher evaluate his/her teaching experience Sub-themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tool for evaluating methods, techniques and strategies • A tool for evaluating feelings and satisfaction
Theme 4: Helps student teacher see his/her own progress Sub-theme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tool showing what one lacks and achieves • A tool showing which aspects of teaching one has improved and how
Theme 5: Helps supervisors and cooperating teachers assess student teachers Sub-theme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tool for assessing student teachers' ideas and developments

Table 4.1: Summary of the findings regarding purposes of the portfolio tool in category 1

My intention was to make the practice of portfolio construction by student teachers a practice conducive to reflective thinking and self-assessment. In order to do this, I needed to examine how the currently used portfolio tool affects their reflective thinking skills and teaching performances and what aspects of this tool they consider as strong or weak in improving their reflective thinking skills. I asked the following research question for this aim:

Research question 2: What do the student teachers report on the currently used portfolio tool?

Analyzing the transcribed interviews and the end-of-the-semester reflection essays yielded student teachers' reactions and feelings to the experience of portfolio construction in the form of benefits of portfolio construction in promoting reflective thinking skills and weaknesses of it in terms of promoting

reflective thinking. In expressing their ideas and opinions on their experience, student teachers mentioned both about the components and the processes involved in portfolio construction.

4.3.2 Category 2: Reactions/feelings to the experience of portfolio construction in terms of:

- **Weaknesses of the portfolio construction process in terms of promoting reflective thinking skills (W)**
- **Benefits of portfolio construction in promoting reflective thinking skills (B)**

Weaknesses of components and process (W of C/P)

4.3.2.1 Theme 1: Lack of sufficient feedback and guidance

Student teachers indicated that the construction process provided partial awareness and has been ineffective in promoting their reflective thinking skills due to lack of sufficient feedback and guidance from the cooperating teachers and the supervisor. Lack of sufficient feedback and guidance prevented them from monitoring their developments. Elder and Paul (1994) and Halpern (1996) claim that a part of being a reflective practitioner involves the exploration of ideas and issues in a collaborative and supportive environment. Writing into reflective journals and reports stimulate student teachers to examine and scrutinize their learning experiences but this must be done in an environment that is supportive (Minott, 2008). A supportive environment could be created via feedback and guidance sessions which might allow student teachers to express their ideas without fear of ridicule or threat.

Feedback sessions need to be sufficient and efficient

Student teacher 1 reported about the insufficiency and inefficiency of the feedback depending on the length of discussions she had with her supervisor and cooperating teacher as given below:

ST1: "When it comes to my experience of constructing a portfolio in EDUC 420, it provides partial awareness for me because I couldn't get effective feedback neither from my cooperating teacher nor from my supervisorWith my cooperating teacher we had two-way meetings which lasted only for five or ten minutes so that wasn't enough to discuss all my teaching experience deeply."

Feedback sessions and discussions need to be in an interactive mode (in communication and in dialogue) in a supportive environment

For a deeper analysis of the teaching experience, longer opportunities should be given to student teachers to enable them discuss their performances in detail. Student teacher 4 below indicates her expectation in this respect in more detail underlining the need for communication during these feedback sessions:

ST4: "I got some feedback from my cooperating teacher after each teaching sessions. But I think it wasn't enough, because he just mentioned about a few things about my weaknesses. All the time, he was in a hurry and I didn't have much chance to communicate with him. I would be very happy if he could share some of his experiences with us. He was an experienced teacher but I couldn't ask most of the points that confused me"

In addition to the length of the sessions, student teacher 4 points out to the lack of dialogue between the cooperating teacher and herself. Student teachers expect to hear what the cooperating teacher thinks on their performances but they also want to be given an opportunity to raise the issues that confuse them and have a chance to discuss and clarify these issues by benefitting from the experiences of the instructors. The point is while mentoring the student teachers, the process needs to be conducted in a reflective mode during which

the decisions are taken in an interactive communication between mentor and student teacher, rather than a linear communication from mentor to student teacher (Weiss and Weiss, 2001). As Minnot (2008) also indicated this has to be done in an environment that is supportive to allow student teachers to share their views without fear. On the other hand, creating a supportive environment with positive feedback is not what the student teachers expect from their supervising and cooperating teachers as the student teacher 14 stated below:

Feedback sessions need to be challenging in terms of the quality and the content to stimulate student teachers towards their weaknesses

***ST14:** "My supervisor and cooperating teacher provided me with some positive feedback and I enjoyed hearing these and made me happy. Nonetheless, what I was expecting from them was negative comments to force me to conduct much more effective lessons for the subsequent teaching practices. Their feedback provided me nothing to develop myself. Therefore, I could not say that I developed in such and such ways and for such and such reasons though I received oral feedback from my mentor and written feedback from my supervisor teacher via e-mails"*

Student teacher 14 stresses the importance of the quality and the content of feedback to be provided on their teaching performances. In order to hold more effective lessons and develop themselves, student teachers want to be challenged as well by hearing their weaknesses. Hearing positive comments all the time eliminated the opportunity for discussion, questioning and reasoning; so, she couldn't improve herself as she wished. As most of the authors (Dewey (1910), Schön (1983), Francis (1995), Copeland et, al. (1993), Lee (2000), Loughran (2002) indicated, reflection begins when an individual is perplexed or uncertain about an idea or situation and ends with a judgment. This student teacher was not guided to determine her weak or problematic areas and not been questioned or stimulated to question herself in this respect. If the student

teacher is not encouraged to carry out an active exploration of her weak areas, s/he cannot monitor whether s/he has improved or not and in which areas s/he has improved.

Student teacher 15 points out the importance that reflective journaling needs to be supported with feedback via discussions as presented below:

Necessity for support via feedback for improvement in a wider perspective

ST15: *“When I started to write my reports, I thought that it was going to contribute to my experience in various ways to enhance my teaching methods. However, I couldn’t find any chance to see how I could manage or change my style according to the class – no opportunity for problem solving. I could be supported with some useful feedback or at least to discuss some strategies to improve my teaching style”*

Learning about ‘self’ is a characteristic of reflective teaching since reflective teaching includes self-examination of beliefs, values and teaching styles/methods. Reflective journaling is a tool which enables student teachers to engage reflectively with the practice of teaching. However, it is also a teaching learning tool in which the responsibility for student learning is shared by both students and lecturers (Doucet and Wilson, 1997). As Minnot (2008) pointed out journaling allows them to examine their beliefs, values and experiences which influence the way they approach practice so the role of lecturers is to examine students’ journals and to use the data to guide the students’ self-examination. So, student teachers need to be provided with some useful written or oral feedback in the form of discussions to solve their problematic areas and improve their teaching styles. As Hatton and Smith (1995) and l’anson et al. (2003) indicated reflective teaching also involves engaging in discussions and dialogue with various others that lead to self-

understanding and self-improvement promoting the development of a professional identity.

4.3.2.2 Theme 2: Lack of depth, diversity and perspective in guidelines in the reports

The student teachers indicated that the points given in the reports for consideration has not been effective in promoting their awareness, self-critique, self-assessment and reflective thinking skills because they lack depth; thus, they couldn't enable student teachers to think from different perspectives with a diversity.

Lack of perspective, diversity and creativity

Diversity is an important aspect of self-examination and self-understanding since it provides multiple perspectives to look at oneself and one's own teaching (I'anson et al., 2003). Student teacher 1 reports about the deficiency and weakness of the reports in guiding student teachers to look at their teaching performance from a diverse perspective as shown below:

ST1: "The portfolio didn't provide any specialization such as classroom management, methods etc. I just evaluated myself generally and I wrote what I had in my mind, it didn't guide me to write different and new points about my teaching. I wish I was able to discover new aspects of myself as a teacher"

The structure of the reports in the portfolio provided a general outlook towards one's teaching since they did not stimulate student teachers to analyze their lesson in terms of stages and important aspects of teaching such as classroom management and methods. Student teachers expected to analyse their teaching practice from various angles wishing to discover different aspects of themselves as teachers. Lack of discovering different aspects of one's own

teaching might have been caused by the type of guiding questions in the reports as indicated by the student teacher 5 below:

ST5: "The portfolio construction process wasn't a good experience for me because it hasn't been very effective for me and I didn't make use of it because of redundancies; there were the same type of questions so I couldn't give response from different perspectives and my perspective didn't broaden. I always turned around the same points"

Not being able to examine one's own teaching from different perspectives is attributed to the limitation of the same type of questions which caused repetition and redundancy in responses with a narrow perspective. Martin's (2005) and Kuter's (2007) studies support this stating that more focused questions need to be incorporated into the reflective process. The excerpt from the student teacher 10 below confirms lack of diversity in questions which prevented the opportunity for creativity as well:

ST10: "It wasn't beneficial in promoting my self-assessment and reflective thinking as I expected because there was not enough diversity type of questions, different ways of evaluating myself and no opportunity for creativity. I just learned my weaknesses and strengths but it didn't require me to do reasoning, questioning and analysis"

Student teacher 10 attributes self-assessment and reflective thinking skills to diverse type of guiding questions which provides an opportunity for different ways of evaluating oneself and for creativity. Reasoning, questioning and analysis are also considered to be important elements for improving self-assessment and reflective thinking skills and student teachers expect to be involved into those levels of self-examination rather than remaining at the level of weaknesses and strengths as also confirmed by the student teacher 11 below:

ST11: "Actually, there are some questions or points for us to follow but we only provided answers to those points on a surface level but I don't think that we managed to go deeper on the problematic issues we faced"

No opportunity to suspend judgment on weaknesses and solutions to improve those weaknesses

The 'attitude of suspended conclusion' (Dewey, 1910), 'framing/reframing the problem' (Schön, 1987), 'reframing through clarifying the problem' (Pugach and Johnson, 1990), 'making a judgment' (Eby and Kujawa, 1994) and 'problem definition/reframing' (Lee, 2000) all suggest that one must never accept suggestions uncritically and must always suspend judgment during the necessary period of inquiry. Student teacher 7 below also states that the portfolio should stimulate her to carry out reasoning and questioning on the reasons for weakness and solutions rather than only asking for the problems and solutions for those problems. Reasoning, questioning and analysis should be integrated into the thought process of the student teachers as they examine their teaching practices. Challenges and contexts should also be created for developing those skills since the current portfolio has only created an awareness regarding the importance of reflective thinking skill rather than providing opportunities for the improvement of those skills:

***ST7:** "My awareness of my professional development has partly been heightened by the portfolio construction process. Instead of asking the problems and the ideal ways to solve the problems, this portfolio must have made me think about why I had these problems and then the ideal ways to correct them, to put them into action. What are my reasons for such solutions? Actually, the portfolio of EDUC 420 course only helped me to understand the importance of being reflective. It didn't create challenges for me to develop these skills"*

The quotation from the student teacher 12 below also supports the deficiency of questioning in the portfolio in terms of enabling student teachers in producing solutions for their problems:

ST 12: "The experience of constructing a portfolio enabled me to partially self-critique my teaching performance as I could be aware of my inefficient points after; however, it didn't facilitate me to produce any solution as a prospective teacher. For instance, I had time management problems in most of my teachings but the portfolio didn't include any question about that matter such as 'why I couldn't tackle with it when I faced with it' and 'How I could manage to do it'. It didn't question my weaknesses deeply"

The student teacher 12 expected from the portfolio to be able to guide him in questioning his weakness at a deeper level through why and how questions.

Lack of awareness on the integration of theory into practice (no guidance or stimulation for the integration of theory into action)

Some student teachers indicated the importance of integrating theory into their practice and reported that the portfolio was ineffective in providing opportunities for the integration of the theory into their practice as expressed by the student teacher 3 below:

ST3: "I had little chance to compare the theory that I have been exposed for four years in ELT department with the practice in my portfolio. I couldn't really analyze whether I could put theory into action in my classes or not. If the portfolio had asked me to provide creative theoretical supports for my practices, I could have been aware of my deficiencies and their reasons easily"

Being able to integrate theoretical knowledge into one's teaching is considered to be an important aspect of effective teaching; however, a considerable amount of variation can be observed in the way the student teacher 3 perceives 'theory-practice' relationship which offers some important elements in this

respect. She perceives it as being able to compare one's own practice on the ground of the theory one has learnt; as being able to analyse to what extent one can put theory into practice in one's own teaching and as being able to explain one's own deficiencies with reasons via theoretical supports. Orland-Barak (2005) also indicated that establishing meaningful connections between theory and practice provides a rationale for action. On the other hand, student teacher 8 perceives 'theory-practice' relationship as implementing theory into teaching, and reporting on the consequences of the implemented theory as given below:

ST8: "The portfolio didn't ask my theoretical knowledge, which theory I put into action, whether it was beneficial or not, what the result of the implemented method is. I evaluated the situations just from one perspective"

Student teacher 8 considers the absence of putting theory into practice and the lack of evaluating its effectiveness as a lack in the perspective as well since she reported her analysis to be only from one perspective when not looked from a theoretical perspective. The generation of a variety of alternative suggestions from theories or research findings is an important factor in good thinking (Dewey, 1910; Copeland, 1993) since it enables one to see the same event from different perspective through 'framing and reframing' the problem for better solutions (Schön, 1987; Pugach and Johnson, 1990; Lee, 2000; Loughran, 2006). Student teachers need to relate their present teaching to the theoretical knowledge produced by thinkers in order to make meaning out of it and is changed by it (Dewey, 1910).

Student teacher 13, on the other hand, associates creativity with the 'theory-practice' relationship as reported below. Lack of creativity is attributed to the lack of opportunity for combining and using theory with practice in the reports since it could broaden their perspective to their teaching performance by providing multiplicity of voices from others.

ST13: "The weakness of the whole process is lack of creativity. It didn't give us a chance to create by using theory and practice that we learnt. We couldn't use the theoretical knowledge learnt in previous methodology and education courses. Portfolio didn't ask to combine theory and practice in our reports, but only my supervisor reminded us to do it"

Lack of opportunity for monitoring progress – lack of bridging between previous and present performances

The student teachers had difficulty to monitor their progress since the components of the portfolio did not provide them with the opportunity to see and compare their previous performances with their present performances and determine action for the future based on the past and present as stated by the student teacher 9 below:

ST9: "In each report, I wrote about the same things. Instead, it could have led me to evaluate myself as a performer for each next step. The components of the portfolio haven't got a development in itself. For example, after I finish with my first reflective report, it could have asked me to evaluate my performance by providing a section to compare between reflective reports of my previous and next teachings"

Reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a consequence – a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each in turn leans back on its predecessors. The successive portions of the reflective thought grow out of one another and support one another. Thus, student teachers need to be provided with an opportunity and

guided to build a bridge between their past and present performances in order to take intelligent action for the next. Reflection is a meaning making process happening consecutively along a continuum (Copeland, 1993; Rodgers, 2002) so the meaning of experience can not be perceived if it is not related and connected to other experiences continuously on a thread to ensure the progress of the individual. As indicated by the student teacher 15 below, he could not follow up his progress since the portfolio has been ineffective in displaying the differences between the past and the present performances. There was also no analysis and awareness regarding how his development occurred.

ST15: *“From the view of progress, the portfolio asked me the areas I have developed myself in. However, the portfolio didn’t show me the differences in progress or it didn’t ask me how I developed or improved myself in those areas. What were the factors that helped my development? I could not figure out how my development occurred”*

Lack of opportunity for expressing feelings and emotions

Student teacher 7 underlines the importance of feelings and emotions during the process of practicing teaching since one’s development does not only include the academic and intellectual aspect of one’s teaching but the emotional aspect as well as stated below:

ST7: *“The whole portfolio depended on a classical word ‘development’. What about the rest? Where were my feelings, emotions and the difficulties I had that I wanted to express? In my portfolio, I didn’t have a chance to reflect my emotions and difficulties since this portfolio only depended on my academic teaching and professional development.*

The student teacher 7 complains about the lack of opportunity for the expression of the emotional aspects of their experience and too much

dependence on the academic side of it. Researchers like Clandinin (1985); Liston & Zeichner (1990); Noordhoff & Kleinfeld (1990); Richert (1992) remind us of the important role emotions and emotional states can play in reflective thinking and also in learning to teach. Student teacher 7 also complains about the unbalance between the academic and emotional aspects of their experience in the portfolio with too much emphasis on the academic (intellectual) side. Many emotion theorists suggest that emotions not only influence motivation, they 'constitute the primary motivational system for human beings' (Izard, 1977). Hence, an understanding of student teachers' emotional states and traits becomes critical to reflective teacher education.

My interpretation of the quotations: The tasks, activities and the questions (consideration points) in the portfolio did not help student teachers to specify, to single out the problems/weaknesses they experienced and to work on them systematically to overcome or produce solutions for them. It doesn't provide a framework for the student teachers to specify their weaknesses, to produce solutions, to provide theoretical or personal justification of their solutions, to implement their solutions and observe the consequences of the solutions in the follow up lessons. It doesn't provide them with the opportunity to compare and contrast their previous performances with their following performances. There was no questioning for the deeper analysis of weaknesses and for concrete solutions, as well as for personal and theoretical support and application of solutions.

The questions asked for guidance in the reflective reports were general and not considered different stages of lesson planning. Hence, this has not stimulated student teachers to reflect on different phases of the lesson from different aspect. General questions limited their way of thinking and have not broadened their perspectives in looking at their performances so they continuously repeated their ideas and couldn't examine their performances at different levels from different perspectives.

4.3.2.3 Theme 3: Lack of continuous supervision, follow-up and monitoring

Student teachers indicated that portfolio construction processes and its components have been partially beneficial in promoting their self-assessment and reflective thinking skills because there was a lack of systematic and continuous supervision and follow-up of the written and oral activities that the student teachers performed. Lack of this caused a lack of discipline in completion and submission of the written and oral activities on time. Lack of a systematic and continuous construction prevented student teachers from improving their weaknesses as indicated by the student teacher 6 below:

Lack of a close and continuous follow up of the performances had a negative impact on the improvement of weaknesses

ST6: "The activities in this portfolio do not force the student teacher to focus on her weaknesses, to produce solutions and to put them into action. The supervisor or the cooperating teacher does not make a close follow up of this. In each lesson, the CT focuses on a separate weakness and on the suggestions for solutions of that weakness but whether that weakness is improved or not in the following lessons is not followed"

The supervisor or the cooperating teacher is expected to provide a focused set of feedback concerning the improvement of the student teacher's weaknesses

with a close supervision each week. Similarly student teacher 7 reported about the insufficiency of the feedback provided which prevented the construction of the portfolio from happening step by step:

Lack of continuous production had a negative impact on the development of different perspectives

ST7: "In addition, the guidance provided by my supervisor and cooperating teacher during the construction of portfolio wasn't enough because my portfolio construction was a one-step process. It didn't last step by step by getting enough feedback to go on. Thus, the elements couldn't gain me different perspectives to be taken into account."

Lack of step-by-step construction of the portfolio with lack of continuous feedback prevented the student teacher from developing different perspectives to his teaching. On the other hand, student teacher 5 stated that lack of systematic and continuous feedback affected the construction of the portfolio causing her to delay the construction. Writing the portfolio in a very short time rather than in steps caused uncertainty about the quality of her production as expressed below:

Lack of systematic and continuous feedback had a negative impact on the construction of the portfolio by causing uncertainty about the quality of production

ST5: "It was very difficult for me to construct my portfolio in terms of time and content. I was not followed during the construction, so I delayed writing it. I completed my reflections in last four days by staying in front of the computer for hours without sleeping. In addition, I did not gain feedback while writing it. I wrote so many things but unfortunately I don't know whether they were what I was expected to write"

Continuous supervision and feedback by the supervisor and the cooperating teacher would enable the completion of the tasks and reports on time and enable student teachers monitor their improvement by having a chance for discussion of their ideas and solutions. Lack of feedback and discussion of the

ideas and suggestions might cause uncertainty regarding the steps and actions taken as indicated by the student teacher 8 below:

ST8: *“In addition, I must have criticized myself. And I did so. I wrote them in my portfolio as it was aimed for me to criticize myself. But I am not sure whether those were in the right direction or not. I must have been provided feedback to check how much I was able to criticize myself but not at the end but during the teaching practice period or portfolio construction process. In my opinion, it lacked solving my problems besides identifying them. It asked me so many times what I think about finding out solutions, it was good but what about if I was not right. So it should have taken into consideration giving concrete ideas, feedback in solutions”*

Feedback needs to be given continuously and systematically in steps for efficiency and clarity. Lack of systematic monitoring leads to lack of discipline in providing feedback and causes submission of components in an undisciplined manner as stated by the student teacher 1 below:

Lack of monitoring and submission of components on time had a negative impact in terms of following progress and enabling improvement

ST1: *“There was no force to complete the reports on time. It would have been more efficient if my supervisor had checked them continually so I would have to finish them on time and I would be able to see my improvement and there would be enough time to realize my weaknesses and overcome them”*

Lack of continuous monitoring and feedback prevents students from following their improvement causing lack of awareness in terms of weaknesses and their solutions. They might have difficulty in linking experiences to each other and taking intelligent actions based on the feedback given by the instructors. It requires a systematic and disciplined interaction with one’s environment and performance. Rodgers’ interpretation (2002) of Dewey’s reflection claims that “reflection is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking” (p.845).

Reflective thought comprises “definite units that are linked together so that there is a sustained movement to a common end” (p.5). Continuity is also important in order to build links between performances; therefore, system and discipline is essential for this.

The following table summarizes the findings regarding student teachers’ reactions/feelings to the experience of portfolio construction in terms of its weaknesses in promoting reflective thinking skills:

<p>Category 2: Weaknesses of components and processes</p> <p>Theme 1: Lack of sufficient feedback and guidance Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback sessions need to be sufficient and efficient • Feedback sessions and discussions need to be in an interactive mode in a supportive environment • Feedback sessions need to be challenging in terms of quality and content to stimulate student teachers for the reasoning of weaknesses • Feedback sessions were essential as a support for improvement in a wider perspective
<p>Theme 2: Lack of depth, diversity and perspective in guidelines in the reports Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of perspective, diversity and creativity • Lack of opportunity for reasoning over weaknesses and solutions for improvement • Lack of awareness on the integration of theory into practice • Lack of opportunity for monitoring progress- lack of bridging between previous and present performances • Lack of opportunity for expressing feelings and emotions
<p>Theme 3: Lack of continuous supervision, follow-up and monitoring Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a close and continuous follow-up had a negative impact on the improvement of weaknesses • Lack of sufficient feedback and continuous production had a negative impact on the development of different perspectives • Lack of systematic and continuous feedback had a negative impact on the construction of the portfolio in steps and caused uncertainty about the quality of production • Lack of monitoring and submission of components on time had a negative impact in following and enabling improvement

Table 4.2: Summary of the findings regarding weaknesses of the currently used portfolio tool in category 2

4.3.3 Benefits of components and process (BofC/P)

4.3.3.1 Theme 1: Created awareness of the self as a teacher in terms of weaknesses and the strengths

Student teachers reported about the benefits of the components and the processes involved regarding the currently implemented portfolio tool. They found the portfolio tool effective since it created self-awareness in terms of weaknesses and strengths as stated by the student teachers below:

ST2: "According to my feelings to my experience of constructing a portfolio are that I could see my weak points and strong points easily from the reports... Reflective reports enabled me to evaluate myself. I could easily identify about my areas which I was strong and weak but in the portfolio there could be more specific items for evaluating our teachings"

ST7: "The portfolio helped me to bring out my problematic areas about my teaching but it didn't help me develop solutions."

Although student teachers indicated that their awareness improved regarding their weak and strong areas, they expected to provide some solutions and put those into action to evaluate the results as well (See Appendix MA. 4). Student teacher 2 considers the portfolio insufficient in terms of the questions or points given for guidance since she claims that more specific items are essential for a better evaluation of their teaching. The quotations and excerpts above give the impression that student teachers perceived self-awareness as becoming aware of weaknesses and strengths. On the other hand, some student teachers associated self-criticism, self-assessment and self-reflection with being aware of strong and weak points as indicated below:

Associated self-criticism with being aware of weaknesses and strengths

ST6: "This process helped me to gain the ability to criticize myself. How much I can criticize myself; I think I was improving in that area. With the help of the feedback that I got from my cooperating teacher helped me see myself from a different perspective.... It helped me to self-critique towards my weaknesses and strengths. After criticizing myself in terms of teaching, I can handle the problematic parts of my teaching"

ST9:"I had a chance to self-critique my teaching performances. I thought about my teachings when I came home and evaluated myself by jotting down the aspects that were good and weak about my teachings.

Student teachers indicated that they gained the skill of self-criticism since they were given the opportunity to write and speak about their weak and strong points *which may also be found in Appendix MA. 5*. On the other hand, seeing the weak and strong aspects of one's teaching can also be perceived as doing self-analysis as reported below:

Associated self-analysis with being aware of weaknesses and strengths

ST15: "To be honest, the process of portfolio construction contributed to my development of teaching only in a way that I analyzed my experience by seeing my weak and strong points" (See Appendix MA. 6)

Student teachers perceived themselves as performing different skills only by recognizing their weak and strong aspects which could be interpreted as thinking about one's performance at first level. The research by Mansvelder-Longayroux et al. (2007) reported 6 learning activities involved in producing portfolios which included recollection, evaluation, analysis, critical processing, diagnosis and reflection. Analysis requires one to examine which different

aspects of an experience can be distinguished and what underlying processes played a role in an experience or development by examining the factors that played a role in that experience. Critical processing involves comparing one's own opinion with the opinions and beliefs of others such as theory, mentor, fellow student, supervisor and formulating your opinion on the basis of different arguments. However, the explanations in the transcriptions and excerpts do not go from 'recognizing the weaknesses and strengths level' further. Moreover, self-critique and self-analysis skills requires the student teacher spot the weak or problematic areas and to define and do some reasoning over the problematic areas to see the underlying reasons or affecting factors for the problematic areas. Solutions and suggestions need to be produced and these need to be grounded on the beliefs of others as theoretically and practically before any action is taken. Reasoning over the consequences of formulated and implemented actions need to be thought and evaluated. Therefore, more stages and further levels of thinking patterns are required for reflective practice.

4.3.3.2 Theme 2: Helped STs improve themselves in some aspects

- lesson planning skills
- teaching style: techniques and methodology (use of blackboard, voice and teaching methods)
- self-responsibility, self-organization and self-disciplined

The components and the processes associated with the portfolio construction tool helped student teachers improve themselves in some aspects such as lesson planning, teaching style and self-responsibility, self-organization and self-discipline. The following excerpts indicate the effect of portfolio on lesson planning skills:

Lesson planning skills

ST11: "Constructing a portfolio has not contributed to the development of any of my skills except for my lesson planning skills"

ST14: "I had an idea about how to make a good lesson plan by the help of my supervisor and also my cooperating teacher's ideas contributed to my lesson plans"

It made student teachers to be prepared and develop good lesson plans systematically. On the other hand, it made some student teachers realize that they were good at preparing lesson plans (See Appendix MA. 7). The portfolio construction process helped some student teachers improve their teaching style in some aspects such as how to use the blackboard (See Appendix MA. 8) and their voice effectively as indicated below:

Teaching style: techniques and methods

ST10: "I believe that portfolio construction process and the components of the portfolio have contributed to my development as a prospective teacher. For example, in my first formal teaching my voice wasn't audible. I took into consideration this and in my last formal teaching I have improved myself"

In addition, it helped some student teachers to develop techniques for teaching some tenses and grammatical points in various ways as presented below:

ST4: *"This portfolio enabled me to examine what I have learnt throughout the practice. For example, I learnt how to teach the present perfect tense in different ways. I taught it for 3 lessons but after those lessons in my reflections I found out that there were various ways to teach it although I just have used only a few of them. Apart from this, there was nothing that I learnt in terms of methodology"*

Constructing the portfolio enabled some student teachers to be organized, disciplined and responsible towards teaching experience as reported by the student teachers below:

To be organized, disciplined and responsible

ST6: "Putting and gathering all the information together needed to have responsibilities. That's why it provided us to be well-organized, disciplined and ready to do all the tasks in teaching experience."

Being organized and responsible towards writing reflective reports and forming up the portfolio enabled student teachers to be aware of their needs and weaknesses as well which in return led them towards developing ways for solving the problematic points. They prepared their lesson plans by taking the weaknesses into consideration (See Appendix MA. 9)

4.3.3.3 Theme 3: The communication student teacher had with the cooperating teacher and the supervisor during two- and three-way meetings (C)

The following student teachers reported some important aspects of the communication they had during the meetings with their cooperating teachers and the supervisor. The dialogue and the communication they had were perceived to be constructive, open, helpful and friendly. They reported to be treated as colleagues and equals rather than students during these meetings for feedback. The attitude of the instructors is said to be interactive and communicative rather than prescriptive. Weiss and Weiss (2001) stated that the process of mentoring in a reflective mode requires the communication to be communicative between mentor and student teacher rather than linear from mentor to student.

A mutual dialogue with an open, helpful and friendly communication

ST9: "The communication between me and the two teachers was good because they were open, helpful and friendly"

ST13: "It was more like a shared-decision making process and a mutual dialogue because my reflection were taken into account"

The adjectives "shared decision making process" and "a mutual dialogue" confirms the interactive aspect of the communication and its positive effect on the student teachers. The fact that the student teacher's reflection were taken into account and they were let to find solutions on their own displays that the supervisor and the cooperating teacher functioned as guides rather than as prescribers which can be seen in *Appendix MA. 10*. This helps develop professional trust and respect during communications at the meetings (Weiss and Weiss, 2001).

The following table summarises the findings regarding student teachers' reactions/feelings to the experience of portfolio construction in terms of its benefits in promoting reflective thinking skills:

Category 2: Benefits of components and processes
<p>Theme 1: Created awareness of the self as a teacher in terms of weaknesses and strengths</p> <p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • weak and strong points • associated self-criticism with being aware of weaknesses and strengths • associated self-analysis with being aware of weaknesses and strengths
<p>Theme 2: Helped student teachers improve themselves in some aspects</p> <p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lesson planning skills • teaching style and methods • to be organized, disciplined and responsible
<p>Theme 3: The communication student teachers had with the supervisor and the cooperating teacher during two-way and three-way meetings</p> <p>Sub-theme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a mutual dialogue with an open, helpful and friendly communication

Table 4.3 Summary of the findings regarding benefits of the currently used portfolio tool in category 2

In order to develop a more reflective portfolio construction tool, I needed to explore what student teachers suggest as modifications to the currently used portfolio; what aspects of the components or processes they would recommend as modifications, deletions or additions. In achieving this aim, I asked the following research question:

Research Question 3: What do the student teachers suggest as modifications to the currently used portfolio?

4.3.4 Category 3: Suggestions for modification of the portfolio (S/M)

Participants were asked both during the interviews and in their end-of-the-semester reflection essays whether they have any suggestions for the modification of the currently implemented portfolio construction tool. Analysing the responses to this question in both of the data collection instruments as well as the other sections released the following themes as suggestions for the modification of the portfolio tool.

4.3.4.1 Theme 1: Specific questions to be given in reports as guidelines rather than points for consideration

Zeichner and Liston (1996) claim that reflective teaching must have a reflexive dimension: "If a teacher never questions the goals and the values that guide his or her work, the context on which he or she teaches or never examines his or her assumptions, then it is our belief that this individual is not engaged in reflective teaching" (p.1). As claimed by Zeichner and Liston, student teachers or practicing teachers are expected to question and examine their practice at different levels from different perspectives in order to be said that they are engaged in reflective teaching. Van Niekerk (1998) indicates that when constructing reflective statements students should be encouraged to ask

themselves questions. He claims that guiding questions are essential components of any portfolio as they allow students to examine the thinking behind their decisions and actions.

Questions concerning both theory and practice

ST1: *“Writing essay type reports are dangerous as everyone writes what s/he wants so it should be better to be given questions and everyone should answer according to them.... There should be more questions about theory and practice. I couldn't implement all techniques that I learned. There should be questions like `what was new in the class today?` `What did I learn and teach today?`”*

There are dangers of writing reports if student teachers are not provided with guidelines since they may get off the topic and write irrelevant things.

Answering according to the given questions might provide student teachers with the useful perspectives and frames to look at their performances. Moreover, questions concerning theory and practice are expected to be more since student teachers wish to implement the theories and techniques they have learnt before to see the consequences of those theories and techniques on their teaching.

Analysing the lesson according to its stages is considered better by the student teachers as indicated below:

Questions concerning the stages of the lesson including when, how and why questions

ST5: *“If mainly the reflective reports are written according to the stages of the lesson, it can be better to describe things orderly. So, students can analyze when, how and why they experienced the situation better.”*

Having a stage by stage analysis of the lesson accompanied with when, how and why questions might help them analyze their experience better and in

detail. Stage by stage analysis of the lesson through appropriate questions perceived to be important by the student teacher 7 as well since it will provide a retrospective perspective for the student teacher to revisit his/her experience and determine problematic areas. The questions are also expected to enable them express their feelings and reactions against their weaknesses to be able to find the most appropriate solutions as presented below:

Questions concerning a retrospective perspective with feelings incorporated for better solutions

ST7: "In each reflective report, there must be questions which are arranged according to the stages of the lesson and students should answer them. Students should write about their problems and think themselves in the same situation again by expressing their feelings and reactions to find the most appropriate solutions"

Some student teachers indicate that self-analysis and self-evaluation need to be done from multiple perspectives and not in one direction. Looking at oneself from different perspectives enables different aspects of the experience to be seen (Driscoll, 2000). So, in order to achieve this, questions enabling a multiple perspective look at one's own performance is essential. The following quotations illustrate the perception of the student teachers in this respect:

Questions concerning multiple perspectives and depth

ST9: "My overall performance in the class is what I become aware of. The reflective reports didn't show me anything different because the answers to the questions in the reports are the things that I already know"

ST13: "It was so boring to continue my self-evaluation in just one direction. The points in the reflective reports didn't lead me to evaluate myself from different perspectives"

4.3.4.2 Theme 2: Importance of peers in observation and discussions

Hearing a variety of other perspectives helps learners to judge the quality of their own solutions and to learn perhaps more effective strategies for problem solving.

Student teachers indicate that opportunities for reflection can be increased by allowing student teachers to share their reflections with their peers as well as stated below:

ST11: “Reflections should not only be supported by the cooperating teachers but student teachers should have chance to share their reflections (views, self-critique) with each other. Peer discussions for sharing their reflections can be more effective because all students are experiencing almost the same things with same feelings in similar conditions. They can understand each other and their situations easily so they may give each other some advices about how to overcome their weaknesses and negative feelings. Student teachers can easily and effectively reflect their ideas to each other more systematically”

Experiencing almost the same things with the same feelings in similar conditions can enable student teachers to understand each other and their conditions better. This makes empathy easier and higher and when empathy is higher, collaboration becomes easier as well. Collaboration provides opportunity for interaction and negotiation. As Vygotsky and situated-cognition theorists indicated higher mental processes in humans develop through social interaction (Driscoll, 2000). Collaboration is not just a matter of asking students to work together in groups or to share their individual knowledge with one another. Rather, collaboration enables insights and solutions to arise synergistically (Brown et al., 1989) that would not otherwise come about. As the student teacher 11 pointed out as a matter of empathy and collaboration, social negotiation of the problematic areas and their solutions become easier and

more effective. Therefore, integrating peer collaboration into the portfolio construction processes might be very effective as could also be stated by the student teacher 9 in Appendix MA. 11.

4.3.4.3 Theme 3: Suggestions for a close follow-up: reports should be written and feedback and guidance should be given systematically during the writing process

- Pre and post teaching discussion sessions should be held regularly before and after each teaching practice
- Formal Appraisal Forms should be given to ST soon after
- All reports should be written on time when memories are fresh.
- Lesson plans and Reflective reports should be given to supervisor on time

Feedback becomes meaningful and effective when given systematically and regularly on time. While constructing a portfolio, student teachers are involved in a process which is to be fed systematically and negotiated socially because one step is going to affect the next step. As the student teacher stated below and in Appendix MA 12, all the reports should be submitted on time and feedback should be received from the supervisor or the cooperating teacher continuously and systematically in order to locate mistakes and have a chance to improve them:

Systematic feedback and submission of reports regularly

ST2: "I want from cooperating teacher to give the reports about me one or two days later not at the end of the semester. And we should write the portfolio daily that's why our supervisor should take our lesson plan and reflective report after our practice teachings. By doing like that both we do our job daily when ideas are fresh and we can get feedback from the teacher and we see our mistakes easily on time and do correction on time for the next lesson"

Dewey stated that "reflection is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking, with its roots in scientific inquiry" (p.845). Reflective thought comprises

“definite units that are linked together so that there is a sustained movement to a common end” (p.5). If reports are not written when experiences are fresh in memory and shared by the instructors and peers for negotiation and solution throughout the process, then writing up that portfolio would not make sense because each unit needs to be linked to the previous, the current and the future performances in order to make progress and develop professionally. In order to achieve this, student teacher 9 recommends that reports are written right after teaching and submitted weekly (which could be seen in MA13) so as to receive feedback systematically. A close-follow up is essential to ensure continuity and system.

Student teacher 11 underlines the importance of feedback and guidance and how the lack of it (which could be found in MA 14) can affect the reflective thought of the student teachers. Not receiving feedback or lack of negotiation on the weak areas prevented the student teacher from developing solutions and strategies for the next teachings.

Importance and lack of systematic discussion and support from the supervisor and the cooperating teacher during the construction process is emphasized by the student teacher 15 below:

Importance and lack of multiple perspectives in guidance

ST15: "It was so boring to continue my self-evaluation in just one direction. They didn't lead me to evaluate myself from different perspectives. Besides, If I had a chance to discuss them (my self-evaluations) with my cooperating teacher and supervisor, they will be more meaningful since I couldn't see my faults on my own, and couldn't find solutions quickly and easily to my problems. I tried to reach to better solutions by trying them out in my coming teachings"

Reflection improves when supported with discussion and feedback. Negotiation of one's practice from different perspectives enables different aspects of the practice to be seen and brings in different suggestions and solutions that would be quite difficult for one to think of in isolation.

The following table summarizes the findings regarding the suggestions for modification of the portfolio construction tool:

Category 3: Suggestions for modification of the portfolio
<p>Theme 1: Specific questions to be given in reports as guidelines rather than points for consideration</p> <p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions concerning both theory and practice • Questions concerning the stages of the lesson including when, how and why questions • Questions concerning problems, feelings and solutions • Questions concerning multiple perspectives and in-depth
Theme 2: Importance of peers in observation and discussions
<p>Theme 3: Suggestions for a close follow-up: reports should be written and feedback and guidance should be given systematically during the writing process</p> <p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic feedback and submission of reports regularly • Systematic and close follow-up • Importance of feedback and guidance on development • Importance and lack of multiple perspectives in guidance

Table 4.4 Summary of the findings regarding suggestions as modifications to the portfolio tool in Category 3

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION OF THE NEWLY DEVELOPED PORTFOLIO CONSTRUCTION TOOL – Phase 2

Based on the findings of the data regarding the currently implemented portfolio construction tool, and the literature reviewed regarding portfolio use and its connection with reflective thinking; a new portfolio construction tool was developed. The weaknesses of the previously implemented portfolio tool which can be consulted in table 4.2 and the suggestions student teachers made on its improvement which can be found in table 4.4 were taken into consideration as the new tool was being developed. The benefits which the previous portfolio tool provided was also integrated into the new tool and these could be referred to in table 4.3. The following sections involve the components of the newly developed portfolio tool; procedures followed during the implementation of the new tool; the role of the supervisor, cooperating teachers and the student teachers during its implementation; and the processes supporting the construction of the new tool.

5.1 The components of the newly developed portfolio construction tool

The contents of the components have been designed by taking the weak aspects of the currently implemented portfolio tool and the suggestions student teachers made for its improvement. More focused questions (how and why questions) were integrated into the journals and the reports to enable reasoning, questioning and an in-depth analysis of the practices at different stages of the lesson so as to provide diversity and creativity during the construction process. Questions to enable theory-practice relationship to be

reflected upon from different perspectives were also integrated. Student teachers were also provided an opportunity to express their feelings on their practices to help them concentrate more on the cognitive aspects of their teaching. The journals and the reports have been designed to help student teachers establish a bridge between their past, current and future practices through 'compare and contrast' questions. Through these compare and contrast questions, they would monitor their progress by making useful connections among their practices and would take necessary action for their improvement.

The familiarization tasks which could be referred in Appendices A, B and C are the only components which are retained entirely without any modification since they aim at familiarizing student teachers with the new setting and the student profile they are going to practice teaching.

5.1.1 Student Teacher's Personal Statement regarding ELT

This is a self-awareness raising task to be done at the beginning of the semester before the Practice Teaching course begins. This is entirely a new element introduced into the portfolio in which student teachers are required to write a 'personal statement regarding ELT' by answering the questions they are given as guidelines in Appendix N. The aim of this task is to enable student teachers to define what teaching means to them, to identify the beliefs and philosophies they have regarding ELT and to define their potential as teachers. This is to make them see whether there have been any changes in their beliefs or philosophies about ELT or whether they have made any progress through constructing their portfolio based on their experiences at the end. As part of this

task, there is a goal awareness exercise regarding what portfolio and reflection are which is to be completed and discussed in the first week of the theoretical classes at the university.

5.1.2 Reflective Journals

The aim of reflective journals in Appendix O is to encourage and guide student teachers to analyze and evaluate their teaching performances and beliefs regarding ELT from multiple perspectives and to enable them to better understand the areas they are weak at. This will enable them to carry out an active and deep exploration of every step of their teaching experiences which is perplexing them. This will help them to be more aware of the problems they have, to define and locate the nature of the problems to better ground their beliefs and produce more sound solutions for their problematic areas. The 'reflective journals' will feed into the 'Progressive Reflective Report' which will be constructed in the form of an action research.

In the currently used portfolio tool, this element appears as 'Reflective Report' which can be consulted in Appendix E but I decided to modify it as 'Reflective Journal' both for the reason that it is widely used under this name in the related literature and also to communicate to student teachers the message that these are going to be their personal journals in which they will reflect on their practices both emotionally and cognitively. In the currently used one, there are only 3 general points asking student teachers to discuss their strong and weak points and how they are planning to improve their weak points. However, in the newly developed one, there are two major sections questioning about emotional and cognitive aspects of teaching experience. In the emotional section, the

student teachers' feelings about their practice and the reasons for their feelings are examined. In the cognitive section; student teachers are expected to reflect on their teaching experience according to the stages of the lesson; according to defining, locating, producing solutions and taking action for weak areas and according to the evaluation of their teaching beliefs/philosophies in comparison to their previous teachings. Student teachers are questioned in many different aspects from different perspectives in the new one based on the complaints and suggestions they made in the first phase; thus the content of the reflective journals in the new tool are entirely different from the reflective reports in the currently used one.

5.1.3 Progressive Reflective Reports

Considering the short duration of stay at cooperating schools, student teachers are required to write only two progressive reflective reports which can be consulted in Appendix P to engage them into the cyclic nature of reflection adapted from Dewey's proposed cycles of reflection (Dewey, 1910) and make them aware of the ways of how to follow their development – how to determine a problem, define and locate it with justification, produce solutions, put those solutions into action and observe the consequences of these solutions to examine whether they fit in and make sense. In other words, student teachers are given a chance, in the form of an action research, to test their theories/solutions and see whether they can be relied on in their future experiences or not. The progressive reflective report is entirely a new component integrated into the new portfolio tool which aims at enabling student teachers to come up with personally constructed theories/meanings. This was

designed to meet student teachers' complaint about not being able to monitor their own development and a need for taking action for producing solutions for their weak areas which were both stated in the first phase of the study.

5.1.4 Progressive Appraisal Forms

This instrument which may be found in Appendix Q is a guide for the evaluation of the teaching performance of the student teachers. The assessment criteria are divided into five dimensions:

- i) Planning for Teaching
- ii) The Teaching Act
- iii) Classroom Management
- iv) Personal Qualities of the Student Teacher
- v) Student Teacher's Evaluation of Self and Teaching in cooperation with the cooperating teacher/supervisor

This appraisal form is made up of 3 sections: Section 1 which includes 'Planning for Teaching' and aims to assess student teachers' lesson planning skills. Section 2 includes 'The Teaching Act', 'Classroom Management' and 'Personal Qualities of the Student Teacher' and aims at assessing student teachers' performances during teaching. Section 3 includes 'Student Teacher's Evaluation of Self and Teaching in cooperation with the cooperating teacher/supervisor' which aims to function as a post-teaching meeting and to encourage student teachers to do self-evaluation while having a mutual conversation with the cooperating teacher/supervisor or both together with the partner peer.

Structurally, this is entirely different from the 'Formal Teaching Appraisal Form' (See Appendix D) in the currently used portfolio tool since it contains 3 sections with 5 dimensions to be completed in 3 steps. Formal Teaching Appraisal Form is completed in one step either by the cooperating teacher or the supervisor and provides no post-teaching discussions. Different from the current one, the new one provides guidelines for holding post-teaching discussions for the self-assessment of the student teachers. Some parts of the progressive appraisal form have been adapted from 'Instrument For The Assessment of the Instructional Competence of Student Teachers' , School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados and some parts from the 'Formal Appraisal Form' used in the current portfolio tool in the Department of Educational Sciences, Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus. Guidelines for post-teaching meeting have been originally created by the researcher based on the reflective cycles proposed by Dewey (1910), Loughran, Pugach and Johnson (1990), Copeland (1993), Eby and Kujava (1994), Francis (1995), Lee (2000), Rodgers (2002) and the participants' perceptions in the 1st phase regarding how they would like to have the post-teaching meetings.

5.1. 5 Peer Observation Checklist (to be filled in by peers)

This checklist in Appendix R is entirely new and has been designed to enable the student teacher to evaluate his/her peer's performance easily by offering him/her some dimensions of teaching to take into account. It has got the same dimensions of teaching with the 'Progressive Appraisal Form' but a different rating scale as 'weak', 'average' and 'strong' with a comment box. This checklist

is for raising the observer's awareness towards the dimensions of teaching and for enabling him/her to take notes to be reviewed during 'peer feedback sessions'. This observation checklist will better equip the observer to provide his/her peer comments or feedback on different aspects of teaching and provide a better basis for 'peer feedback session'.

5.1.6 Peer Reflective Journal

Peers will be encouraged and guided to write a reflective journal in cooperation with each other following their observations on their own performances which will include basically the definition and location of the problems each of them experiences with possible solutions suggested and supported theoretically and personally. At the end of each of these journals, they will come up with a 'collaboratively constructed meaning'. This is a collaboratively written reflective journal based on the feedback and discussions held during 'Peer Feedback Sessions' on one of the peers' teaching. Peers are given some guidelines to construct their reflective journals taking them into consideration. These are basically the points they follow during the peer feedback session. The 'Peer reflective Journal' is entirely a new element which may be seen in Appendix S and aims to enable student teachers to see things differently and listen to what others offering as alternatives or solutions which helps broadening their understanding of their own experiences. Looking at others' experiences will also enable them look at their own experiences with a different eye and doing this will let the individual see the strengths and weaknesses of his/her experience better.

5.1.7 Final Report

Student teachers will be required to write a 'final report' which may be found in Appendix T at the end of the Practice Teaching programme. This element is retained from the currently used portfolio; however, some modifications have been made in the questions posed based on the tasks given in the previous reports. The first section of this report asks student teachers to review and see whether there has been any change in their teaching beliefs and philosophies and whether they have made any progress or not. This section aims at making student teachers summarize their profile at the end of their teaching practice to be able to start their teaching career more conscious and aware of who they are as teacher candidates so as to have their professional development on a more sound basis.

The second section is going to be on the effectiveness of the practice teaching course and portfolio construction processes. In this section, student teachers will evaluate the Practice Teaching course in special reference to portfolio construction processes that have been applied to give suggestions on the improvement of both.

5.2 Procedures followed during the implementation of the new tool

Systematic production of the components and systematic conduction of the feedback sessions were given special attention as the data suggested. The student teachers were closely monitored to perform their actual teachings in real classroom settings as they were scheduled and to hold their feedback

sessions right after their teachings both with the cooperating teacher and the partner peer as was reported by the participants in the first phase.

Supervisory feedback sessions were held later on the same day with the supervisor at the university if the supervisor has not been able to observe the student teacher at the school on that day. These took place in a 'Socratic manner' during which the supervisor posed many questions to enable the student teacher to explore his/her teaching performance from different aspects since they complained about the lack of diversity, challenge and guidance during these sessions. The supervisor paid special attention to attend at least two teachings of each student teacher – the first one to help student teachers in identifying their weaknesses and the last one to observe whether there have been any changes in their performances and beliefs.

Student teachers were also encouraged to write their reflective journals on the same day that they performed their teachings by sending their reflective journals via email before the end of the day to enable a step-by-step construction of the portfolio and systematic guidance. During the supervisory feedback sessions, the supervisor attempted to provide both written and oral feedback on the reflective journals of the student teachers weekly to enable them better prepared for their following teaching which is to be held the following week. This was done to help them build bridges between their previous and current performances to produce better solutions for their weaknesses. The student teachers were scheduled to teach only once a week to enable pre preparations and the post feedback sessions happen regularly.

The supervisor also discussed the preparations and the plans of the student teachers for their next teachings during these feedback sessions.

Peer observations were also held as it was scheduled at least two times during their practicum at schools and the peer feedback sessions were conducted at the university in the presence of the supervisor as it was suggested by the participants in the first phase to enable them share their observation notes and views to help each other in identifying and developing their weak areas.

5.3 Role of the supervisor

I did an orientation both with the cooperating teachers at their own school and with the student teachers at the university at the beginning of the semester to introduce them with the aims, components and the processes of the newly developed portfolio tool. They were specially oriented about their roles and responsibilities during the implementation of the new tool. The collaboration and dialogue between and among all the parties (supervisor, cooperating teachers and the student teachers) involved into the process of portfolio construction was extremely important in order for the new tool to be implemented effectively.

Some of the participants in the first phase reported that the communication they had with their supervisor and their cooperating teacher was based on 'shared decision making' and 'mutual dialogue'. Therefore, I attempted to do my best to create a community of collaboration in which all the parties involved were the participants of the discussions to be held. The major aim was to help student teachers develop themselves professionally as reflective teacher candidates before they graduate. All the activities and the processes in the new portfolio

tool are designed to eliminate the role of the supervisor and the cooperating teachers as the figure of authority giving instructions in the sense of 'do this' or 'don't do this'. Rather, they are supposed to act as the participants in feedback sessions to facilitate student teachers' understanding of their own performances from different perspectives by questioning them and allowing them to raise questions as well.

As the supervisor, I attempted to act both as a guide and as a participant both during the feedback sessions and in-class discussions during lecture hours. I tried to avoid imposing any idea or underline any view but rather acted as a participant discussing, suggesting or posing questions on the critical issues regarding student teachers' performances to enable the student teachers to see the issue under consideration from different perspectives. My role was to increase their awareness in many different aspects as possible and to encourage them to produce solutions and take actions to construct their own understanding and meaning for their own teaching. Doing this has also increased my self-awareness in better guiding my student teachers since the issues I questioned and the justifications they provided or the questions they posed and the justifications I attempted to make enabled me to think over the issues from different perspectives as well.

5.4 Role of the cooperating teachers

I oriented the cooperating teachers that the ultimate aim is not to focus on student teachers' performances numerically as scores but rather to help them discover their own weaknesses and strengths, to help them produce solutions

for these and to follow them put their solutions into action to observe the results. The cooperating teachers were expected to act as the guides helping student teachers analyse and evaluate themselves from different perspectives.

5.5 Role of the student teachers

They were expected to act as partners to each other by helping each other with lesson planning. They were supposed to give suggestions regarding the stages of the lesson, the materials to be used and the implementation of the lesson. They were also expected to act as the 'critical friend' to observe, discuss and report on each other's performances. During discussions with the supervisor and the cooperating teacher, they were encouraged to act as one of the participants of the discussion doing self-examination and self-evaluation by raising questions and doing reasoning on his/her own teaching.

5.6 Processes supporting the construction of Practice Teaching Portfolio

5.6.1 Supervisory Feedback Sessions

'Supervisory Feedback Sessions' which is an entirely new process introduced into the new portfolio were held weekly with each student in one-on-one conferencing format in the supervisor's office in a relax atmosphere two times a week to discuss their preparations for teaching, experiences/ performances after teaching and to provide feedback on any of their written work (any of their reports written during the week). In other words, these supervisory feedback sessions were tailored/shaped according to the needs and wants of the student teachers to meet their demands and enable them to become more effective in their practices. These sessions took place on a mutual interaction manner

during which both the student teacher and the supervisor posed their questions and provided their answers in return to contribute to the discussion.

5.6.2 Peer Feedback Sessions

'Peer Feedback Sessions' which may be seen in Appendix U is an entirely new process introduced into the new portfolio. These sessions were arranged and held (weekly) both inside and outside lecture hours under the supervision of the supervisor during which peers gave feedback and suggestions to each other on their teaching performances which were followed by a 'Peer Reflective Journal' in Appendix S. Student teachers were paired with each other and placed either into the same classroom or timetabled accordingly to be able to observe each other's teaching and hold peer feedback sessions at least 2 or 3 times during the construction of their portfolios depending on the suitability of their timetables. After their teaching performances, peers got together to discuss the teaching of one. The observing peer reviewed his/her observation notes in a 'Critical Friend' mode. The observing peer was free to use his/her observation notes in providing feedback for his/her friend; however, s/he could also use the points given as guidelines in Appendix U in leading the feedback session.

5.6.3 Feedback sessions with the cooperating teacher as well as all together with the supervisor and the peer

These sessions functioned as post-teaching meetings with the cooperating teacher or the supervisor and the peer included as well. The student teacher was guided or encouraged to do self-evaluation while having a mutual conversation with the cooperating teacher/supervisor or both. These sessions

are retained from the currently used portfolio; however, some substantial modifications have been made both in their content and applications. These sessions have not been conducted regularly and systematically at all as stated by the participants in the first phase. Moreover, the role and responsibilities of the cooperating teachers, student teachers as peers and the supervisor were not defined at all. There were no guidelines as how to hold these discussions; what to ask or what to speak. Thus, cooperating teachers and the supervisors were given the freedom to hold these sessions in the way they prefer and some times even to skip them giving their busy schedules as excuses. Based on all these findings, in order to ensure that these sessions are held regularly and systematically; they are not held as independent activities in the new portfolio but have been made a part in the third section of the Progressive Appraisal Form in Appendix Q which is to be filled in and followed as part of the documentation. Moreover, some guidelines were provided for the cooperating teacher and/or the supervisor regarding what questions to pose, how to raise issues with their roles and responsibilities defined.

Diagram 5.1 below is the graphical representation of the newly developed portfolio construction tool:

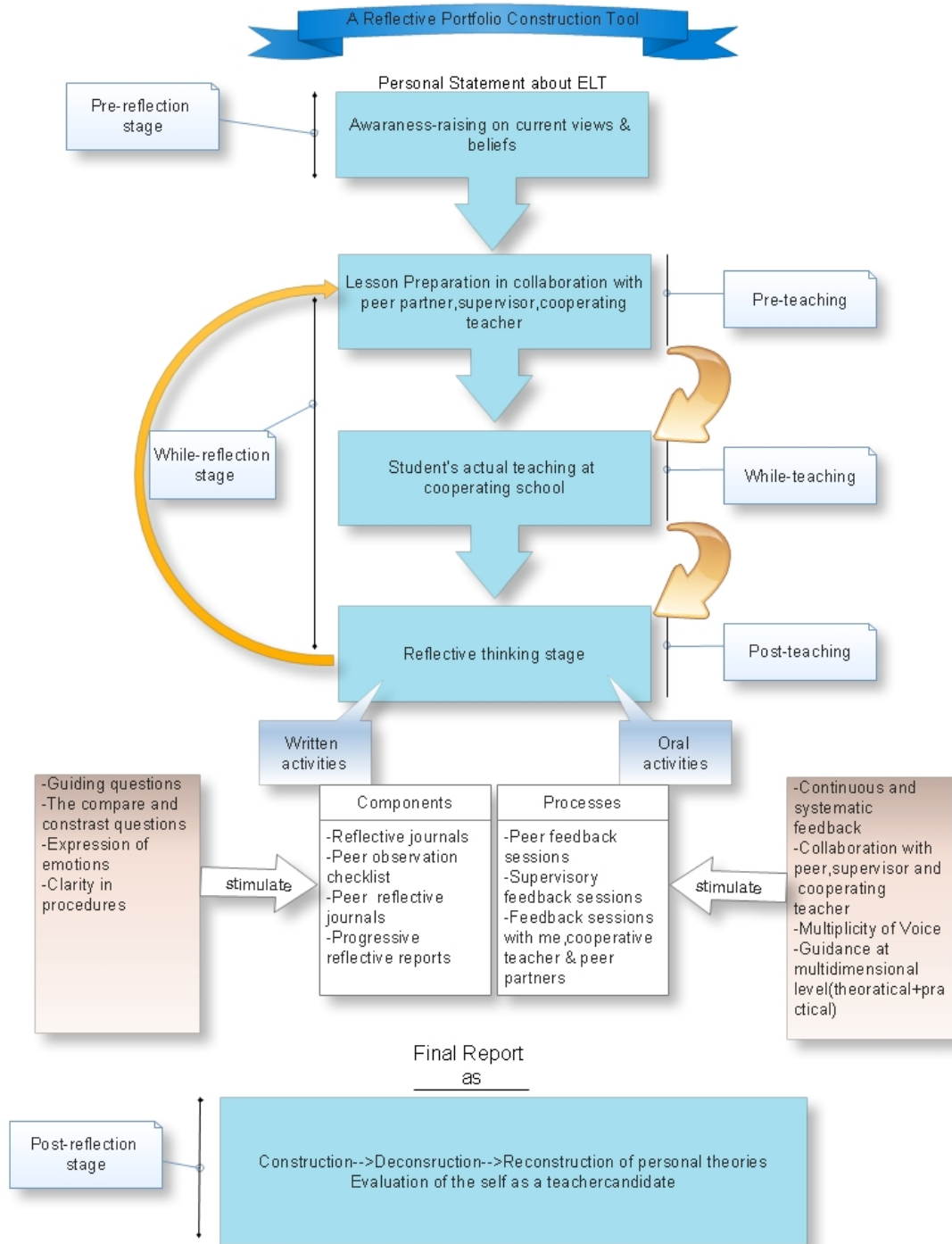


Diagram 5.1 Graphical representation of the newly developed portfolio construction tool

CHAPTER 6
Presentation and Discussion of the Findings of the Newly Developed
Portfolio Construction Tool: Phase 3

6.1 Introduction

This chapter involves the presentation and discussion of the findings collected on the newly developed portfolio construction tool after its implementation. After transcribing all the interviews, I first read all the transcriptions and the end-of-the-semester reflection essays without taking any notes but only underlined the parts that struck me as significant and interesting in terms of my research questions. Then, I started reading through each transcription and essay one by one but this time began to make marginal notes about significant remarks paying attention to the issues each student raised. While doing this, the frequency which the significant remarks were made and the distribution of different people who made these remarks were also taken into consideration (Allwright and Bailey, 1991). I attempted to note down the main idea of each of the segment throughout each transcription and essay. When I reread the main ideas that I noted down in the left and right margins, I realised that some similar topics occurred such as definition of portfolio, aim of portfolio, benefits or opportunities that the portfolio components or the feedback sessions provided. Next, I read the parts that I underlined and categorized them as aim, definition and opportunities or benefits to identify what type of aims, opportunities or benefits the participants mentioned about. I note down each type of definition, aim and benefits they mentioned and tried to identify the similarities and the differences among them. Dealing with the similarities and the differences under each category yielded some useful themes. These occurring themes helped me a lot in constructing an understanding of the student teachers' perceptions of

the portfolio as a construction tool and its impact on their professional development in terms of their reflective thinking skills. I also use these categories and emerging themes as a guide to describe respondents' perceptions of the portfolio construction process as a tool for the reader.

Four major categories emerged from the analysis in response to the first research question and two major categories emerged regarding which aspects of the portfolio the student teachers reported as contributing to their professional development in terms of their reflective thinking skills.

6.2 Defining the major categories

Analysing the data yielded four major categories and some related themes regarding the effectiveness of the newly developed portfolio construction tool. Each of the categories represents the feelings, attitudes, thoughts, ideas and views of the student teachers (as the participants) as their perceptions regarding the components of the portfolio as a construction tool and the sessions they were involved in as a support for the whole process of the portfolio construction. The categories that occurred regarding the effectiveness of the portfolio as a tool are as follows:

Category 1: Definition of the Portfolio Construction Process (D)

Category 2: Benefits/Opportunities that the Components of the Portfolio provided (B/C)

Category 3: Benefits/Opportunities that the Feedback Sessions of the Portfolio provided (B/FS)

Category 4: Peer Collaboration: Peer observation, peer feedback sessions and peer reflective journals (PC)

Definition of the portfolio construction processes (D) refers to the student teachers' original definitions of the portfolio based on their own experiences of constructing the newly developed portfolio. Benefits that the components of the portfolio provided (B/C) includes student teachers' perceptions of the benefits and the opportunities that the components of the portfolio provided. The components refers to the student teachers' personal statement regarding ELT, reflective journals, progressive reflective reports, peer reflective journals and the final report that the student teachers produced as written documents throughout the portfolio construction process. Benefits that the feedback sessions of the portfolio provided (B/FS) contains student teachers' perceptions regarding the benefits and the opportunities that the feedback sessions provided during the construction of the portfolio. The feedback sessions specifically includes the supervisory feedback sessions held between the student teacher and the supervisor regularly both on their weekly formal teachings and their written documents such as reflective journals, progressive reflective reports; the feedback sessions held at the school with the cooperating teacher, the supervisor and the peer all together. Peer Collaboration: peer observations, peer feedback sessions and peer reflective journals (PC) refers to the collaboration held between peers via peer observations done by the two partner peer, the peer feedback sessions held between two peers on two of their formal teachings under the supervision of the

supervisor and the peer reflective journals written about the partner peer's teaching performance on two of his/her formal teachings.

Below, I attempt to present the analysis of data related with each category and the emerging themes. As I introduce the data regarding each category and the related themes, I try to construct student teachers' understanding of the portfolio construction process and its effect on the development of their reflective thinking skills by providing quotes from their speeches during the interviews and from their comments they noted into their end-of-the semester-reflection-essays. Diagram 6.1 below attempts to introduce the major categories and each theme that emerged in a mind map:

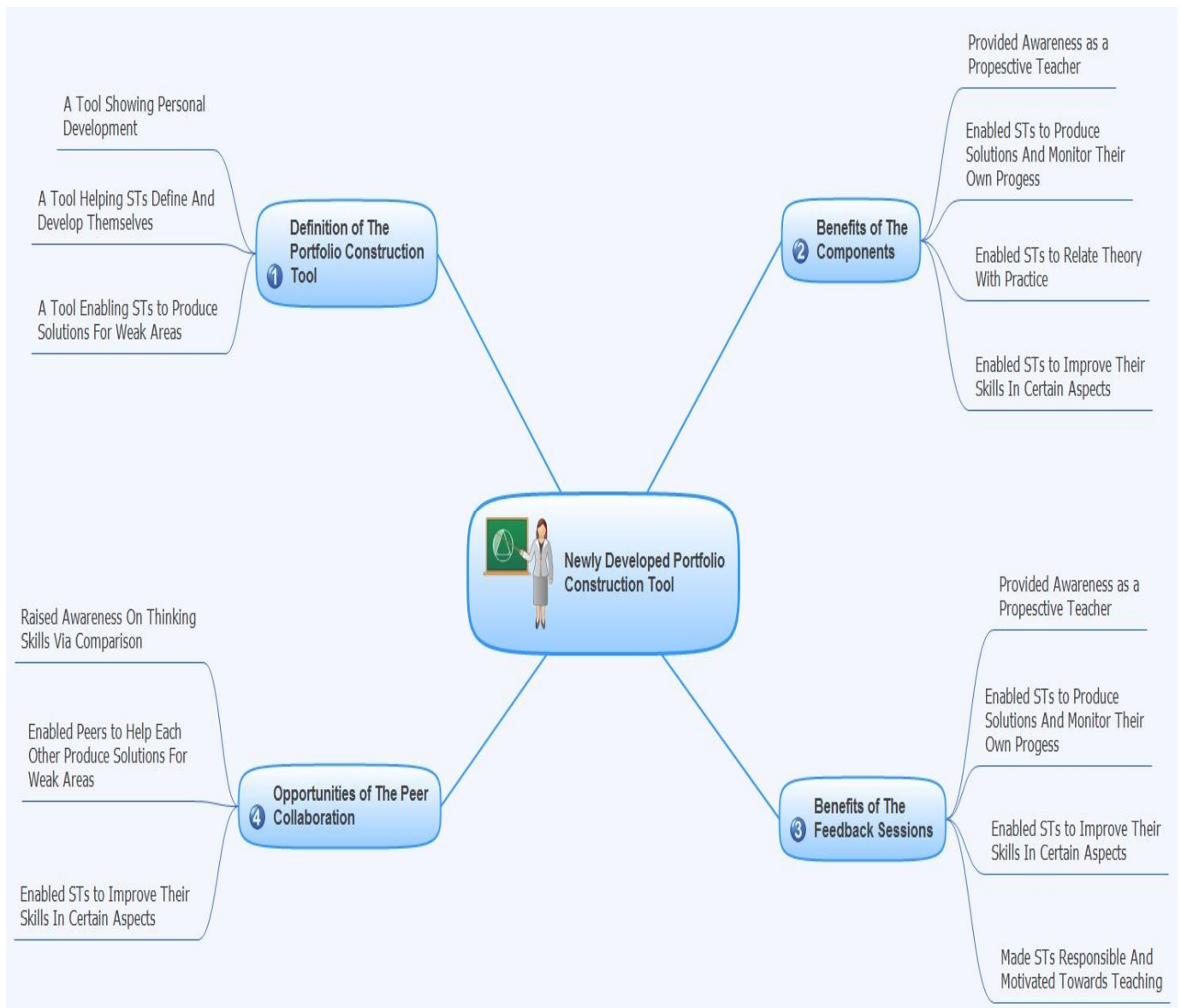


Diagram 6.1 Visual representation of the thematic categories for the newly developed portfolio tool

6.3 Presentation of the Thematic Categories

Data in Phase 3 was collected to determine whether there have been any changes in the student teachers' perceptions regarding the ways they define portfolio, and regarding the effectiveness of the new components integrated or modified as well as the processes changed or newly added. Therefore, the research questions 1, 2 and 3 were predetermined to gather their perceptions in

this respect. Question 1 was developed to collect their perceptions regarding the ways they define portfolio in relation to its purpose. Questions 2 and 3 were developed to gather their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the components and processes of the newly developed portfolio in terms of reflection. Question 4 emerged later after the development of the new portfolio tool during phase 2 when peer collaboration tasks were newly incorporated into the tool. Research question 4 was added with an intention to determine student teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the peer collaboration tasks after the implementation of the new tool.

Research Question 1: How do the student teachers define portfolio construction?

6.3.1 Category 1: Definition of the Portfolio Construction Process (D)

The first category refers to the student teachers' original definitions of the portfolio since most of them attempted to define what portfolio construction means to them. Some of them even used metaphors for their definitions all of which reflect how student teachers perceived the experience of constructing a portfolio. Examining the ways student teachers defined the portfolio construction processes yielded three themes which I attempted to present below:

6.3.1.1 Theme 1: A tool showing personal development (Self-observation/self-monitoring)

Some of the student teachers perceived portfolio construction as a tool showing personal development. While some considered it as a document,

some others referred to it as a process due to some reasons student teachers expressed commonly which may be seen in appendix VA. 1.

After going through the process of constructing the newly developed portfolio, student teachers perceived it as a tool showing personal development. Their perception of the portfolio is mostly based on the opportunity it provided to gain insight into their current level of performance and the potential they have to achieve targeted performance. The portfolio seemed to have a potential in displaying student teachers what they have as pluses and what they lack as minuses. It provided them with an opportunity to self-monitor their own progress. Experience, alone, in isolation without documentation would not help them observe their own learning. Documenting their previous experiences enabled them to follow their progress by providing continuity in learning. In order for student teachers to make meaning out of their experiences, they need to link their experience both to the past and the future (Rodgers, 2002).

Keeping reflective journals and reports provided them with relevant feedback on their own learning as Butler and Winne (1995) indicated “they help the person to monitor their own development by providing feedback on a continuous basis”. This conception was supported with the research findings by Smith and Tillema (1998) and Erginel (2006). Erginel (2006) stated that weekly journals provided student teachers with the self-monitoring opportunity which led to self-analysis in terms of their strengths and weaknesses; hence, to self-awareness. The following quotation from the student teacher 7 exemplifies these thoughts:

A tool reflecting back to one’s own experiences from one’s own perspective

“It is a tool reflecting us what we go through and what we experience throughout this internship programme. It is a tool reflecting back to us our experiences from our own perspective so

as to see our whole progress. It is a documentation showing us our progress. You see your totality as a teacher with your pluses and minuses”

Some of them compared it to a mirror reflecting every experience encountered from the student teacher’s own perspective. Based on the content of the definitions, I believe that they consider it as a process not as a product; a process which makes them aware of who they are as a teacher, what strengths and weaknesses they have, and what experiences they have gone through in order to have that personality as a teacher as indicated below by student teacher 10:

A mirror showing weaknesses and strengths

“Portfolio is a kind of mirror. We look at it and we see our reflection... So it’s a kind of mirror showing us who we are and what we are lacking or what we have as teacher candidates. It helps us see ourselves and our development as we construct it”

These student teachers consider portfolio as a tool helping them see their development as they construct it. It raises awareness to weaknesses and strengths and allows student teachers monitor their progress. It enables them to become aware of who they are and how they became that way. Research before; however, indicated that it is a tool which enables the supervisors or instructors to anticipate learning needs of the student teachers and to monitor their progress and performance. (Heartel, 1990; Wiggins, 1993 cited in Orland-Barak, 2005). The participants in this study; however, state that it is a tool which provided them with an opportunity to monitor their own progress as they construct it. This is supported by Barton and Collins (1993) and Guillaume and Yopp (1995) in their studies. Elango et. al. (2005) also stated that portfolio

“enables learners to act and learn autonomously and allows them to assess their strengths and weaknesses” (p.511). These ideas lead us to the self-directed view of learning which the participants in this study raised as another theme as mentioned below.

6.3.1.2 Theme 2: A tool/process helping student teachers define and develop themselves

While some student teachers perceived it as a tool showing personal development of a teacher candidate, some perceived it as a tool helping them define and develop the self due to the commonly stated views and reasons which may be found in Appendix VA. 2.

Self-definition through self-expression

The definitions by student teachers point out that ‘identification of the self, awareness of the self and definition of the self’ are important aspects for personal development as a prospective teacher. The quotation by the student teacher 5 below exemplifies these views:

ST5: “I guess this is a tool for better expressing oneself as a teacher. I became aware of myself in many different aspects – I know my strong points as well as my weak points now. This is what the portfolio construction process is for. It helps a student teacher focus on his/her weak and strong points....This is a pure self-awareness process – a self identification process”

Portfolio can be considered as a tool for self-expression. Through expressing themselves via the reflective journals and the progressive reflective reports, student teachers found an opportunity to become aware of and to define

themselves. Hence, portfolio as a self-awareness and self-identification process can be considered as an effective learning tool which allows students teachers to assess their strengths and weaknesses. It helps them to identify and meet their learning needs (Elango et al, 2005).

Self-definition through the ongoing aspect of the portfolio (A time-line)

The comments both from the interviews and end-of-the-semester-reflection-essays underline the ongoing aspect of the portfolio comparing it to a 'timeline'. The portfolio as a timeline provides a back and forth looks into the experience and provides a self-awareness of weaknesses and strengths helping student teachers define themselves better as expressed by the student teacher 8:

ST8: "Portfolio construction is a process in which student teachers can go back, look for previous experiences and learn from previous experiences; become aware of weaknesses and strengths and go over those again and again. If there is a weakness, portfolio process gives you a chance to improve yourself. If you have strengths, it encourages you to use it more effectively. It is like a time line; you sometimes go back and sometimes go further"

The portfolio in this study provided the continuity between the prior, current and future experiences (Dewey, 1910; Schön, 1983; Copeland, 1983; Francis, 1995; Rodgers, 2002) enabling student teachers to see their experiences on a timeline. Seeing prior experiences and comparing them with the current experiences helped them identify their learning needs, see their weak areas and provided an opportunity for fixing and improving those areas. Moreover, moving the student teacher back and forth between his/her teaching

experiences on a timeline offered prospects for self-regulated learning enabling them to act and learn autonomously (Buttler and Winne, 1995) and assess themselves continuously for improvement.

6.3.1.3 Theme 3: A tool enabling student teachers produce solutions for the weak areas

The portfolio in this study does not only help student teachers become aware of their weaknesses and strengths but also enables them to produce solutions for some of their weak points as indicated by the student teacher 4 below:

A tool for counselling: solution-focused tool

ST4: "It was like a solution-focused brief counselling as I said in my reports as well. It was like a counsellor and I was the client. Err... I wrote my feelings, my thoughts, and my problems that I faced with and it helped me what solutions to find for my problematic areas. It also helped me understand what the reasons for my weak areas were. It showed me the way like how I can go through the process and find my own solutions and reasons for the problematic areas"

She uses a metaphor to express the solution aspect of the portfolio by comparing it to a counsellor-client relationship. Feeling herself like a client and the portfolio like a counsellor reflects the psychotherapeutic aspect of the portfolio that she felt. It provided the opportunity for the student teacher to express her feelings and thoughts which created a relief and flexibility for her to produce cognitively and think reflectively. Emotions are considered to be the starting point for development and change since they are recognised as powerful determinants of thinking processes (Goleman, 1996). Turbulent emotions, whether past or present, limit thinking (Goleman, 1996) and encourage responses based on restrictive patterns of behaviour (Leitch and Day, 2000). The counsellor aspect of the portfolio enabled the student teacher

to express her feelings as well as her problematic areas and helped her eliminate those turbulent feelings which might limit thinking. The counsellor-client metaphor might also point out that the portfolio did not only help her produce solutions for the weak areas but guided her in going through the process to find the reasons behind her problematic areas and the ways for overcoming those problems.

The following table summarizes the findings regarding student teachers' perception of the definition/purpose of the portfolio construction tool:

Category 1: Definition of the Portfolio Construction Tool
<p>Theme 1: A tool showing personal development</p> <p>Sub-themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tool reflecting back to one's own experiences from one's own perspective • A mirror showing weaknesses and strengths
<p>Theme 2: A tool helping student teachers define and develop themselves</p> <p>Sub-themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-definition provided through self-expression • Self-definition provided through the ongoing aspects of the portfolio (a time-line)
<p>Theme 3: A tool enabling student teachers produce solutions for the weak areas</p> <p>Sub-theme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tool for counselling: solution-focused tool

Table 6.1 Summary of the findings regarding the definition/purpose of portfolio tool in category1

Research Question 2: What do the student teachers report on the components of the newly developed portfolio construction tool in terms of its effectiveness in promoting reflective thinking skills and providing opportunities for professional development?

6.3.2 Category 2: Benefits/Opportunities that the Components of the Portfolio provided (B/C)

Comparing and contrasting the responses that the participants provided about the components yielded four themes.

6.3.2.1 Theme 1: Provided awareness regarding oneself as a prospective teacher (Self-awareness)

The participants reported that the components of the portfolio such as the reflective journals and the progressive reflective reports increased their awareness as prospective teachers making them more conscious of their weaknesses and strengths. The following quotations exemplify student teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of the portfolio and how its components improved their awareness in many different aspects:

Awareness regarding what potentials they have or lack

ST1: "For example before the portfolio construction process; I didn't know about the importance of 'questioning techniques'. Moreover, I realized that I can't ask 'good questions' as I was writing my reflective journals and tried to solve this"

Becoming aware of the importance of certain techniques, skills and strategies in teaching is an important aspect of teacher development and reflective thinking.

Realizing whether one possesses that technique or not herself as a student teacher is a further stage of self-awareness process and reflective teaching.

The student teacher 1 goes into the analysis of the self by realising that she is not good at using the questioning techniques. She engages herself with the construction of the 'self' as a teacher realising the importance of the 'questioning techniques' and monitoring herself in developing the technique of

asking good questions. The student teacher did not only gain an opportunity to explore and understand herself as a teacher but to construct herself professionally as well through experience and portfolio construction as illustrated below:

Self awareness through stimulation and motivation

ST1: "Writing the Reflective Journals and Progressive Reflective Report helped me produce solutions and apply these in class as well. The Reports and journals stimulated me to think over this weak aspect of myself (questioning technique) and monitor myself.. err whether I was better in questioning or not in the follow up classes because I was going to report on my applications.. So it made me realize what I lack and what potentials I have"

Dewey (1910), Schön (1983), Copeland et al. (1993), Francis (1995), Loughran (1996), Rodgers (2002) all indicated that reflective thinking begins with identification of a problematic/weak area. The student teacher 1 did not only become aware of her weak aspect at the recognition level but was 'stimulated' by the journals and the reports to think over the weak aspect and monitor it'. 'Being stimulated by the journals and reports' for suspending judgment is an essential attitude for reflective thinking. As Dewey (1933) indicated without whole heartedness, there exists indifference, and the energy to observe and gather information about one's teaching and so forth is not there. The reflective journals and the progressive reflective report provided the enthusiasm and motivation for the student teacher to define her weak aspect and monitor it for a solution for a better construction of the self professionally.

Awareness is not an easy and random process. It requires a disciplined and systematic way of thinking. 'Stimulation to think over the weak aspect and

monitor it' indicates that the participant carried out an active exploration in identifying and solving the problem out. She displayed 'an attitude of suspended judgment' (Dewey, 1910; Schön, 1983; Loughran, 1996; Rodgers, 2002) which is a disciplined and systematic way of thinking over the weak areas in order to better define them and produce solutions for them. She even monitored herself in applying her solutions and deciding whether she became better in using questioning techniques or not in the follow up classes. Student teacher 4 also confirms the perception that awareness can be made possible through solving out the weak areas and strengthening the strong areas:

ST4: "With the help of the journals and the reports, I also managed to overcome some of my weak points and to strengthen my strong points as well. This was a pure self-awareness process, I mean a self-identification process"

Student teachers are hardly to develop some insights and conceptions about themselves without putting the solutions they produced into action and seeing the results. Similarly, the comments by the student teacher 7 below indicated the opportunity the portfolio provided in becoming aware of the misconceptions about the self after some applications in the real classrooms like the things known to be strong turned out to be weak and the aspects known to be weak turned out to be strong. Pollard (2008) identified reflective teaching as a cyclical or spiral process in which teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously. So the student teachers concerned here had a chance to monitor, evaluate and revise their practices in order to become more aware of themselves as teachers.

Awareness regarding misconceptions about the self

ST7: *"We became aware of ourselves as teachers like how I am as a teacher in class, how my performance is or what aspects of me are good; what aspects of mine are bad or weak. For example, after some applications the things I knew to be bad or weak about myself turned out to be good in real classroom or the things I knew to be good about myself came to be bad or weak in the real classroom. So, the portfolio made me aware of all these and of many different aspects of me. It improved my self-awareness a lot."*

Self-awareness through the application of theories, methods, and techniques

ST5: *"Portfolio gave me a chance to apply the theories, methods and techniques we learnt during our four years of study and to understand how much of these I could apply, which techniques I have been successful in and which techniques I still need to improve myself. For example, I wasn't aware before that I was good at the questioning techniques and at interacting with students or I could prepare suitable materials to support the teaching point I was going to teach. Constructing this portfolio gave me the opportunity to become aware of my good aspects"*

Theory alone on its own without application is not sufficient; application without reflection over it is also insufficient and does not make sense. Student teacher 5 points out awareness at application level and making sense out of the applications of the theories, methods and techniques. Portfolio provided awareness regarding student teachers' skills in applying theories and methods and enabled them to understand or relate theories with practice, to comprehend which of the methods or techniques they are able to apply that they have learnt so far. Many participants in Wray's (2007) research also support this aspect of the portfolio indicating that the process of portfolio construction helped clarify and solidify important personal philosophies, techniques and strategies. They also spoke of an illuminated connection between theory and practice. The components of the portfolio helped student teacher 5 illuminate the methods and techniques he incorporated into his teaching. Being able to relate theory

with practice is an important aspect of reflective thinking skills (Dewey, 1910; Zeichner and Liston, 1987; Copeland et al., 1993; Francis, 1995; Rodgers, 2002).

Moreover, clarifying and solidifying their techniques and strategies also helped them improve their evaluation skills. While relating theory with practice, student teachers had a chance to evaluate their skills in applying theories, methods and techniques which enabled them to gain self-awareness at a broader and further level. Student teacher 5 was able to evaluate how much of the techniques and methods she was able to apply, which techniques she has been successful in and which techniques she still needs to develop herself in. Mansvelder-Longayroux et al. (2007) reported 'evaluation' as one of the portfolio themes that emerged out of six learning activities. While evaluating, student teachers express a value judgment on their approach or functioning, examine what they have learnt or possess as a skill and give an opinion about something. Student teacher 5 in the current study evaluated her methods/techniques and judged herself as possessing some important techniques and skills such as 'questioning techniques, 'interacting with students' and 'preparing effective materials' that she was not aware of possessing before.

In addition to the journals and reports, the student teachers had 4 hours of observation during which they had 4 observation reports to be filled in to get acquainted with the learners in the cooperating teacher's classroom and his/her teaching techniques. Student teachers reported that they didn't find these observations and observation reports useful and essential in being informed of

the student profile that they were going to deal. Student teacher 6 touched on a very important aspect of cognitive constructivism which is 'learning by doing' (Piaget, cited in Santrock, 2001) claiming that she got acquainted with her students not by observing but by teaching as she indicated in Appendix VA. 3. Piaget claimed that people learn best when they are active and seek solutions. The educational implication of his view is that people learn best by doing and experiencing rather than blindly imitating or observing. Student teacher 6 indicated that she got to know the reality of that context when she participated and performed within that context because the meaning and the reality within that classroom setting changed when her role changed from being an observer (an outsider) into a participant (insider) within that context. This is also associated with the constructionist view that 'reality is socially situated, context-related, and context-dependent'. If one of the participants especially the teacher changes, the culture and communication might change within that class as indicated by the student teachers 9 and 10 as well:

Awareness regarding the importance of communication and interaction instead of observation

ST9: "I believe observations at the beginning were too much. Watching my class as an outsider for hours didn't make me gain anything. I got to know about them when I started teaching to them. You can observe even 15 hours but unless you communicate with them you never get to know them. So rather than observations; communication and interaction is more effective in learning more about that context and the persons in that context"

Awareness regarding the issue of being an insider or outsider as a student teacher

ST10: "To me, in this portfolio there may be only two observations on student profile because no matter how much you observe, things change when you start teaching in a class. Observing as

an outsider doesn't mean that you can learn about the class. Being an insider can make the atmosphere of that class totally different. Communication, interaction and management, everything might change when you are a part of that class"

Student teachers 9 and 10 use the terms 'being an outsider and insider in a context' and this is associated with the constructionist view that meaning or reality is not discovered but constructed. Truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities within that context (Crotty, 1998). One can hardly be informed of a culture and the profile of the individuals in a given culture or context only by observing as an outsider. The whole reality or meaning might change when one is a participant within that culture or is an outsider observing externally. Reality is created or constructed differently when the members of that context communicate, negotiate or share with each other. Thus, the social reality would not exist independently of the individuals who make up those personal creations. The student teacher should be a part of that world (class) in order to construct the meaning by taking into account the meanings and motives of the participants and this is possible by getting into communication personally with the individuals within that context not only by observing externally.

6.3. 2.2 Theme 2: Enabled student teachers to produce solutions and monitor their own progress/self-development

Student teachers reported that writing the reflective journals and the progressive reflective reports provided them with an opportunity to produce solutions for their weak points and to follow up their self-development. The participants indicated that writing the reflective journals and the progressive

reflective reports guided them to define their weaknesses by examining the reasons behind and to produce solutions and strategies for their weak areas. They were also supposed to put the solutions into action and see whether they worked or not. They believe that going through these steps enabled them to monitor their own progress as well. The following quotes exemplify this perception of the student teachers:

Solution via definition of the weakness by identifying the reasons behind

ST1: "As I was writing my journals, I worked more on my weaknesses; I had to define my weaknesses and the reasons for that in my reflective journals; I had to produce solutions, err.. strategies about how to solve them and what to do next. I had to put those solutions into practice and to report about the results".

Becoming aware of the weaknesses is only the beginning aspect of the professional development. Producing solutions is an essential part which could only be possible through examining what factors played a role or are playing a role in one's functioning. Writing the reflective journals and the progressive reflective reports guided the student teacher 1 to analyse her weaknesses by examining the reasons behind and the factors preventing her development so as to produce solutions and strategies for the weak areas appropriately. This could be interpreted as the 'suspended judgement' as Dewey (1910) termed it. It means one must never accept suggestions uncritically and must actively explore the situation before taking any action. The nature of the problem needs to be identified and the solutions produced needs to be grounded theoretically as well before we finalize our solutions and put them into action. Similarly, Loughran (1996) calls the suspended judgement as 'framing and reframing' which is a process helping student teachers develop a range of ways of seeing

a problem. Student teachers are guided to consider how alternative perspectives might be developed in analyzing and defining a problem by challenging one's taken for granted assumptions. She indicates that putting the solutions into action and reporting whether they worked or not has been useful in minimizing the mistakes.

Solution via reading from different sources

The quotation which may be referred to in Appendix VA 4 by the student teacher 2 emphasizes her act of using different sources in producing solution for her problematic area which is lack of using the voice effectively in class. Referring to other theoretical and empirical sources enabled her to produce some strategies in solving out her problem. Learning to be a reflective practitioner includes the ability to establish meaningful connections between theory and practice, providing a rationale for action (Stein, 2000 and Orland-Barak, 2005). The reflective cycle includes the ability to integrate theoretical and empirical knowledge with practical experience in order to provide a foundation for action. Referring to what other sources are saying about the issue might provide a better foundation for the action to be taken. This could be supported by Dewey's 'notion of grounded belief' which is an element of reflective thinking. Something is believed in or disbelieved not on its own direct account but through something else which stands as evidence or proof as the ground of your belief. The participant grounded her beliefs by supporting them with other sources as well which led her produce some strategies and become successful in using her voice effectively. Coopeland et al. (1993) also claims as one of the attributes of reflection that solutions are generated from or are

grounded in theories, assumptions, or research findings which are explicitly held and understood by the practitioner. The components of this portfolio guided student teachers to read existing beliefs, theories and research findings in order to ground their solutions for better actions.

The above quotation by the student teacher 2 also illustrates examination of the weak area at diagnostic and reflective level as defined by Mansvelder-Longayroux et al. (2007) in their research where they describe six learning activities emerging from portfolios. Diagnosis includes examining what you found difficult (effective use of your voice) and what consequences this had (problems with the classroom management). Lack of effective use of voice caused problems in classroom management. The student teacher also examines what areas she has made progress in and what factors played a role in her development. She examines that she has improved herself in classroom management and this development resulted from her effective use of voice which is a thought at reflective level.

Solution via the guiding questions (reflective cycle) in the journals and the reports

ST3: "My voice was really terrible in the first lesson because I don't think that students could easily hear my voice. But in the follow up lessons, it got better and better because I had to find a solution for this. There were questions in the reflective journals and progressive reflective report which made us focus on our weak aspects to produce strategies and solutions and then to put them into action and see the results for our future success. The reports and the journals in the portfolio made us question our weak points; made us focus on them; think over them. We thought about what we could do and then we tried to put them into action and then we evaluated them if they worked or whether we had to change them or not. We had many questions on this in the portfolio"

The solution-focused aspect of the portfolio is underlined in this quote. The portfolio does this via questions in the journals and reports. These guiding questions make student teachers focus, think over their problematic areas, to produce solutions and to put these solutions into action for evaluation whether they worked or not. The experience here illustrates that student teachers go through the reflective cycle suggested by Dewey (1910), Schön (1983), Copeland et al. (1993), Francis (1995) and Loughran (2002). Dewey also considers 'action' as one of the elements of his reflective cycle since he considers it as a possibility for settled-ness and a way of solving practical problems. He argues that the consequent action to be taken has to be 'intelligent' and "qualitatively different from routine action" because this is going to lead to the conclusion of belief or disbelief resulting in the reconstruction of the personal theory. In order to take an intelligent and qualitatively different action, some suspended judgment is essential before it. The student teacher here mentions about the questioning she carried out on her weak areas; her focus and thought over it as well before taking an action as a solution. The cycle here takes the student teacher even one step further to evaluate the consequences of the solutions; whether they worked or not. This enables the student teacher to conclude whether to believe in or disbelieve in the ideas/solutions s/he produced and hence to the reconstruction of the personal meaning. Copeland et al. (1993) asserts that reflective practice involves a process of solving problems and reconstructing meaning.

Solution via the step-by-step approach of the reports

The following excerpt from the end-of-the-semester-reflection essays support the reflective cycle aspect of the portfolio with the 'step by step approach' of the reports:

ST4: "In the progressive reflective report we wrote the problem; the definition of the problem and went step by step in solving out the problem. So this gave me a chance to prepare my next teaching lesson plans depending on the steps I put into the progressive reflective report. It reminded me like 'this was my problem; my weak area, I have to behave this way to reduce or minimize my weak points; then I have to put this into action and check whether it's been successful or not'. Since it proceeded step by step; it gave us the chance to improve ourselves better and see our development better because we needed to check the steps and behave according to the steps in the report. So this made us see our weak aspects and work on those weak points better. Briefly, it helped me a lot in defining my most critical problems and solving them out"

Step-by-step approach of the progressive reflective reports provided the student teachers with the systematic, rigorous and disciplined way of thinking in becoming more aware of weak aspects, defining them and dealing with them by producing strategies and putting them into action. This might be related with Dewey's (1910) reflective thought which is consecutive - a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each in turn leans back on its predecessors as well as Copeland et al.'s (1993) assumption that reflective practice is seen to exist along a continuum. . Student teacher 4 believes that proceeding step by step helped them improve themselves better and follow their development easily since they needed to behave according to the steps in the report. Other student teachers also

confirm the impact of steps and guiding questions in producing solutions for the weak areas which may be seen in Appendix VA. 5.

Producing solutions for their weak areas enabled student teachers to follow up their development. The following quotes and the excerpts demonstrate how certain aspects of the portfolio components enabled them to monitor their progress:

Monitoring progress via looking back and forth

ST3: "What I liked about the portfolio was that I had the opportunity to go back; to look back and see how I was; what I did and how I was at the moment. I had the opportunity to see my development. It was good to be able to read how I felt at the beginning and how I felt then; at the moment of writing. I went back and looked at my previous journals, reports and improved myself accordingly. It helped me to observe myself – how I was at the beginning and how I became and what I did in order to become better. It helped me to follow my progress"

Reflection is "a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with a deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas" (Dewey, 1910). Referring back and coming to the present made the student teacher observe herself better and comprehend how she was before, how she became this way currently and what she was supposed to do in order to become better. This could be associated with the reflective thought as a consequence not merely a sequence. It is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible, and ensures the progress of the individual and, ultimately, society. This 'going back and forth' enabled her to monitor her progress closely and to make sense out of the experience she had now and then. Writing and reading about the

successive portions of experience enables student teachers to think reflectively since experience grows out of one another and support one another.

Student teacher 4 whose excerpt can be consulted in Appendix VA 6 underlines the importance of the steps and the questions in the journals and the reports and how they made the continuity of learning possible and ensured the progress of the individual. Reflective thought was provided through the steps and the questions in the journals which ensured disciplined way of thinking and helped the student teachers make connections and establish relationships between previous and current experiences. So, one experience determined the next one as its proper outcome while each in return leaned back on its predecessors (Dewey, 1910; Francis, 1995; Copeland et. al, 1993 Rodgers, 2002). This has provided progress by raising awareness towards what the student teacher 4 did and what else she needed to do to become better.

Moving in relation to the previous steps enabled the student teacher to decide what other solutions she needed to produce or actions she needed to take in order to become better. This caused taking intelligent actions as Dewey termed it rather than taking a random action.

Student teacher 3 whose excerpt you may refer to in Appendix VA. 7 had a chance to observe her development during the process due to the comparison and contrast opportunity that the reports and the journals provided. The tasks in the journals and reports made her go back and forth continuously and think on her previous, current and future performance which led her follow her progress and take intelligent action for her development. Coopeland et al., (1993) and

Rodgers (2002) also consider reflection as a meaning-making process happening consecutively along a continuum because they cast reflection as an ongoing process of solving problems.

Monitoring changes in personal beliefs via compare and contrast aspect of the portfolio

Compare and contrast aspect of the portfolio provided opportunity to follow up progress by raising awareness towards change in personal beliefs and attitudes; hence in professional identity. The following quote and the excerpt by the student teacher 5 in Appendix VA. 8 illustrate this perception of the student teachers:

ST4: "The final report was like the compare-contrast report for me because it helped me see how my ideas, thoughts, and beliefs about teaching have changed. At the very beginning we wrote about our feelings, beliefs, and philosophy about teaching into the personal statement reports and the questions in the final report made me compare my feelings, thoughts, and beliefs at the end with the ones at the beginning. It was very effective and beneficial because I could see the difference in my development. I mean how my thoughts and beliefs were at the beginning before I started teaching in the real classroom and how my beliefs and thoughts were after some real experience".

Many authors (Dewey, 1910; Schön, 1983; Griffiths and Tann, 1991; Copeland et al.,1993) claim that reflective practice is to be taken for the reconstruction of personal meanings and personal theories. Student teachers 4 and 5 underline the awareness raising that personal statement report and the final report created regarding the changes in beliefs and views about teaching. This has shown us how much the student teacher 5, for example, changed throughout the portfolio construction process since she perceived that her personal

statement report was like written by a student whereas her final report sounded like written by a teacher. The personal statement report and the final report enabled the student teachers to compare and contrast their views and beliefs about ELT between pre and post stages of the portfolio construction since one was written at the beginning and the other one at the end of the process. This process of portfolio construction reflects a change in beliefs and views which contributed into the reconstructing of the personal meaning/theory and into the formation of the professional identity of the student teachers. Schön (1983) considers reflection as a way of taking action to construct personal theories as well as, as a way of constructing personal theories that guide actions.

6.3.2.3 Theme 3: enabled student teachers to relate theory with practice

Portfolio elements (reflective journals) illuminating the function and the logic of the theories

The portfolio construction components enabled some student teachers to relate theoretical knowledge they studied with their teaching practices as explained in the quote by the student teacher 1 in VA 9. Student teacher 1 speaks of an illuminated connection between theory and practice. Writing up reflective journals enabled student teachers to articulate their understanding of educational theory. The theoretical knowledge they had so far was not incorporated into their understanding of their practices. The student teachers gained a theoretical perspective while looking at their practices. Wray's (2007) research findings are also in line with the perception in this research. Producing the reflective journals helped them illuminate the function and logic of the theories as the student teacher 1 said "why and what for they (theories) were produced". She could relate those theories with her practices and made sense

of why and what for they were produced. Gaining theoretical explanations for one's own practices enables one to improve practice by raising awareness towards a theoretical foundation for action. As Orland-Barak (2005) stated learning to be a reflective practitioner includes not only acquiring technical expertise but also to establish meaningful connections between theory and practice by providing a rationale for action. The journals asked student teachers to justify their good and weak points as well as their solutions theoretically or empirically in order to provide a solid foundation for their actions. In an attempt to do this, student teachers become aware of the theoretical perspective they were using in their practices.

Theories illuminating (helping to identify) problematic areas:

ST7: "Especially the questions in the reflective journals have been very beneficial because there were questions which required theoretical or empirical support for the identification of our problems and for the solutions that we produced. So I read a lot to find out solutions or strategies for my weak points and to justify why those solutions were suitable for my weak points. Reading about related theories also gave me the opportunity to discuss those solutions with my supervisor (you), my cooperating teacher and with my peer to decide on the best solution".

The ability to articulate connections between theory and practice is often cited as a requirement for reflective thinking and practice. Reflective thinking is possible through the notion of grounded belief (Dewey, 1910) which is made possible through the notion of suspended judgment (Dewey, 1910; Schön, 1983, 1985; Kemmis, 1985; Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985; Loughran, 2002, 2006). Thus, when student teachers suggest their beliefs in certain actions that they are to take or when they produce solutions for certain actions based on certain personal beliefs, they are supposed to bring out the ground (s) of their

beliefs. They have to consider the reasons, causes, evidences that stand behind their actions or thoughts in order to be able to produce appropriate solutions and take intelligent actions. The questions guided student teacher 7 to read about related theory and research which in return helped him illuminate problematic areas and define weaknesses for better solutions with better groundings. Moreover, reading about theory provided a ground for a discussion with the supervisor, peer and the cooperating teacher about the best alternative for the solutions. After teaching, when they examine their weaknesses or problems, they are expected to define the nature of the problem they experience by providing a ground for why they consider it as a weakness. The student teachers are expected to do an investigation directed towards bringing out more facts which serve to confirm their beliefs in defining and locating the problem. They are expected to do the same for the actions they are planning to take or the solutions they produce for overcoming the problem. Whatever beliefs they have for the solutions they produce, they have to ground them by bringing to light further evidences which support the action they are to take. So reading about related theories provided solid grounds for the student teachers to produce solutions and to support the solutions they produce theoretically.

6.3.2.4 Theme 4: Enabled student teachers to improve their skills in certain aspects (reflective thinking, critical thinking, self-assessment and evaluation, and problem-solving skills)

Student teachers in this study indicate that writing reflective journals and progressive reflective reports enabled them to improve their skills in certain

aspects. The quotations below present student teachers' perceptions on this aspect:

Critical thinking was provided through multiple perspectives and the help of guiding questions

ST1: "It also made me equipped about how to behave in different situations, in other words, how to think in multiple perspectives. For example, in my first teaching, I only focused on one thing; on one way of teaching. I couldn't think of other aspects of the lesson. And I was stuck when something unexpected occurred. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't think of presenting my lesson in different ways. But later, after reflecting on myself in the journals, I started thinking in many different ways. Like, what if students do this, what if students answer this way, what if students do not answer or react at all. I started to think critically in many different ways. I believe this is through the deep questions we had in the reflective journals and the feedback sessions. Both enabled me to think in multiple perspectives and to write more critically and reflectively"

'Thinking in multiple perspectives' or 'thinking in many different ways' is the most important ability underlined in this quotation. Moreover, the ability of thinking in multiple perspectives led to the ability of teaching or presenting the lesson in different ways. It helped the student teacher focus on other elements of the lesson simultaneously as well or be prepared for unexpected occurrences. The guiding questions in the reflective journals and the ones posed during the feedback sessions played an important role in bringing out this multiplicity in thinking and acting. The student teacher improved herself from being able to think in one way to think and act differently in different situations. Student teacher 1's perception that being able to think critically means being able to think in multiple perspectives and to behave differently in different/unexpected situations is also a noteworthy aspect of her experience. This is also related with Schön's reflection-in-action which implies conscious thinking and modification while on the job – "thinking on your feet". It suggests

not only that “we can think about doing something but that we can think about something while doing it” (Schön, 1983 cited in Manen, p.34). It involves simultaneous reflecting and doing, implying that the professional has reached a stage of competence where he or she is able to think consciously about what is taking place and modify actions instantaneously (Hatton and Smith, 1994). Student teacher 1 improves herself from the level of being able to focus on only one aspect of teaching and not being able to act against unexpected situations when she first started teaching to the upper level of thinking in multiple ways and acting simultaneously while on the job.

Self-assessment was provided through the guiding questions in many different aspects at different levels

ST3: *“While writing the reflective journals; the questions in it enabled me to do self-reflections and self-assessment continuously because they made me think about myself and evaluate myself; my performance and strategies in many different aspects. The questions really guided us on how to reflect and do self-assessment of ourselves. The questions made me go deeper into my experiences and look at my experience at different levels from different perspectives. If I were let alone; I wouldn’t be able to know what to think on; in which ways to write about and evaluate my teaching”*

The impact of the guiding questions in the reflective journals and the progressive reflective report is underlined in improving skills once again. Thus, ‘looking at and thinking about experience at different levels from different perspectives continuously’ is perceived to be self-assessment and self-evaluation. This perception of the student teacher is associated with Dewey’s (1938) elements of interaction and continuity. Experience alone, even the educative one, is not enough. What is critical is the ability to perceive and then weave meaning among the threads of experience. That is, an experience is not

the same as thought. Rather, it is the meaning that one perceives in and then constructs from an experience that gives that experience value. Kemmis (1985) also emphasizes the element of interaction in reflection that it is a dialectical process requiring us to look inward at our thought and outward at the situation in which we find ourselves. Student teacher 3 talks about the interaction of the internal and the external; her thoughts, self-evaluations and assessment from different perspectives on her performance externally. The guiding questions in the journals made her build relationships between her thoughts and action in that particular context of teaching at different levels from different perspectives. Schön's reflection-in-action also emphasizes that the measure of the value of an experience lies in the perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads up to. Similarly, the student teacher 3 emphasizes how the guiding questions in the journals and in the reports enabled her to evaluate and assess her experience at different levels from different perspectives helping her make sense out of her experience which she wouldn't be able to do if let alone. Doing this continuously enabled her to relate her past experience with her current and future experiences which made learning meaningful and connected for her.

Reflective thinking was provided through accepting one's own errors

ST4: *"This portfolio improved my reflective thinking skills. In other words, I learnt how to criticize myself. I mean a person needs to accept her errors or weak points in order to be able to improve herself. This portfolio taught me to accept that I am weak at certain points and that I need to look for the reasons for the weak points and find some solutions to improve them. It helped me realize that the reasons behind my weak areas could be related with me not with other factors. So it improved my self-critique skills. I learnt how to value myself with my strengths and weaknesses"*

Reflective thinking skill is considered as 'the ability of accepting one's errors or weak points and acknowledging the need to improve those errors/weak points' by the student teachers in this study. Examining the reasons behind those weak points, acknowledging that the reasons behind one's weaknesses could be related with the self and producing solutions for improvement are also considered to be essential within the process of reflective thinking. Many educationalists in the field (Dewey, 1910; Schön, 1983; Copeland et al., 1993; Francis, 1995; Handal,; Smyth, 1991) claim that reflection begins when an individual is perplexed about an idea or situation and ends with a judgment. In between the individual is expected to carry out an active exploration to locate and identify the reasons which perplex him and to establish grounds for his beliefs and for the alternative solutions for the weaknesses. Student teacher 4 claims writing the portfolio made him start with a problem that perplexed him and to accept the existence of that problem and to examine the reasons behind that in order to produce solutions. Trying to define his weak points and producing solutions for those weak points helped him develop his self-critique and self-evaluation skills engaging him with suspended judgment (Schön, 1983, 1987; Loughran, 2002, 2006). Loughran (2006) argues that a problem is unlikely to be acted on if it is not viewed as a problem. Similarly, student teacher 4 reports that one needs to accept one's errors and needs to relate the reasons for those errors to oneself in order to improve them.

Student teacher 4 also associates reflective thinking with learning how to value oneself with strengths and weaknesses. 'Valuing oneself with strengths and weaknesses' is the most important aspect to be underlined in this quotation

because that means one is open to accept or recognise his/her own weakness and is prepared to improve it. 'Valuing oneself with strengths and weaknesses' is an attitude and could be related with 'open-mindedness' (Dewey, 1933) which is an essential attribute for rigorous reflection. It is an active desire to recognise the possibility of error even in the beliefs which are dearest to us. It means 'being willing to reflect upon ourselves and to challenge our own assumptions, prejudices and ideologies, as well as those of others' (Pollard, 2008, p.19-20). Student teacher 4 developed this attribute of being open-minded to accept her errors and take action to improve them.

Problem-solving skills were provided through the guiding questions as a habitual act

Considering oneself as 'a solution-focused teacher' is an important aspect and attitude towards reflective teaching and reflective thinking. Dewey (1910); Schön (1983); Copeland et al., (1993); Francis, (1995); Smyth, (1991) all consider that alternatives or solutions are to be produced for the problematic areas after careful exploration and reasoning of the weak points. Producing solutions are essential for intelligent actions and for the reformulation and reconstruction of the personal theories. Without formulating solutions, one cannot take intelligent action and one can not come up with a judgment regarding her own beliefs and assumptions. Student teacher 4 whose excerpt can be referred to in Appendix VA 10 developed this as a habitual part of her life that even after the practice teaching course she still formulates solutions for different cases and conditions based on the assumptions of what if X or Y situation arises. The guiding questions played an important role in helping the

student teacher develop this habit of producing solutions towards different conditions and for different stages of the lesson. Being a solution-focused student teacher helped her develop a judgment regarding her belief that 'smiling at students' is not a solution for managing a difficult class.

Self-critique and self-evaluation skills were provided through visualising oneself while teaching: retrospection

ST7: "I visualised myself and my teaching step by step once again because the questions or the sections in the reflective journals questioned my performance in many different ways; every stage of myself so there was nothing left outside so it made me review and evaluate every single step of my teaching – this made me become more aware of my pluses and minuses and to develop my self-critique and evaluation skills. Now I know how to look at my own and my peers' teaching and how to examine a performance; I mean what points to pay attention to."

'Visualising oneself back on teaching step by step' is an important skill for improvement. The journals were structured in such a way that enabled the student teacher 7 review and evaluate every single step of her teaching with pluses and minuses through retrospection. This is related with Loughran's (2002, 2006) 'framing and reframing' concept which is possible through 'distancing' the individual self from the situation. It is like the image of a person simultaneously splitting into two roles: self-in-action and self-as-observer, with the observer at a distance looking at the self in the momentary situation (Chak, 2006). This is a strategy which enables the practising teacher to look at his/her performance like a third person observing oneself in action. It brings awareness and a different perspective to one's teaching creating different opportunities for the self to challenge his/her existing beliefs and assumptions. The questions enabled student teacher 7 to distance herself from her teaching and to review

and evaluate every step of her performance like a third person observing herself. This has provided the student teacher with a chance to evaluate and criticize herself and gained her an awareness of how to evaluate and assess her peer's performances as well.

The following table summarizes the findings regarding student teachers' perceptions of the opportunities that the components of the portfolio construction tool provided:

<p>Category 2: Benefits/Opportunities that the Components of the Portfolio provided (B/C)</p>
<p>Theme 1: Components provided self-awareness as prospective teachers Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness regarding what potentials they have or lack • Awareness provided through stimulation and motivation • Awareness regarding personality as a teacher • Awareness provided through solving out the weak areas and strengthening strong points • Awareness regarding misconceptions about the self as a teacher candidate • Awareness provided through the application of theories, methods and strategies • Awareness regarding 'learning by doing' • Awareness regarding the importance of communication and interaction instead of observation • Awareness regarding being an insider or outsider inside the classroom setting as a student teacher
<p>Theme 2: Components enabled student teachers to produce solutions and monitor their own progress/self-development Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solutions provided via defining weaknesses with reasons behind weaknesses • Solution provided via reading from different sources (referring to theories) • Solution provided via the guiding questions in the journals and the reports • Solution provided via the step-by-step approach of the reports • Following up progress via looking back and forth over the teaching experiences
<p>Theme 3: Components enabled student teachers to relate theory with practice Sub-themes:</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective journals illuminating the function and the logic of theories • Theories illuminating problematic areas; theoretical knowledge helping to define weak areas
<p>Theme 4: Components enabled student teachers to improve their skills in certain aspects</p> <p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking provided through multiple perspectives brought out through the guiding questions • Self-assessment/self-evaluation provided through the guiding questions in many different aspects at different levels • Reflective thinking provided through accepting one's own errors/weaknesses • Problem-solving provided through the guiding questions as a habitual act • Self-critique and self-evaluation provided through visualising oneself in action after teaching: retrospection

Table 6.2: Summary of the findings regarding the opportunities that the components of the newly developed portfolio tool provided in category 2

Research Question 3: What do the student teachers report on the processes of the newly developed portfolio construction tool (feedback sessions) in terms of its effectiveness in promoting reflective thinking skills and providing opportunities for professional development?

6.3.3 Category 3: Benefits/Opportunities that the Portfolio Construction

Process provided

The portfolio construction process in this newly developed tool is supported via the feedback sessions held continuously among different parties at different settings right after the formal teaching sessions. The Feedback sessions in this new tool include supervisory feedback sessions (both oral and on written documents), feedback sessions at the schools with the student teacher, the partner peer and the cooperating teacher as a group and the peer feedback sessions with the partner peer as 'the critical friend' in general. The student teachers say that the feedback sessions provided

many benefits and opportunities for them to improve their reflective thinking skills. Their transcribed responses and views from the end-of-the-semester reflection essays yielded the following themes:

6.3.3.1 Theme 1: *Enabled student teachers to improve their reflective and critical thinking skills*

Student teachers reported that the feedback sessions provided some kind of scaffolding (Vygotsky, cited in Santrock, 2001) in fostering their reflective thinking, critical thinking, self-assessment and evaluation skills. The following excerpt from the end-of-the-semester reflection essays illustrates this idea:

Critical and reflective thinking provided through multiple conversations

ST 3: "I had the chance of commenting on my own performances with the cooperating teacher, my supervisor and my peer. This helped me to get 3 different evaluations for my formal teachings. With the help of various dimensions, we could find alternative solutions to the weak points of mine. There were also different comments about how to use my strengths better to have more effective classes. These multiple conversations contributed a lot for writing my reflective journals. I could think of many points about my performances better while writing the journals and reports because my critical and reflective thinking skills have improved after these sessions"

Feedback sessions are considered to provide multiple dimensions to one's performance in this excerpt as a result of multiple conversations. These sessions provided opportunities for multiple evaluations, alternative solutions for weaknesses and different comments for even using strengths better. Multiplicity in conversations provided multiplicity in thinking during the production of the reflective journals which helped student teachers improve

their critical and reflective thinking skills. As l'Anson et al. (2003) pointed out in order for reflection to occur, student teachers engaged in professional development need to be encouraged to view their development from various angles. So l' Anson et al.'s ITE model puts considerable emphasis on opportunities for dialogue with various others such as peers, teacher fellows and tutors, each of which enables engagement with a range of different understandings and perspectives. They perceive these different perspectives about teaching practice as 'multiple refractions'. This involves the student teacher in actively negotiating the interpretation of his/her practice through the encounter with multiple refractions. The research by l' Anson et al. revealed that this process of multiple refractions can be seen to promote the development of a professional identity since it is intrinsically linked to dialogue and negotiation with others. Similar to the student teachers in their study, the student teachers in this study were observed to value the variety of perspectives because it provided them with the multiplicity to reflect on their practice more critically and reflectively. This plurality of voices can lead to new ways of seeing and new forms of practice.

Critical and reflective thinking through the continuous supervisory guidance

ST5: "I have shared every document of myself with my supervisor and received continuous feedback from my supervisor. She provided me with a different way of looking at things – a completely different perspective and guided me towards thinking in a more critical and reflective manner with her questions, reasoning, comments and the sources she directed me to read and relate to my practices. If guidance and feedback has not been provided to us continuously during the construction of the portfolio, I wouldn't be able to think as critically and reflectively and as deeply as I could do now. Everything would stay up in the air and I would be sailing on the surface of the sea with no direction and aim. Most probably hang around the same place or totally got lost. In order for a supervisor to help student teachers think effectively, s/he has to be able to think reflectively as well"

Feedback sessions are significant in terms of the guidance they may provide for the student teachers. The quality and the continuity of the guidance are also important in ensuring focus, aim and direction for the student teachers in their journey of exploring themselves as teachers. The implied metaphor of the sailor as sailing in the sea and the supervisor as the compass is used to underline the necessity and quality of the continuous guidance.

The importance of the conversation and the dialogue that occurred between the supervisor/cooperating teacher and the student teacher

Student teacher 5 also underlines the importance of multiple refractions in the sense of multiple perspectives and how these multiple refractions guided him towards thinking in a more critical and reflective manner with the help of the questions, reasoning and comments made during the feedback sessions. However, he takes the issue one step further by pointing out the importance of the quality and the continuity of the guidance provided in fostering reflective and critical thinking skills. He underlines the importance of the conversation and the dialogue that occurred since the supervisor guided him through questions, comments, reasoning and the resources to be read for theoretical support. The discursive dimension of the supervisor itself provided different perspectives to his teaching practice.

The importance of the reflective thinking skills of the supervisor/ cooperating teachers during guidance

He also emphasises the importance of the reflective thinking skills of the supervisor in helping out a student teacher think reflectively. In their reflective

supervision model, Weiss and Weiss (2001) underlines that the process of mentoring in a reflective mode often requires one to 'think aloud' about decisions that gradually become 'interactive communication' between mentor and student teacher, rather than a 'linear communication' from mentor to student teacher. During their supervisory conferences, the supervisor frequently asks the student teachers to analyze how and why they use particular theories of curriculum and instruction in order to support them in becoming more self-directed and analytical.

Student teachers 10, though, agree with the contribution of the continuous supervisory observations criticised the newly developed portfolio construction tool as not being continuous enough in supervisory observations as indicated below:

ST10: "It would have been better if you had observed all of our teachings not just one at the beginning and the one at the end. I know that you checked all of our reflective journals and held feedback sessions for all of our performances but if you observed us personally in class you could have seen our weaknesses or improvements better and provide much better feedback for those sessions as well. You might have missed some important points in between"

Observing student teachers' performances one at the beginning and one at the end might prevent the supervisor from following up the progress of each student teacher and providing help and support during this process. As the student teacher 10 pointed out some important points might be missed and these could be important in guiding and following up the student teacher. The logic of this is explained by the student teacher 2 who claims that for continuity in feedback, all the teaching sessions need to be observed. Weaknesses

determined at the beginning need to be very closely followed during the whole process to help the student teacher improve those weaknesses. The solutions produced and applied need to be observed and checked continuously; otherwise, the feedback provided at the beginning might not be meaningful. As Dewey (1938) indicated without continuity learning is random and disconnected, building toward nothing either within the learner or in the world. The cooperating teachers were expected to provide the continuity in feedback and guidance since they were supposed to observe all the teaching performances of the student teachers. This situation brings out two possibilities as either the quality of the conversation and the dialogue between the cooperating teachers and the student teachers were perceived to be not satisfactory enough or in a culture of performativity, novice teachers want feedback from someone perceived to be in a position of authority who is the supervisor to reassure them. However, with a reflective portfolio construction tool which aims to train student teachers to become more self-directed and autonomous teachers, depending on an evaluation from an outsider is something questionable. The student teacher is expected to become better able to hold up a mirror to his/her own practice and become less dependant on evaluation by an outsider.

6.3.3.2 Theme 2: Awareness regarding oneself as a prospective teacher through feedback sessions

Student teachers reported that holding these feedback sessions increased their awareness regarding themselves as prospective teachers in the following manners:

Awareness was provided through hearing from different perspectives (multiplicity of voices)

ST6: *“It is impossible for us as student teachers to become aware of things about our own teaching on our own so through these feedback sessions we had a chance to hear about ourselves from different perspectives such as from our supervisor, our cooperating teacher, our peer and we also expressed our thoughts for our performance. We had four different perspectives and these made me more aware of myself because I had a chance to hear many different aspects of myself and my teaching which all contributed to my following teachings. Having different feedback from different perspectives made me well prepared for the follow up lessons because we also discussed some possible solutions”*

Vygotsky’s Social Cognition theory implies that knowledge is mutually built and constructed; that individuals construct knowledge through social interaction with others. Listening to the supervisor’s, cooperating teacher’s and her peer’s comments and suggestions functioned like a scaffolding technique (Vygotsky cited in Santrock, 2001) in making student teacher 6 become more aware of her teaching performance and also helped her better prepared for her next teaching. This student teacher’s perception is also related with Dewey’s (1916) notion that reflection needs to happen in community through interaction with others. Similarly the student teacher 6 also indicates that this is an activity that one cannot do in isolation on her own; that one needs to share and listen to others.

Rodgers (2002) similarly underlines the need for affirmation of the value of one’s experience because in isolation what matters can be too easily dismissed as unimportant. One can miss a very important aspect of her own teaching that could be seized and affirmed by other observers. Dewey (1916) points out to

the importance and benefits of sharing experience with others to help the individual grow reflectively. This is because 'the act of sharing' broadens one's field of experience since they communicate to us their observations through the lens of their own experiences in the same enterprise. The group sessions are meant to enhance reflectivity by bringing more minds and multiple perspectives to bear on educational issues and by forcing individuals to bring to the surface and articulate to others their own ideas and reasoning processes (Kemmis, 1985; McCaleb, Borko, & Arends, 1992; Oja, Diller, Corcoran, & Andrew, 1992; Schön, 1983; Zeichner and Liston, 1987). Student teacher 6 also reports that sharing views during these feedback sessions raised her awareness and helped her take decisions in the form of possible solutions and strategies for the planning and delivery of the following classes as was indicated by Gower and Walters (1983).

The study conducted by l'Anson et al. (2003) on the multiple refractions of student experience also support the student teacher 6's perceptions that an individual's interaction with his/her environment does not automatically lead to reflection nor to the formulation of complex structures of thought about their practice. They believe that in order for reflection to occur, student teachers engaged in professional development need to be encouraged to view their development from various angles and their ITE model puts considerable emphasis on opportunities for dialogue with various others such as peers, teacher fellows and tutors each of which enables engagement with a range of different understandings and perspectives. Student teacher 6 also expressed it in her above given quotation that she had a chance to hear about herself from

different perspectives which made her become aware of herself and provided her opportunities for new forms of practice since she indicated that these multiple perspectives enabled her to better prepared for the next classes by helping her in terms of creating possible solutions for the problematic areas. Student teachers in Erginel's (2006) study also reported that the feedback sessions and the guidance provided by the instructor and the peers increased their self-awareness by enabling them identify their weaknesses and produce some strategies for their weaknesses.

Awareness was provided through horizontally and vertically at a multidimensional level (at instructors' and peer's level simultaneously)

The opportunity that the sessions provided according to the student teacher 7 whose quotation can be consulted in Appendix VA 11 is the opportunity for discussion at different levels. The student teacher states that she both had a chance to listen to what various others (l'Anson et al., 2003) think on her own teaching and what ideas she herself has on her own performance. The discussions from multiple perspectives were not only problem identification oriented but also solution-focused. Student teacher 7 indicates that the sessions also provided her with an opportunity to see her performance 'not only horizontally but vertically' as well. She considers the feedback provided by the supervisor and the cooperating teacher as horizontal and the feedback provided by the peers as vertical since they are at the same status sharing the same conditions. This comment of the student teacher brings a new perspective to the issue of feedback sessions and guidance that they are not only expected to be from multiple perspectives but also at a multidimensional level. To sum up, as l'Anson et al. (2003) indicated that in order for reflection to

occur, student teachers engaged in professional development need to be encouraged to view their development from various angles and this requires opportunities for dialogue with various others, each of which enables engagement with a range of different understandings and perspectives. Dialogue at multiple levels and from multiple perspectives provides multiple ways/opportunities of seeing oneself and better ways of repositioning oneself.

6.3.3.3 Theme 3: Enabled student teachers to produce solutions and monitor their own progress

Solutions were produced via hearing different strategies from different perspectives

ST6: Having different feedback from different perspectives during the feedback sessions made me well prepared for the follow up lessons because we also discussed some possible solutions and produced some strategies which I put into action and some of them really worked”

Reflection does not end at the stage of identifying weak areas but also goes on with producing solutions and strategies for these weak areas (a solution-focused process) (Dewey, 1910, Schön, 1983). The feedback sessions were effective in better preparing the student teacher 6 for her follow up classes since they provided opportunities for having different perspectives on her teaching performance and discuss some possible strategies for her next teachings. As Beauchamp and Thomas (2006) indicated it being able to imagine a future practice is an important step in the development of professional identity. Wenger (1998) also considers educational imagination as an element of reflective practice. Therefore, student teachers are not only expected to reflect on their past experiences but to develop strategies for their

future performances by being able to think over the desired possibilities.

Therefore imagination over future performance is an important aspect of and a need for reflection as Dewey also put it years ago.

She even indicates that she had a chance to analyse whether the strategies they produced during these feedback sessions worked or not by putting them into action and observing the consequences as well. Most of the proposed reflective processes are concerned with the complete cycle of professional doing- action coupled with reflection which then leads to modified action (Kolb,1984; Coopeland,1993; Francis,1995). Both forms of Schön's reflection involve taking action to modify practice and construct personal theories. For Dewey (1910), reflection must include intelligent action as a testing of one's theories. He considers 'reflective action' as the final end-product of an active and deliberative cognitive process over the solution of a problem or a felt difficulty. Similarly, student teacher 6 indicates that as a result of the multiple perspectives during the sessions, which means after some contemplation over the difficulties she experienced, they managed to produce some solutions some of which she reports worked after she put them into action.

Solutions were produced via reasoning and questioning with a theoretical support

ST3: "Feedback sessions have been very beneficial; especially in producing solutions and strategies for the problematic areas. Our supervisor was also very encouraging and supportive in every respect; theoretically as well. She raised very effective questions during the feedback sessions to help us do reasoning and produce some solutions for our weak areas"

Student teacher 3 indicated that the supervisor's questions helped her do reasoning on her weaknesses and on producing alternative solutions for those weaknesses. Discussing the issue with the supervisor through questioning provided her with different ways of seeing her weaknesses and producing alternatives by reframing her problematic areas as Schön (1983, 1987) and Loughran (2002, 2006) stated with their notion of 'framing and reframing'. Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) and Kemmis (1985) emphasize the importance of consciousness in the process which is through the period of suspended judgment. In order for experiences to lead to new understandings, they believe these ideas must be brought to consciousness and be grounded before one can be an active decision maker. Through the questions raised during these feedback sessions, different perspectives and ideas were brought to consciousness since the student teacher believes that these questions helped her do reasoning on her weaknesses and on the solutions. The theoretical support provided by the supervisor also helped her ground the problem and the solutions before taking an action.

6.3.3.4 Theme 4: Made student teachers more responsible and motivated towards teaching and portfolio writing (psychological aspect)

The student teachers stated that the feedback sessions held made them more responsible and motivated towards teaching and portfolio writing. The dialogue between the supervisor/cooperating teacher and the student teachers during the supervisory feedback sessions created an attitude of wholeheartedness which led to enthusiasm and encouragement and to intellectual perception. The following quotations exemplify this attitude of the student teachers:

Responsibility and motivation were provided through the attitude of the supervisor and the cooperating teacher

ST4: *“Feedback sessions were one of the most beneficial aspects of the portfolio construction process. When we saw that the supervisor value the reports we wrote, we became more encouraged. When our supervisor and cooperating teacher provided us with oral and written feedback; we felt ourselves valued. Both of them took our efforts, written documents and performances seriously. Both of my instructors’ attitudes made me take this process seriously as well. I became more enthusiastic about teaching and my portfolio. Their commitments do really matter and made us more responsible and motivated”*

This quotation of the student teacher 4 underlines the importance of dialogue and the attitude of the supervisor and the cooperating teacher during guidance throughout the whole process. Dewey (1910) argues that reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others. Dewey believed that the attitudes the individual brought to bear on the act of reflection could either open the way to learning or block it. He argued that awareness of our attitudes and emotions, and the discipline to harness them and use them to our advantage, is part of the work of a good thinker. The feedback provided by the supervisor and the cooperating teacher makes her feel valued because they display a serious attitude towards the student teacher’s performance and finds her performance and written reports valuable. This attitude enables the student teacher to develop a positive attitude towards herself and value her own work as well. Whole-heartedness (Dewey, 1910) indicates a genuine enthusiasm about one’s subject matter. Curiosity about and enthusiasm for that subject matter is essential to good teaching. Without them a teacher has no energy, no fuel, to carry out reflective inquiry – much less teaching itself. The positive and supportive dialogue between the supervisor/the

cooperating teacher and the student teacher and their attitude towards student teacher's efforts made her motivated and enthusiastic about her teaching and portfolio production which I believe evoked this attitude of whole-heartedness in the student teacher towards her teaching and portfolio. Goodman (1991) also indicates that this attitude of whole-heartedness gives individuals the strength to move beyond abstract notions and put their ideals into practice and enables pre-service teachers to work through their fears and insecurities, and thus provide a basis for action.

Moreover, the supervisor's and her cooperating teacher's attitude made her responsible towards her teaching and portfolio construction herself which is another attitude required for reflective thinking and action. For Dewey (1933) being responsible means to dare to take decision upon soundly grounded beliefs and experiences, and then to take the risk of putting these decisions into action to see the consequences of them on the teaching and learning processes.

The motivation and the enthusiasm gained from the instructors' attitude were also supported by the continuous feedback provided on time. Putting some of the suggestions into action and observing that they worked made student teachers more enthusiastic about feedback and value the feedback they received as indicated below:

ST6: "Both my supervisor and the cooperating teacher guided us at every step and provided us with feedback continuously both oral and written so it was very beneficial in the sense that it motivated me to complete my tasks on time and become more aware of myself. And considered all the feedback, comments and suggestions seriously because I tried out some of the suggestions we discussed

and when they worked I became more enthusiastic about your comments and feedbacks”.

Awareness of our attitudes and the positive possession of these attitudes could open our way to reflective thinking and action so the attitude and the dialogue of the supervisor and/or the cooperating teacher with the student teacher during the feedback sessions and throughout the whole process is considered to be important in opening or blocking the way to reflective thinking and learning. Student teacher 3 also comments on the importance of the attitude of and dialogue with the supervisor/the cooperating teacher by underlining some personality traits which are useful for effective feedback and motivation during the construction of the portfolio as given below:

Importance of personality traits and dialogue during feedback sessions

ST3: “It would be much more effective if my cooperating teacher had been more collaborative and positive during the feedback session. She was only a weak point-focused person and focused only on my errors and weak points. She didn’t suggest any ideas to help me improve myself. She just said ‘you were weak in this and that’s all. She didn’t even listen to me or ask me any questions. I would be happier if we managed to be in dialogue and discuss my teaching from different perspectives”

Cooperating teachers are expected to be ‘collaborative and positive’ during the feedback sessions. The portfolio construction tool is criticised to be weak in terms of the cooperating teachers selected to work with the student teachers. Student teacher 3 complains about the type of communication she had with her cooperating teacher claiming that she was not collaborative and positive enough. Research indicates that the communication and interaction between the mentor and the student teacher needs to be interactive which means a two-

way communication between the mentor and the student teacher rather than a linear communication from mentor to student teacher (Weiss & Weiss, 2001); however, the situation under consideration here is a monologue and one-way communication going from the cooperating teacher to the student teacher. Moran and Dallat (1995) claimed that the mentor's role is to stimulate reflective conversation by using a variety of techniques such as questioning, listening, challenging. The mentors interviewed in Moran's and Dallat's research (1995) identified the use of these techniques as an important aspect of their role but admitted that they had been unable to fully realize their potential.

In addition to her lack of using an interactive communication with the student teacher, the cooperating teacher in this current study also had a negative attitude focusing only on the errors of the student teacher ignoring her strengths. Moreover, while focusing on her weak aspects, she could not create a dialogue allowing the student teacher to express herself and her ideas about her teaching but had a one-way (linear) communication stating only the weak points without any questioning, reasoning, listening or suggestions for improvement. This leads us to think over the attitude to be shown and the type of communication to occur during feedback sessions. This situation is also related with Vygotsky's scaffolding technique which includes 'dialogue' as the major method for scaffolding learning in initial teacher training.

The following excerpt from the student teacher 4 underlines the unprofessional attitude shown during the feedback sessions indicating both the psychological and academic effects such an attitude has caused:

Professional manner and experience of the supervisors/cooperating teachers

ST4: "While some student teachers got proper feedback and guidance some can receive insufficient and inadequate guidance and feedback. This affects the student teacher both academically and psychologically. My cooperating teacher couldn't behave professionally as well as academically. The guidance she provided was not enough and helpful. She was not cooperative and motivated to help as well. I believe she was not experienced enough to guide a student teacher in a practice teaching course. I felt myself so bad and alone from time to time"

The importance of experience, professionalism and personal attributes in providing feedback and guidance is underlined in this excerpt as well. A cooperating teacher is not only expected to be cooperative and motivated but also experienced enough and academically equipped in order to guide a student teacher effectively. Absence of these caused the student teacher feel psychologically negative leading her to feel bad and alone during the process of portfolio construction and internship. Negative psychological state might affect the student teacher perform cognitively and think reflectively. Researchers such as Clandinin(1985); Liston & Zeichner (1990); Noordhoff & Kleinfeld (1990); Richert (1992) remind us of the important role emotions and emotional states can play in reflective thinking and also in learning to teach. Izards (1977) sees "the emotions as the chief determinants of the quality of life and as the main provider of blueprints for cognition and action" (p.139). He suggests that the emotional process is initiated first and then the cognitive system comes very quickly into play. The two systems interact to oppose or complement each other. "In either case emotion alters perception and cognition. It is proposed that certain emotion states deautomatize or otherwise alter the structures or contents of consciousness in such a way as to preclude cognitive processes as

they usually operate” (Izard, 1977, p.157). Therefore, a student teacher feeling psychologically negative and alone is not expected to think reflectively since emotional state affects the cognition perform properly. A negative emotional state might cause the student teacher lose her motivation towards teaching and thinking reflectively.

The following table summarizes the findings regarding the benefits that the portfolio construction processes (feedback sessions) provided:

<p>Category 3: Benefits/Opportunities that the portfolio construction processes (Feedback Sessions) provided</p>
<p>Theme 1: Feedback sessions enabled student teachers to improve their reflective and critical thinking skills</p> <p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical and reflective thinking were provided through multiple dimensions/ conversations • Critical and reflective thinking were provided through continuous supervisory guidance (questions/reasoning/comments/resources recommended) • Critical and reflective thinking were provided through the dialogue/ communication between the supervisor/cooperating teacher and the student teacher • Critical and reflective thinking were supported through the reflective thinking skills of the supervisor/cooperating teacher
<p>Theme 2: Awareness regarding oneself as a prospective teacher through feedback sessions</p> <p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness was provided by hearing from different perspectives • Awareness was provided through horizontally and vertically at a multidimensional level (at instructors’ and peer’s level simultaneously)
<p>Theme 3: Feedback sessions enabled student teachers to produce solutions and monitor their self-development</p> <p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solutions were produced via hearing different strategies from different perspectives • Solutions were produced via reasoning and questions with a theoretical support • Progress was monitored via putting solutions into action
<p>Theme 4: Feedback sessions made student teachers more responsible and motivated towards teaching and portfolio writing</p> <p>Sub-themes:</p>

- Responsibility and motivation were provided through the dialogue and the attitude of the supervisor/cooperating teacher with the student teacher
- Motivation and enthusiasm were provided through the continuous feedback given by the supervisor and the cooperating teacher
- Professional manner and the experience of the supervisor/cooperating teacher were important in providing motivation and enthusiasm

Table 6.3 Summary of the findings regarding the opportunities that the feedback sessions of the newly developed portfolio tool provided in category 3

This was not a predetermined research question but emerged during the development and implementation of the newly developed portfolio construction tool. After developing and implementing the peer collaboration tasks integrated into the new tool, I aimed at examining the effectiveness of these tasks so I asked the following research question during the third phase:

Research Question 4: What do the student teachers report on the effectiveness of the peer collaboration tasks of the newly developed portfolio construction tool in promoting reflective thinking skills and professional development?

6.3.4 Category 4: Peer Collaboration: peer observation, peer feedback sessions, peer reflective journals

Student teachers perceived peer collaboration as a very beneficial activity which helped them improve their skills in certain aspects, raised their awareness regarding their own thinking and teaching skills and enabled them to help each other produce suggestions and solutions for their weak areas. The following quotations exemplify student teachers' perceptions in these aspects:

6.3.4.1 Theme 1: Enabled student teachers to improve their skills in certain aspects

Student teachers indicated that peer collaboration especially observing a peer helped them improve their reflective thinking, critical thinking and assessment/evaluation skills as quoted below:

Critical eye: observing objectively and consciously

ST1: "Observing my peer helped me have a critical eye in my mind. I learnt how to observe objectively without prejudices. I learnt to take on responsibility and this made me act fairly and objectively. But of course I did this with the help of the checklist and the questions provided in the handbook. They helped us observe each other consciously; knowing and following every step of our peers. I learnt to become an objective and conscious observer and evaluate one objectively. I mean as much as I could."

Student teacher 1 considers having a 'critical eye' as learning how to observe objectively and consciously. Observing and evaluating one consciously means 'knowing what to look for' and objectively means 'without prejudices' The guiding questions and the peer observation checklists provided a framework/a set of criteria for the student teacher to watch and evaluate her peer as she was teaching. This means student teachers need guidance in order to be conscious of what to observe and how to evaluate. Following a checklist and a set of questions while observing her peer teaching helped her develop a critical eye which contributed to her critical thinking skills as well. She also adds that these peer observations and evaluations helped her take on responsibility which in return enabled her to act fairly and objectively on behalf of her peer. Francis (1995) indicated that successful collaboration does not just happen. It must be consciously nurtured so specific skills needing to be developed. Posing

clarifying questions is one way of helping student teachers develop skills for successful collaboration and take on responsibility for their peer's work as well. Similarly, student teacher 1 indicates that the checklist and the guiding questions prepared for the observations and peer feedback sessions helped her develop her evaluation skills and made her feel responsible for observing and providing feedback for her peer. In the research conducted by Francis, student teachers indicated that they felt accountable both for their own growth and that of their peers. When one is accountable to a group, one feels a responsibility toward others that is more compelling than the responsibility we feel to only ourselves (Rodgers, 2002). Student teacher 4 explains below the responsibility she developed towards herself through observing a peer:

Self-evaluation skills were improved through framing and reframing oneself: distancing oneself

ST4: "So observing a peer gave me the chance to become more aware of what to do and what not to do. I believe observing my peer gave me the opportunity to question myself; and evaluate my own teaching. You can better observe what to do; what points to pay attention to rather than being told by the cooperating teacher because you have a chance to compare and contrast your own teaching with your peer's live performance"

Observing a peer increased her self-awareness by providing her with an opportunity to question and to evaluate her own performance by contrasting herself with her peer's live performance simultaneously. This raises awareness in many aspects and improves self-evaluation skills because as Loughran (2002, 2006) claims, it gives the student teacher a chance for 'framing and reframing' her own teaching performance and weaknesses. This ability of framing and reframing helps student teachers develop a range of ways of seeing a problem. He adds that 'framing and reframing' offer ways of

considering how alternative perspectives might be developed and, importantly, create possibilities for challenging one's taken-for-granted assumptions. Thus, while observing her peer, the student teacher might develop different ways of seeing her problems and develops different alternative strategies to put into action. Moreover, observing a peer might provide a psychological separation from the present context. One moves away from a situation which is the peer's live performance, and becomes an observer of oneself. The moments the student teacher starts comparing and contrasting her peer's performance with her own previous performances is in a way means distancing herself from the present context and retrospectively observing herself in action in her thoughts. As Chack (2006) indicated "distancing as a strategy brings awareness of one's thoughts, emotions and actions and sets the stage for attending to such content" (p.36). Hence, 'framing and reframing' one's own performance through observing her peer and distancing herself from the context for a self-evaluation of her own performance via comparison and contrast provides the opportunity for improving self-evaluation skills.

The quotation from student teacher 10 below also underlines this empathetic look at oneself while observing a peer. Observing a peer made her put herself into the shoes of her peer and become aware of the points that she is also going to be observed. While watching him, she distanced herself from the context and became more aware of certain aspects and prepared herself what points to pay attention to during her own teaching:

Self-evaluation skills through an empathetic look at oneself

ST10: *“These peer observations and feedback sessions also made me think empathetically. I put myself into his place and said to myself that he was going to watch me through these points so I analysed myself from those points as well while I was watching him and commented on his teaching.”*

Student teacher 12 discusses the same strategy of ‘distancing’ by exemplifying it in the following way:

“As I was observing my peer, I just reminded myself not to repeat the mistakes she did because those mistakes negatively affected her teaching. So as I watched her, I became more aware of the important aspects of teaching and more aware of my teaching because I had a chance to compare myself with her during those observations and during the feedback sessions afterwards”

6.3.4.2 Theme 2: Raised student teachers’ awareness on thinking and teaching skills and contributed to their development through helping each other with solutions and suggestions

Student teachers reported that collaborating with a peer raised their awareness regarding their own thinking and teaching skills and contributed to their development through providing an opportunity for comparison as exemplified in the following quotes:

Being observed: The perspective of the equal other

ST11: *“Working with a peer collaboratively has been very effective because my peer saw some aspects of mine that I couldn’t see about myself on my own. I wasn’t aware of most of the things as I was teaching but he warned me against many things like ‘don’t do this’, ‘what about if you behave this way’ or ‘your such behaviour or task or strategy was very effective because such and such’. He brought in a very different way and rich way of looking at my teaching. I found his feedback very valuable. He helped me with producing solutions too and I did the same.”*

The perspective of others is important in becoming more aware of one's own teaching. Student teacher 11 indicates that her peer made her aware of the things that she would not be able to see on her own and provided her with a rich way of looking at her own perspective. As Rodgers (2002) stated "In isolation what matters can be too easily dismissed as unimportant" (p. 857) and that collaboration offers the opportunity of seeing things "newly": Others offer alternative meanings, broadening the field of understanding. In their studies, Anson et al. (2003) also confirms the student teacher's perception that in order for reflection to occur, student teachers engaged in professional development need to be encountered to view their development from various angles and peer collaboration is one of those angels who provides dialogue with various others. This opportunity for dialogue with others such as peers can lead to new ways of seeing and new forms of practice which supports the inter-subjective construction of meaning.

The quotation from the student teacher 5 below on the other hand emphasises the self-awareness gained through observing a peer:

Observing a peer: an empathetic look at oneself helped develop strategies

ST5: "While observing my peer I took down some notes about her weak aspects as well as some suggestions on how to improve herself. I also took notes of the things that I should not do because students reacted or didn't like. So watching her made me gain a lot of strategies to apply for my own teaching and become more cautious of the things that I should not apply in class. So the feedback I gave to her was actually the feedback for me as well. Watching her made me realise what to do and not to do"

Watching a peer provides two roles for the student teacher: student teacher as an observer and student teacher as a learner. The student teacher is a critical friend who observes to give feedback for her peer's performance for her peer's improvement as a teacher and the student teacher is also a learner who watches to learn from the peer's performance based on the peer's weaknesses and strengths for her own self-improvement. Student teacher 5 underlines an unexpected opportunity that observing a peer might provide. Observing a peer might provide an empathetic look at oneself and one's own teaching because while taking some notes for your peer's weak aspects, you become cautious of the same things that one should not apply in class. The observing peer puts himself/herself into the shoes of the practising peer (the partner) and warns oneself what to do and what not to do for her own teaching.

Student teachers reported that they benefitted a great deal from the peer collaboration; however, they made some suggestions about the implementation of peer collaboration in order to optimize its effect on the student teachers' professional development as indicated below:

Continuous peer observation

ST11: "In my opinion it was a wonderful portfolio. However, some modifications were needed. For example, the peers should observe all of the formal teachings because to see all formal teachings can be useful and effective for solving the important weaknesses. At the end of each formal teaching, the peers can comment on their performance and they can shape their next formal teaching according to these comments. Observing only two randomly is no use if you do not know the one before or the one after"

Student teacher 11 above and 2 who may be consulted in Appendix VA 12 underline the importance of continuity in providing feedback. In order for peer

observation and collaboration to be meaningful and useful, peers need to observe each other continuously in order to link their peer's previous teaching with his/her next teaching. Student teacher 2 and his peer observed each other continuously and this provided them with an opportunity to follow each other so closely; so the feedback they provided to each other was more meaningful. This was because they experienced things together in the same context. Since, they knew what happened previously, they were able to offer suggestions accordingly for the next classes and to observe and evaluate their peer on the basis of those suggestions.

Suitability of partners

The peer collaboration aspect of the portfolio was criticized in terms of the suitability of the partners to each other and the psychological and academic effects this may cause as stated below by the student teacher 9:

ST9: "The only aspect I can criticize about this portfolio construction processes was the issue of partnership. I believe one can learn a lot from her partner but my partner was not collaborative and motivated. We couldn't get on well with each other because she didn't want to cooperate and discuss with me the activities we were supposed to do together. If I had a more collaborative and motivated partner, I believe we would have been more beneficial to each other in many ways. I watched my peers working with their partners in enthusiasm and I really felt myself alone and had difficult time getting prepared for the following classes"

Student teacher 9 stresses a very important aspect of peer collaboration which is the suitability of partners. If partners are not suited to each other, peer collaboration rather than being beneficial, it may be destructive in terms of the psychological effects it may cause on the peer partner. If partners who are

matched to work together are not collaborative, motivated and enthusiastic to work with each other, this may cause an academic loneliness on behalf of one of the partners. So personality match needs to be taken into account while forming up the partners.

The following table summarizes the findings regarding the student teachers' perceptions of the peer collaboration:

<p>Category 4: Peer Collaboration: peer observation, peer feedback sessions, peer reflective journals</p>
<p>Theme 1: Peer Collaboration enabled student teachers to improve their skills such as reflective thinking skills, critical thinking skills, and assessment and evaluation skills</p> <p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical eye: observing objectively and consciously • Self-evaluation skills through distancing oneself from one's own teaching experience • Self-evaluation skills through an empathetic look at oneself
<p>Theme 2: Peer Collaboration raised student teachers' awareness regarding their own teaching skills and contributed to their development through helping each other with solutions</p> <p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being observed: the perspective of the equal other • Observing a peer: an empathetic look at oneself (self-awareness) • The necessity of continuous peer observation • The effect of the suitability of partners

Table 6.4 Summary of the findings regarding peer collaboration in the newly developed portfolio tool in category 4

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents a brief summary of the findings of the newly developed portfolio construction tool and attempts to provide a conclusion on the crucial aspects/elements of the portfolio construction tool stimulating reflection.

Chapter 7 also offers some implications for practice, for further research and what I have learnt as a researcher by undertaking this research.

7.1 Summary of the findings

Below, I attempted to provide a brief summary of the responses provided to the research questions posed after the implementation of the newly developed portfolio tool in the 3rd phase of the study:

1. *How do the student teachers define portfolio construction after the implementation of the newly developed portfolio construction tool?*

Examining the ways student teachers defined portfolio construction processes yielded three themes. After going through the process of constructing the newly developed portfolio, student teachers perceived it *as a tool showing personal development* rather than a tool for measurement. They considered it as a mirror showing student teachers what they have as pluses and what they lack as minuses. They compared it to a tool reflecting back to one's own experiences from one's own perspective providing them with an opportunity to monitor their own progress. Some perceived it as a tool helping them define and develop the self. It helps student teachers define themselves by providing an opportunity for self-expression which increases awareness in many aspects. They define portfolio as a timeline which provides back and forth looks into the experience and promotes self-awareness helping student teachers define themselves

better. Portfolio was also defined as a solution-focused tool since it enables student teachers produce solutions to improve their weaknesses.

2. What do the student teachers report on the effectiveness of the components of the newly developed portfolio construction tool in terms of promoting reflective thinking skills and providing opportunities for professional development?

Student teachers reported that the components of the newly developed portfolio tool increased their self-awareness as prospective teachers making them more conscious of what potentials they have or lack. The components also stimulated them to think over and monitor their weak areas which resulted in a heightened self-awareness. Moreover, they indicated that components provided awareness regarding their personality as teachers since the reflective journals and the reports provided the enthusiasm and motivation for them to define and monitor their weak aspects for solution for a better construction of the self professionally. Student teachers also indicated the opportunity that the portfolio provided in becoming aware of the misconceptions about the self after some applications in the real classrooms like the things known to be strong turned out to be weak and the aspects known to be weak turned out to be strong. The new portfolio tool provided awareness regarding student teachers' skills in applying theories and methods and enabled them to understand or relate theories with practice, and to comprehend which of the methods or strategies they were able to apply that they had learnt so far. They also indicated that their awareness was raised through the observation and teaching tasks claiming that they did not find the observation tasks useful indicating that they got to know the reality

of the classroom context when they participated and performed within that context because the meaning and the reality within that classroom setting changed when their role changed from being an observer (an outsider) into a participant/teacher (insider) within that context. They became aware of the importance of the communication and interaction rather than observation in getting acquainted with the students.

Student teachers reported about the opportunity the newly developed portfolio tool provided for them since it enabled them to produce solutions for their weaknesses and monitor their own progress. They indicated that they were able to produce solutions since the components guided them to define their weaknesses by examining the reasons behind. They were also supposed to put the solutions into action and see whether they worked or not. They believe that going through these steps enabled them to monitor their own progress as well. Producing solutions were also provided by guiding student teachers to refer to theoretical and empirical sources in solving out their problematic areas. They also reported that the step-by-step approach and the guiding questions given in the journals/reports facilitated the act of producing solutions by making student teachers focus over their problematic areas in producing solutions.

Writing up reflective journals enabled student teachers to articulate their understanding of educational theory and helped them illuminate the function and logic of the theories. They could relate those theories with their practices and made sense of why and what they were produced for. Reading about

related theories illuminated their problematic areas helping them define weaknesses for better solutions with better groundings.

Student teachers indicated that the guiding questions in the journals/reports enabled them to think in multiple perspectives and to behave differently in different situations which contributed to their critical thinking skill. They also stated that the guiding questions enabled them 'to look at and think about experience at different levels from different perspectives continuously' and to visualize themselves back in action which they perceived to have an impact on their self-assessment and self-evaluation skills. Their reflective thinking skills were improved since the portfolio taught them to accept their errors/weaknesses and to acknowledge the need for improving their errors.

3. What do the student teachers report on the effectiveness of the processes of the newly developed portfolio construction tool (feedback sessions) in terms of promoting reflective thinking skills and providing opportunities for professional development?

Student teachers reported that the conversations held during the feedback sessions provided multiplicity of voices which improved their critical and reflective thinking skills. The communication and the dialogue held between the supervisor/cooperating teacher and the student teacher also developed their critical and reflective thinking skills through the questions posed and the reasoning and comments made during guidance.

Student teachers reported that hearing from different perspectives provided the opportunity to hear different aspects of the self both horizontally and vertically at a multidimensional level which improved awareness of the student teachers. Hearing different strategies from different perspectives as well as the reasoning and questioning conducted at the feedback sessions improved awareness as well.

Student teachers also reported that the dialogue and the attitude as well as the professional manner of the supervisor/cooperating teacher during the feedback sessions made them more responsible and motivated towards teaching and portfolio writing.

4. What do the student teachers report on the effectiveness of the peer collaboration tasks of the newly developed portfolio construction tool in promoting reflective thinking skills and professional development?

Student teachers reported that peer collaboration helped them improve their critical thinking skills by helping them develop a 'critical eye' which enabled them to observe objectively and consciously. Peer observations improved their self-evaluation skills by providing them with an opportunity to frame and reframe oneself through distancing oneself from one's own teaching. Being observed provided the perspective of various others and observing a peer provided an empathetic look at oneself which contributed to self-awareness. However, student teachers also reported about the weaknesses of the peer collaboration suggesting for a necessity of continuous peer observation and of the suitability of partners in improving the weaknesses.

Based on the analysis of the findings both in the first and third phases of the study, I can conclude that the following are the crucial aspects and elements of the portfolio construction tool that stimulates reflection.

7.2 Crucial aspects/elements of the portfolio construction tool stimulating reflection

7.2.1 Portfolio as a multifunctional tool showing personal development and helping for development

Student teachers regarded portfolio as a tool showing personal development because portfolio reflects back to one's own experiences from one's own perspective and it is like a mirror for them showing weaknesses and strengths. They also defined portfolio as a tool helping them define and develop themselves since it provided them with an opportunity to express themselves continuously on a time line stressing the ongoing aspect of the portfolio. They also perceived portfolio as tool helping student teachers produce solutions for their weak areas underlining the solution-focused and counselling aspect of the portfolio.

Butler and Winne (1995) indicated that "portfolios help the person to monitor their own development by providing feedback on a continuous basis". This conception was supported with the research findings by Smith and Tillema (1998) and Erginel (2006). Erginel (2006) stated that weekly journals provided student teachers with the self-monitoring opportunity which led to self-analysis

in terms of their strengths and weaknesses; hence, to self-awareness and self-definition.

Barton and Collins, (1993), Guillaume and Yopp, (1995) and Elango, Jutti and Lee (2005) also stated that it is a tool which provided teachers with an opportunity to monitor their own progress as they construct it. So, it gives the student teachers individual responsibility for learning and monitoring their own development and act accordingly to fix the problematic areas.

7.2.2 The guiding questions

The most frequently mentioned aspect/element of the portfolio perceived to be stimulating reflection is the guiding questions given in the reflective journals/reports and the ones posed during the feedback sessions.

Student teachers consider guiding questions as one of the vital aspects of the portfolio tool stimulating reflection because of the opportunity they provided student teachers to focus on their weak or problematic areas and to look at experiences at different levels from different perspectives. Many authors (Dewey, 1910; Schön, 1983; Copeland et al., 1993; Francis, 1995; Loughran, 2006; Rodgers, 2002) also indicate that reflection begins with a felt difficulty or when an individual is perplexed or uncertain about an idea or situation.

They indicated that 'the guiding questions' helped them do reasoning; question their ideas, the reasons why they did or did not do certain things by raising awareness on the theoretical and empirical explanations for certain behaviours. The steps for reflective practice offered so far also claim that the identified

problem needs to be located and defined (Dewey, 1910; Francis, 1983; Copeland, 1985) so reasoning and questioning are essential. Reflective thinking cycles stresses the need for a careful, active and persistent investigation from different angles and perspectives at different levels by listening to what various others are saying before deciding on any act. The student teachers in this study reported that they were guided to look for theoretical and empirical explanations for their behaviour and actions with the help of guiding questions.

Moreover, they stated that these guiding questions provided them with an opportunity to go back to previous experiences and compare previous and current practices continuously to produce solutions and see the difference (to follow the progress). They claimed that they wouldn't be able to see themselves and their performance in many different aspects through a critical eye without looking back and forth. Finally, they indicated that these enabled them to observe how much successful they have been in their solutions and in improving their weak areas as well. Dewey defined reflection as "a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with a deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas. It is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible, and ensures the progress of the individual. Hence, the guiding questions functioned as 'the compare and contrast questions' and provided the continuity in learning by building up bridges among the previous, current and future performances.

The guiding questions in the journals, reports and the ones posed during the feedback sessions functioned as an instructional scaffolding which is developed as a teaching strategy by Lev Vygotsky. There are five different instructional scaffolding techniques (Hogan and Pressley, 1997) and 'modeling of desired behaviour' is generally the first step in instructional scaffolding. The guiding questions given in the reflective journals and reports in the new portfolio tool functioned as the first step in instructional scaffolding. The guiding questions acted as models of desired behaviour through which student teachers were guided how to think, how to analyse, how to determine weak and strong areas, how to produce solutions and act in given situations. They were encouraged to verbalise their thought processes through 'think aloud modeling'. The second step of instructional scaffolding requires instructors to offer explanations as well. The supervisory feedback sessions held before and after each teaching practice functioned as 'offering explanations' step of the scaffolding technique. The student teachers were offered explanations but not directly. They were given certain explanations through the guiding questions raised by the supervisor to provide hints and key words (Hogan and Pressley, 1997) which prompted student teachers to recall information from their practices and make comments on their previous teaching and to produce strategies for future ones. The third step of the instructional scaffolding technique 'invites student participation in the task'. This practice engages the student in learning and provides her with ownership of the learning experience (Hogan and Pressley, 1997). Similarly, the guiding questions both in the reflective journals and progressive reflective reports required student teachers to apply the techniques and solutions they produce for their weak areas and to report on the outcomes

reflectively and systematically. The last two steps require 'verifying/clarifying student understanding and inviting students to contribute clues' (Hogan and Pressley, 1997). The supervisor and the cooperating teachers in the newly developed tool assumed the roles of verifying and clarifying student teachers' confusions by contributing to their understanding indirectly through posing some guiding questions and also encouraged them to justify their situations, techniques and acts during their teachings through questions as well.

The guiding questions in the newly developed tool also functioned as reception scaffolds, transformation and production scaffolds. Reception scaffolds help learners to effectively gather information from available sources by focusing learners' attention on important information and prompting the learners' to organize and report what s/he experiences. The guiding questions in the journals and reports helped learners to gather information on their teaching experiences by focusing their attention on certain aspects of their teaching and helped them organize their ideas, feelings, analysis and solutions. The guiding questions which asked student teachers to read and benefit from related theoretical and empirical sources functioned as 'transformation scaffolds' and helped student teachers to produce techniques and solutions by transforming the theory into their own situations. The guiding questions which required student teachers to implement the solutions they produce or the techniques they developed and report on the outcomes acted as the 'production scaffolds' (Hartman, 2002).

7.2.3 Continuous supervision (continuous and systematic guidance – feedback sessions)

Student teachers perceived continuous supervision as another vital aspect of the portfolio construction tool stimulating reflection.

Student teachers stated that continuous supervision guided them towards thinking in a more critical and reflective manner since the supervisor, cooperating teachers and peers provided students with different ways of looking at things with questions, reasoning, comments and sources. It improved self-evaluation by helping student teachers evaluate themselves from many different perspectives and angles. Continuous supervision also provided motivation, self-confidence and increased self-responsibility towards teaching and portfolio construction. Moreover, it provided continuous involvement into the portfolio so it became an ongoing process which enabled a step-by-step (systematic) construction of the portfolio. This continuous involvement also provided opportunity for monitoring the self-development by providing continuity in learning.

On the other hand, some student teachers found supervisory observations not continuous enough criticizing that observing the student teachers' performances one at the beginning and one at the end of the portfolio construction process prevents the supervisor from following up the progress of the student teacher. They pointed out that some important points might be missed and these could be important in guiding and following up the student teacher. They underlined that for continuity in feedback, all the teaching sessions need to be observed. Weaknesses determined at the beginning need

to be very closely followed during the whole process to help the student teacher in improving those weaknesses. The solutions produced and applied need to be observed and checked continuously; otherwise, the feedback provided at the beginning might not be meaningful.

Continuous supervision by different parties provided the voices of various others which mean an opportunity for a dialogue at multiple levels. Having a multiplicity of voices provided multiplicity of perspectives on looking at one's own performance and provided open-mindedness towards their teaching performance. The student teachers in this study reported that hearing from different voices guided them towards thinking in a more critical and reflective manner. Different voices during continuous supervision created an active desire to listen to more sides and give full attention to alternative possibilities which helped recognise the possibility of error even in oneself. This attitude is more likely to foster the development of the critical, reflective and self-evaluation skills.

During cognitive growth, Vygotsky recognised that individuals master intellectual skills progressively. He underlined that individuals who are just learning a skill make many mistakes and rely heavily on assistance and feedback from their teachers (Byrnes, 2001). Through practice and corrective adult feedback, individuals progress to higher and higher levels of understanding until they reach the expert level, at which point they can perform the skill or task independently. As the individuals progress, Vygotsky states that adult tutors must act as scaffolds: they must provide just enough guidance to allow the individuals to advance independently (Byrnes, 2001). All sorts of

feedback sessions (supervisory, with cooperating teachers and peers) were integrated into the new portfolio tool to provide a great deal of assistance and feedback from instructors (supervisor, cooperating teachers) and peers to help student teachers progress to higher levels of understanding until they reach the upper levels that they can perform teaching independently and analyse their own teaching reflectively for its betterment. The ongoing guidance and continuous feedback acted as scaffolds to help them think reflectively on their own and produce techniques and strategies independently in order to teach more effectively.

While facing with the challenges of the real classroom context, the student teachers are likely to develop negative emotional states and attitudes. Those negative attitudes might direct the course of their inquiry or practice causing learning and thinking to be confined (Dewey, 1933 and Izard, 1972). Student teachers reported that being continuously supervised throughout the construction of the teaching portfolios helped them develop the attitudes of motivation (enthusiasm) self-confidence and self-responsibility which are considered to be essential for reflection. They felt themselves responsible towards their teaching and portfolio and became more motivated about taking decisions on soundly grounded beliefs or experiences and to put these decisions into action to see the consequences.

7.2.4 Collaboration with supervisor, cooperating teacher, and the peer

Student teachers perceived collaboration as another fundamental element stimulating reflection in this portfolio construction tool due to both the intellectual and the emotional reasons they stated.

Student teachers stated that collaboration helped improve self-awareness and produce solutions for problematic areas through hearing different strategies from different perspectives. It improved critical and reflective thinking skills through multiple dimensions and conversations. The questioning, reasoning and comments provided collaboratively improved thinking critically and reflectively.

Student teachers reported that peer collaboration improved critical thinking skills since it provided a critical eye by observing the partner objectively and consciously. It helped improve self-evaluation skills as well through distancing oneself from one's own teaching experience and having an empathetic look at oneself. Being observed by a peer contributed to self-awareness since it provided a different aspect of the self from someone who is at the same level with the student teacher himself/herself.

Student teachers indicated that collaboration led supervisor and the cooperating teacher act as a guide and a facilitator and they became encouraging and supportive in every respect both theoretically and emotionally (scaffolding). These attitudes of the instructors made student teachers feel more valued, enthusiastic, motivated and responsible towards portfolio construction and teaching. Collaboration provided good interaction (good

dialogue) with each other – with all the parties involved. As Vygotsky indicated “Knowledge is mutually built and constructed. Individuals construct knowledge through social interaction with others; that we should establish many opportunities for students to learn with the teacher and more-skilled peers” (Santrock, 2001).

7.2.5 Refractions from different perspectives – Multiplicity of Voices

The term ‘refraction’ is used as ‘multiple reflections of student teacher experience from various angles as peers, teacher fellows, tutors and self’ in I’anson et al.’s (2003) study and I adopted the term and used it in the sense of multiple feedback on the student teacher’s experience from various others in this study.

Student teachers in this study indicated that refractions from different perspectives have a stimulating effect on the improvement of reflective thinking skills.

Student teachers stated that refractions provided different comments and feedback on one’s own teaching and this provided different and rich way of looking at one’s own teaching. Opportunity for seeing oneself as a teacher from different perspectives helped identify and define weak areas better with alternative solutions or strategies for those weak areas which one would not be able to produce on his/her own.

Different refractions in the sense of different feedback, comments, different ways of looking at oneself and one’s own teaching provided more awareness of

oneself and one's own teaching all of which contributed to self-improvement and professional development as a teacher candidate. As l'anson et al (2003) indicated in their ITE model:

An individual's interaction with his /her environment does not automatically lead to reflection or to the formulation of complex structures of thought about their practice. In order for reflection to occur, students engaged in professional development need to be encouraged to view their development from various angles. Indeed what is perceived to be reflection may more accurately be viewed as a particular refraction of their practice (p. 196)

ITE models or portfolio construction tools are expected to provide opportunities for dialogue with various others (peers, supervisor, and cooperating teacher) each of which enables engagement with a range of different understandings and perspectives. This process involves making thoughts of the various others about the student teacher's practice explicit, by providing an opportunity to revisit the performance of the student teacher through the eyes of a supervisor, cooperating teacher, partner peer and self. This provides a potentially powerful tool to develop reflective capability since it promotes dialogue and engagement with wider discursive perspectives which involves opportunities to engage with 'self as other'. This requires openness to a plurality of voices which can lead to new ways of seeing and new ways of practice which enables the intersubjective construction of meaning.

7.2.6 Writing about the emotional aspect of the experience

Student teachers moving from the teacher education programmes to real classroom contexts will undergo a shift in identity as they adapt to an actual classroom setting at school. This shift will require them to see themselves as teachers rather than students and this will bring an increased sense of

emotional challenges faced by student teacher as the teacher. Teacher educators need to understand these challenges and help student teachers understand their emotional states as well since the impetus for human mind comes from the emotions as much as from the intellectual as Warnock (1976) indicated.

Student teachers reported that writing about the emotional aspects of their teaching contributed both to their own and the supervisor's awareness and understanding of their teaching performance. They stated that it provides the supervisor with an opportunity to better understand the emotional state that the student teacher is in and provide better support and explanations for them. It provides the supervisor with an access to understand how student teachers feel about their performance internally and what they experience emotionally during teaching because the supervisor cannot observe emotions externally.

Izard (1977) suggests that the emotional process is initiated first and then the cognitive system comes very quickly into play. Many emotion theorists suggest that emotions not only influence motivation, they 'constitute the primary motivational system for human beings' (Izard, 1977). Student teachers indicated that knowing what one feels helps a lot in understanding one's own performance. The mood one starts teaching is important because one's mood (feelings, emotions) affect one's performance or teaching skill. They stated that commenting on emotions, feelings helps in finding out and becoming aware of what affects teaching performance both negatively and positively. It provides

relaxation and a healthy mind to focus on the intellectual/professional aspect of teaching as expressed below:

ST1: "Putting my feelings and reactions freely was very important for me because it helped me to get rid of the negative feelings or disappointments about my performance or the situation. It made me write the cognitive aspects of my teaching with a fresh mind"

ST8: "When I was writing my feelings and emotions, I felt so much relaxed and as if I was in a therapy. I was better able to see my performance with its strengths and weaknesses after having an emotional relaxation"

Thus, expressing oneself emotionally can be considered as a motivational impetus for the human mind to have a more focused look on the intellectual aspect of one's teaching.

7.2.7 Attitude and professional manner of the supervisor and the cooperating teacher

Attitude and professional manner of the supervisor and the cooperating teacher are the vital elements affecting student teachers' emotions and morale. It also influences the type and the nature of the dialogue and the communication among all the parties involved within the process. They also stated that the professional manner and the attitude of the supervisor as well as the cooperating teacher either provided motivation, enthusiasm and responsibility towards teaching and portfolio writing or de-motivated them causing lack of enthusiasm and isolation.

The feedback provided by the supervisor and the cooperating teacher makes student teachers feel valued because they display a serious attitude towards the student teachers' performances and find their performances and written reports valuable. This attitude enables the student teachers to develop a positive attitude towards them and value their own work as well. Whole-heartedness (Dewey, 1910) indicates a genuine enthusiasm about one's subject matter. Without it a teacher has no energy, no fuel, to carry out reflective inquiry – much less teaching itself. The positive and supportive dialogue between the supervisor/the cooperating teacher and the student teachers and their attitude towards student teachers' efforts made them motivated and enthusiastic about their teaching and portfolio production which I believe evoked this attitude of whole-heartedness in the student teachers towards their teaching and portfolio. Goodman (1991) also indicates that this attitude of whole-heartedness gives individuals the strength to move beyond abstract notions and put their ideals into practice and enables pre-service teachers to work through their fears and insecurities, and thus provides a basis for action.

On the other hand, if the supervisor or the cooperating teacher is not collaborative and positive enough, and the communication held is not interactive and in a dialogue format but is a monologue focusing only on the weak aspects of the student teacher ignoring the strengths, then this type of communication and manner is going to affect the student teacher negatively causing him/her have a negative attitude towards his or her own teaching and

portfolio with a lack of enthusiasm and curiosity. Lack of enthusiasm is going to affect the thinking process negatively.

7.3 Vital attributes promoted through the newly developed portfolio construction tool

7.3.1 Self-awareness

Self-awareness is regarded to be one of the most important aspects that this portfolio construction tool promoted. Student teachers indicated that self-awareness was raised and developed by many different aspects of the portfolio components and processes on different aspects of the personality as a prospective teacher.

Student teachers indicated that portfolio components such as personal statement, reflective journals, progressive reflective reports and final report helped them become aware of themselves in terms of personality, what potentials they have and lack, and the misconceptions they have about the self as a teacher candidate. Student teachers also became aware of the certain aspects of the classroom context that one could get acquainted with their students not by observing as an outsider but being an insider through practising teaching. They emphasised the 'learning by doing' aspect of the portfolio criticising the observation task of it.

Student teachers indicated that the awareness is not only possible through becoming aware of the weak points but has to be taken to further steps such as producing strategies for the improvement of them. Student teachers are hardly

to develop some insights and conceptions about themselves without putting the solutions they produced into action and seeing the results.

Portfolio also provided awareness regarding student teachers' skills in applying theories and methods and enabled them to understand or relate theories with practice, to comprehend which of the methods or strategies they are able to apply that they have learnt so far. Many participants in Wray's (2007) research also support this aspect of the portfolio indicating that the process of portfolio construction helped clarify and solidify important personal philosophies, techniques and strategies. They also spoke of an illuminated connection between theory and practice. The components of the portfolio helped student teachers illuminate the strategies and techniques they incorporated into their teaching. Being able to relate theory with practice is an important aspect of reflective thinking skills (Dewey, 1910; Zeichner and Liston, 1987; Copeland et al., 1993; Francis, 1995; Rodgers, 2002).

Self-awareness as a prospective teacher was also provided through the feedback sessions held among different parties during different times continuously. Awareness was raised through hearing from different perspectives all of which provided the opportunity to hear different aspects of the self as a teacher. Student teachers indicated that their awareness was promoted through horizontally and vertically during these feedback sessions at a multidimensional level since they had feedback both at the instructors' and peer's level simultaneously.

Vygotsky's Social Cognition theory implies that knowledge is mutually built and constructed; that individuals construct knowledge through social interaction with others. Dewey (1916) also stresses that reflection needs to happen in community through interaction with others. Gower and Walters (1983) also reported that combined experiences encourage reflection since working together in the preparation of classes and in sharing of views after the lessons develops decision making about teaching, raises awareness and reinforces process of reflection.

7.3.2 Solution production skills and monitoring self-development

Student teachers reported that reflective journals and progressive reflective reports enabled them to produce solutions through guiding them to define their weaknesses by exploring the reasons behind and by requiring them to read from different sources by referring to theories. Moreover, they stated that the guiding questions in the journals and the reports and the step-by-step approach of the reports contributed a lot in producing solutions. The compare-and-contrast questions in the reports and journals enabled them to monitor their progress via looking back and forth over their teaching experiences as well. They also indicated that hearing different strategies from different perspectives as well as the reasoning and questioning done during the feedback sessions all contributed to their solution production skills.

Becoming aware of the weak areas is only the beginning step for professional development. The student teacher is also expected to produce strategies or solutions for those weaknesses and to put these into action to improve those

weak areas so as to come up with personal constructs and theories. Producing solutions is an essential part of reflection (Schön cited in Hatton and Smith, 1994).

Learning to be a reflective practitioner includes the ability to establish meaningful connections between theory and practice, providing a rationale for action (Stein, 2000 and Orland-Barak, 2005). Referring to what other sources are saying about the issue might provide a better foundation for the action to be taken (Coopeland et al., 1993). The components of this portfolio guided student teachers to read and integrate existing beliefs, theories and research findings in order to ground their solutions for better actions.

This portfolio led student teachers towards solution and action via the guiding questions in the reflective journals and progressive reflective reports. These guiding questions made student teachers focus, think over their problematic areas, to produce solutions and to put these solutions into action for an evaluation of their effectiveness.

Feedback sessions helped student teachers produce solutions for their weaknesses because they had the opportunity to hear different strategies from different perspectives. If designed and implemented appropriately, the group sessions are meant to enhance reflectivity by bringing more minds and multiple perspectives to bear on educational issues and by forcing individuals to bring to the surface and articulate to others their own ideas and reasoning processes. (Applegate & Shaklee, 1992; Hullfish & Smith, 1961; Kemmis, 1985; McCaleb, Borko, & Arends, 1992; Oja, Diller, Corcoran, & Andrew, 1992; Schön, 1983;

Zeichner and Liston, 1987). More minds and multiple perspectives bring out others' reasoning processes and more ideas for solutions.

7.3.3 Ability to relating theory with practice and practice with theory

Student teachers reported that components of the portfolio especially the reflective journals and the progressive reflective reports enabled them relate theory with practice. Reflective reports helped them illuminate the function and the logic of theories. The theoretical knowledge they had so far was not incorporated into their understanding of their practices. The student teachers gained a theoretical perspective while looking at their practices. They made sense of why and what for theories or techniques are produced and used for. Wray's (2007) research findings are also in line with the perception in this research. As Orland-Barak (2005) stated learning to be a reflective practitioner includes not only acquiring technical expertise but also to establish meaningful connections between theory and practice, providing a rationale for action.

Reading about related theories, strategies and techniques also helped student teachers illuminate the problematic areas they had. Theoretical knowledge helped them define and locate their weak areas with a better understanding. Reflective thinking is possible through the notion of grounded belief (Dewey, 1910) which is made possible through the notion of suspended judgment (Dewey, 1910; Schön, 1983, 1985; Kemmis, 1985; Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985; Loughran, 2002, 2006).

7.3.4 Improvement of reflective, critical, evaluation and problem-solving skills

Student teachers stated that portfolio components helped them improve their critical thinking, reflective thinking, self-assessment, self-evaluation and self-critique skills mostly due to the guiding questions they had at different levels in the journals and the reports. They indicated that these guiding questions provided them with an opportunity to look at their experiences through multiple perspectives at different levels. They also provided retrospection for the student teachers helping them visualise themselves in action by looking back on their past experiences.

The guiding questions in the reflective journals and the ones posed during the feedback sessions played an important role in bringing out multiplicity in thinking and acting. The student teachers improved themselves from being able to think in one way to think and act differently in different situations. Student teachers regard 'being able to think in multiple perspectives' as 'being able to think critically' since they have not based their thoughts and actions merely on their personal assumptions. Brookfield (1997) stated that "when we think critically, we start to research these assumptions for the evidence and experiences that inform them" (p.18) and we do not accept judgment unquestioningly. The ability of thinking in multiple perspectives helped student teachers focus on other elements of the lesson simultaneously as well or be prepared for unexpected occurrences (Schön, 1983). With the help of the guiding questions in the journals and the reports, student teachers started to think in many different ways and not stuck with one way of behaving or

teaching. Mansvelder-Longayroux et al., (2007) stated that critical processing involves comparing your own opinion with the opinions or beliefs of others such as theory, mentor, fellow student, and supervisor. It includes formulating one's own opinions on the basis of different arguments and looking at which arguments are more credible than others. Similarly, the questions in the reports and the journals helped the student teachers formulate different arguments other than theirs and to be equipped with behaving and teaching in multiple ways in different or unexpected situations.

'Looking at and thinking about experience at different levels from different perspectives continuously' is regarded to have a vital impact on the development of self-assessment and self-evaluation skills. Student teachers developed this skill of looking at and thinking about their own performance and strategies in many different aspects at different levels through multiple conversations during feedback sessions. They indicated that the communication and the dialogue they had with the supervisor, cooperating teacher and the partner peer during feedback sessions contributed to the development of their critical and reflective thinking skills as well. l'anson et al. (2003) stated that "the opportunity for dialogue with tutors, teacher fellows and peers encourage the student teacher to participate in and negotiate between the different embedded dialogues" (p. 198) which are routes to reflection. This also provides a shift from viewing self and agency from one's own lens to viewing oneself through the eyes of others.

Reflective thinking skill is considered as 'the ability of accepting one's errors or weak points and acknowledging the need to improve those errors/weak points'

by the student teachers in this study. Student teachers developed this attribute of being open-minded to accept their errors and take action to improve them. Student teachers developed this skill of recognising the possibility of error even in the beliefs or actions of oneself (Dewey, 1910, 1933) and examining the reasons behind those errors, acknowledging that the reasons behind one's errors could be related with the self which are essential attributes for reflective thinking and teaching.

7.3.5 Increased motivation, enthusiasm and responsibility towards teaching and portfolio writing

The student teachers stated that the feedback sessions held made them more responsible and motivated towards teaching and portfolio writing. The dialogue between the supervisor/cooperating teacher and the student teachers during the supervisory feedback sessions created an attitude of wholeheartedness which led to enthusiasm and encouragement and to intellectual perception (Dewey, 1910).

The positive and supportive dialogue between the supervisor/the cooperating teacher and the student teacher and their attitude towards student teachers' efforts made them motivated and enthusiastic about their teaching and portfolio production which I believe evoked this attitude of whole-heartedness in the student teachers towards their teaching and portfolios. Goodman (1991) also indicates that this attitude of whole-heartedness gives individuals the strength to move beyond abstract notions and put their ideals into practice and enables pre-service teachers to work through their fears and insecurities, and thus provide a basis for action. Moreover, the supervisor's and her cooperating

teachers' attitudes made them responsible towards their teaching and portfolio construction which is another attitude required for reflective thinking and action (Dewey, 1933).

7.4 Implications for Practice

Based on the findings of this study and the related literature reviewed, the following implications can be drawn while designing reflective portfolio construction tools within the framework of Practicum courses in teacher education:

1. Portfolios enable learners to act and learn autonomously within a self-directed view of learning with increased motivation and responsibility. Within this self-directed view of learning, guiding questions are desirable elements of the portfolio tool to be given within the journals or reports and to be posed or asked during the feedback sessions. In order to examine and analyse their own experiences at different levels from different perspectives and take actions for improvement, student teachers need to be guided with focused questions at every stage during the construction of their portfolios.
2. Continuous supervision which involves ongoing guidance and feedback with the supervisor, partner peer and the cooperating teacher separately as well as collaboratively during different types of feedback sessions is a vital aspect to be integrated into the portfolio construction process in promoting reflection. It could be useful if continuous supervision is conducted by questioning, reasoning, commenting, analysis and recommended resources of various others so as to provide opportunities

for critical and reflective thinking skills as well as for self-assessment and evaluation.

3. Collaboration with the supervisor, cooperating teacher and the peer partner is another fundamental aspect to be incorporated into the portfolio construction processes. Collaboration needs to be designed in such a way so as to contribute both to the cognitive and the emotional aspects of the portfolio construction process allowing a positive and constructive atmosphere by promoting the motivation (enthusiasm), open-mindedness and the responsibility of the student teachers towards teaching and portfolio construction. This collaboration needs to bring different perspectives together to enable the student teacher to hear different aspects of the self and triangulate both one's own and others' perceptions of the self to have a heightened self-awareness as a teacher. This collaboration is expected to provide an opportunity for a dialogical and discursive communication which allows reasoning and questioning over teaching performances.
4. Peer collaboration is another crucial element to be taken into consideration while designing portfolio as a tool for student teachers. Peer observation, peer feedback sessions and peer reflective journals need to be incorporated into the process in such a way to provide opportunities to observe with a 'critical eye' objectively and consciously. It has to contribute to the development of reflective thinking and self-evaluation skills of the student teachers by allowing them to observe their peers to put themselves into the shoes of their partner to have an 'empathetic look at oneself'.

However, to get the optimum advantage from peer collaboration, peer observation and peer feedback need to take place continuously in order to be able to follow and support one's peer systematically in a meaningful context; otherwise, peer partners will not be able to make sense out of each other's experiences. In addition, peers to be selected as partners to each other need to be suitable to each other personally and they need to be collaborative and enthusiastic to work together and help each other. If not, the influences might be negative causing demotivation and loneliness on behalf of the partners. In her research, Richert (1990) also found that partner characteristics is an important aspect affecting the portfolio construction process indicating that who the partner is and what competencies the person brings to the task also influenced the reflection.

5. Relating theory with practice and practice with theory is also desirable during the development of the professional identity of the student teachers. Hence, tasks or questions that will enable student teachers incorporate theory into action need to be given in the portfolio as well. These tasks or questions needs to help them illuminate the function and the logic of theories they have been using so far or guide them to read about related theories, strategies and techniques which will help them illuminate the problematic areas they have. Theoretical knowledge helps them define and locate their weak areas with a better understanding.
6. Reflective journals, progressive reflective reports and other sorts of reports that help student teachers go through the reflective cycle

suggested by many educationalists should be integrated into the portfolio. These reports need to be designed in such a way that will help student teachers identify their weaknesses and strengths, locate and define these weaknesses and produce intelligent solutions by grounding them theoretically and put these into action to observe the consequences for the construction of the personal theories. A personal statement report which displays beliefs, views about teaching should be written before the actual teaching begins and a final report is to be written after the practice teaching is completed to allow them see the changes or modifications in their beliefs, ideas or personal theories. This will enable them to monitor their self development.

7. Student teachers need to be given an opportunity to write about the emotional aspect of their teaching experiences as well since knowing what one feels helps a lot in understanding one's own performance. The mood one starts teaching is important because one's mood (feelings, emotions) affect one's performance or teaching skill. So these tasks need to be structured in such a way to help student teachers bring out the emotions and feelings that affect their teaching performance both negatively and positively. This will provide relaxation and a healthy mind to focus on the intellectual/professional aspect of teaching. This will also provide the supervisor with an access to understand how student teachers feel so as to provide better support both academically and emotionally. (Warnock, 1976).
8. In order for the continuous supervision and guidance to be effective during the portfolio construction process, the attitude and professional

manner of the supervisor and the cooperating teacher are to be given special consideration. It was reported in this study that the professional manner and the attitude of the supervisor as well as the cooperating teacher either provided motivation, enthusiasm and responsibility towards teaching and portfolio writing or caused de-motivation and isolation. Thus, the supervisors and the cooperating teachers need to be oriented in this regard.

7.5 Implications for Further Research

The following implications can be identified for further research in this topic:

- The newly developed portfolio construction tool has been developed based on the perceptions of the student teachers taking EDUC 420 Practice Teaching course and the effectiveness of the tool has been examined based on the data collected from the student teachers taking the same course after its implementation. Therefore, the findings of the study are limited to the perceptions of the student teachers which bring in data only from one perspective. Since there are other parties (stakeholders) involved into the construction process of the portfolio, their views and perceptions need to be gathered as well to bring in more perspectives to the portfolio process. Thus, the perceptions of the supervisors and cooperating teachers need to be examined by implementing the newly developed portfolio construction tool to modify it on a sounder basis.
- The current study was conducted within the action research framework hence the data is limited to the participants who were enrolled into the

researcher's sections in the spring semesters of the consecutive academic years. This newly developed tool needs to be implemented with all the other sections within the same context to examine its applicability and modify it based on the perceptions of the student teachers, the supervisors and the cooperating teachers. The triangulated data will provide wider insights for the improvement of the tool.

- The tool's effectiveness can also be determined by assessing the level of reflective thinking that the student teachers display after the implementation of the newly developed portfolio construction tool. The answer to "Has the newly developed portfolio construction model promoted student teachers' reflective thinking skills?" question can be looked for. Linguistic analysis of student output such as their reflective journals or self-reports need to be involved as different research methods in order to reveal more insights into the nature and quality of student reflection.
- The student teachers in this current study claimed that the newly developed portfolio tool was effective in improving reflective and critical thinking skills as well as self-evaluation and self-assessment skills. Student teachers' perceptions of these skills can further be analysed in a further study since these are considered to be crucial attributes novice teachers are expected to possess before graduating from the teacher education programmes. The question "What qualities do these skills incorporate according to the student teachers' perceptions?" can be researched.

7.6 What have I learnt as a researcher by undertaking this study?

- What changes has happened to me as a researcher?

Academic/professional improvement

I have developed a more scientific perspective to teaching, teacher education and research as a whole. I became aware of different ways of designing qualitative research with different data collection and data analysis methods as a result of the articles (empirical research) I have read throughout my own study. Conducting my own study and reading through other studies related to my research topic have widened my perspective of looking at reflection, portfolios and teacher education. I have developed multiple ways of looking at these issues and gained insights regarding my topic at various levels. I had a very confined way of looking at reflection and portfolio in specific and teacher education in general when I first started working on my research. Now, I am able to see various different ways of approaching the same topic all of which might bring different dimensions and understanding to the same topic which might be put into practice in class while educating teachers in my own context. Both the findings of my research and the ones in the related literature have gained me the theoretical and practical knowledge to apply various reflective tasks at various levels to help students develop their reflective and critical thinking as well as self-evaluation skills.

Personal improvement

I have developed my own reflective and critical thinking skills as well as self-assessment skills. I have become very reflective of my everyday practices and think over my practices from different angles and suspend judgment until I have

scientific groundings before taking any action. I have learnt to look at an issue from multiple perspectives and develop different strategies before going any further.

Conducting this research has increased my self-awareness both academically and personally. It enabled me to observe, examine and analyze my own practices. I became more aware of my weaknesses and strengths and to develop ways and strategies to deal with my weaknesses. It has also improved my problem-solving and decision making skills.

- What contribution have I made to knowledge?

This study can be considered as the first attempt integrating reflection into the construction of portfolio in North Cyprus. It is significant and unique because it attempts to offer an alternative perspective on developing a reflective portfolio construction tool at a contextual level. In a period where reflection is regarded as an important approach to teacher education, this study offers a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the issue of reflection by integrating it with the phenomenon of portfolio writing in teacher education. Therefore, it sheds light upon the improvement of a more reflective practicum course.

This study is also significant in that it attempts to depict the phenomenon of reflection from the student teachers' own perceptions by placing primary importance on the understanding of reflective thinking from the student teachers' perspectives. It does not leave the understanding of reflection at an analysis level but develops a tool based on the student teachers' perceptions

and implements it for a continuous assessment and interpretation of the issue of reflection. The study attempted to fill in the gap about how a portfolio tool might be designed in order to foster student teachers' reflective thinking skills in the literature by answering the question "what components and processes might a reflective portfolio construction tool involve?" The literature so far underlined the role of portfolio tool in improving reflection; however, have not offered anything specific. The findings might provide the teacher educators, and researchers with different viewpoints on reflective portfolio design.

The findings provide some crucial aspects and elements that could be taken into consideration while designing the components of a reflective portfolio and the processes to be followed during the construction of the portfolio. It highlights the usefulness of guided questions to be integrated into journal writing and posed during feedback sessions; the importance of and the conditions for continuous and systematic feedback; the cognitive and affective impact of collaboration with the supervisor, cooperating teacher and the peer on reflection. The attitude and manner of supervisor/the cooperating teacher and the type of communication during collaboration; the effects of refractions from different perspectives as the multiplicity of voices on reflection and the importance of integrating emotional aspects of the experience into the process are some of the aspects that might be taken into consideration while designing courses and programmes in teacher education.

This study can be regarded as significant since it offers unique definitions for the portfolio as a tool such as a mirror reflecting back to one's own experiences

from one's own experiences; a tool enabling self-definition through self-expression and its ongoing aspect (a time line) and a tool for counselling which helps one focus on solutions, all of which might provide different lenses to our understanding of portfolio construction in teacher education. This study can also be regarded as unique because it offers an in-depth analysis and a comprehensive perspective to most of the issues that have been dealt at a surface level so far in the literature. Most of the empirical studies state that portfolios increase self-awareness; however, very little is known about how this awareness is caused. This study offers multiple perspectives to how self-awareness can be enriched. It underlines the importance of guiding questions, ongoing guidance and feedback as instructional scaffolds as stressed by Vygotsky as well. Similarly, it sheds light upon how student teachers can be guided to produce solutions for their weak areas. Moreover, it provides useful alternatives regarding what aspects of portfolio promote student teachers' reflective thinking, critical thinking, self-assessment and problem-solving skills.

This study can be considered as significant since it uncovers different understanding to peer collaboration in portfolio writing and its effect on reflection. It claims that reflective, critical thinking and self-evaluation skills can be promoted through a critical eye, distancing oneself and an empathetic look at oneself which are all provided by working with a peer. Self-awareness can be promoted via peer collaboration via the perspective of the equal other (peer partner), continuity in peer observation and the suitability of peers. All these findings about peer collaboration underline the importance of Vygotskian scaffolding as a teaching strategy in educating student teachers.

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(http://webct.nottingham.ac.uk/webct/ContentPageServlet/Ed_DFundamentals/P)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Familiarization Task

Please answer the following questions briefly on a separate sheet before you start your observations.

1. School characteristics: Provide a brief description regarding the major characteristics of the school in English language teaching: the type of school, the English curriculum used, types of assessment and tests, levels of English, the textbook, the technology available and used
2. Classroom characteristics: Describe the classroom in which you will be teaching: classroom rules, routines, physical arrangement, grouping patterns, factors affecting teaching and learning
3. Student characteristics: Describe the students in the classroom including the number of students, their ages and gender, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, native language(s), level of English proficiencies, level of motivation, areas of interest, range of abilities, learning styles, and special needs.
4. Aim: Write briefly about your main objectives during the teaching practice program and your plans you are planning to have attained by the end of this program.

APPENDIX B: Class Profile

Observation Date	
Class Observed	
Level in English	
Number of Students on Class List	
Number of Students Present in Class	
Teacher	
Student's age group	
Skill taught	
Gender distribution No of female students No of male students	
Any distinguishing characteristics of students (difference in age, nationality, etc.)	
Seating arrangement(s) (please draw a chart of the seating arrangement in the space provided including the position of teacher and equipment)	
Willingness of students to participate	High <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate <input type="checkbox"/> No participation <input type="checkbox"/>
Ability of students to cope with the material	Very well <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate <input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/>
General student behavior towards the teacher and other students	Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/>
List the kinds of problems that you think you might have to solve when you teach this class?	
What do you suggest (propose) for solving these problems?	

APPENDIX C: Lesson Planning

Grammar Lesson

Before the lesson, do not get any information from the teacher about what is to occur. Observe the lesson carefully, and take notes in order to construct a lesson plan for the lesson you have seen.

Date:
Class:
Level:
Aims:
Performance Objectives:
Materials:
Aids:

Stages of the Lesson:	
Warm up and motivation (_____ min.):	What did the teacher do?
Setting the objectives/agenda (____ min.):	How did the teacher announce the objectives of the lesson?
Introduction (_____ min.)	How did the teacher present the teaching point of the lesson?
Controlled practice (_____ min.)	What kinds of activities did the teacher engage students in for controlled practice?
Language production (____ min.)	What kinds of activities were the students engaged in to communicate productively in the target language?
Overall comments on the lesson:	

APPENDIX D: Formal Teaching Appraisal

Evaluation sheet for student teacher's teaching practice for partial fulfillment of the requirements for the course EDUC 420 – Internship

Student Teacher : _____

Observer : _____

Date : _____ **Grade** : _____ **10**

Teaching Point : _____

To the student teacher: Please attach a copy of this form to your lesson plan for your formal appraisal and give it to the person to observe you.

To the observer: Please grade the student and write brief comments on the following.

**EX. (Excellent); VG. (Very Good); G. (Good); AD. (Adequate);
BA. (Below adequate); FBA. (Far Below Adequate)**

	EX. 10	VG. 9-8	G. 7-6	AD. 5	BA. 4-3	FBA. 2-0	COMMENTS
1. PERSONALITY <i>Attitude (warm, friendly, enthusiastic...); confidence (firm command of class)</i>							
2. TEACHER TALK <i>(Clear pronunciation, natural speech, accurate use of language, effective use of voice)</i>							
3. WARM UP & MOTIVATION <i>Motivates students; relaxes students; warms up students at outset; demonstrates interest and concern for each student.</i>							
4. PRESENTATION <i>Presentation is structured, relevant, interesting, contextualized and clear.</i>							

	EX. 10	VG. 9-8	G. 7-6	AD. 5	BA. 4-3	FBA. 2-0	COMMENTS
5. PLANNING							

<i>Incorporates realistic timing and appropriate variety of activities at the appropriate level; is clear and neat; includes clear appropriate, achievable aims.</i>							
6. AIDS <i>Appropriate use of aids and technology including visuals, realia, blackboard, video, tape, OHP, etc.</i>							
7. CORRECTION <i>Variety of correction techniques appropriately used; self and peer correction encouraged.</i>							
8. FEEDBACK <i>Appropriate responses given to student contributions, e.g. praise, correction, follow-up, further explanation, etc.</i>							
9. STAGES OF LESSON <i>Well-structured, incorporating a variety of activities, skills, exhibiting an appropriate range of teaching techniques.</i>							
10. ACHIEVEMENT OF AIMS <i>Concrete evidence that the lesson has achieved what it set out to achieve, and that the original aims were appropriate to the class.</i>							

Total Grade: _____
100

Strengths:

Weaknesses:
Points to Consider:

APPENDIX E: Reflective Report

Just after you give your lesson, write a detailed self-evaluation report including:

- Discuss any aspects of your lesson that you think went well by providing reasons.
- Discuss any aspects of your lesson that you think need further development and organization by providing reasons.
(e.g. Classroom management, warm up and motivation, audio visual aids, blackboard and technology usage, group and/pair work, activities and games, controlled and free practice, evaluation exercises, questioning techniques, error correction, etc.)
- Discuss how you plan to develop the areas that need further improvement.

APPENDIX F: Practice Teaching Final Report

PRACTICE TEACHING FINAL REPORT

Please write a report summarizing what you have gained from your experiences in the Practice Teaching program.

1. Summarize
 - what you did at the school
 - what you learned regarding the impact of the syllabus, textbook, and classroom characteristics on students' language learning performance

2. Evaluate your own performance with respect to:
 - your own discoveries in EFL methodology
 - the areas you have improved yourself
 - the areas you still need to develop yourself

APPENDIX G: An Information Sheet for the *Prospective Research Participants*

Research Project title: A study on the student teachers' perceptions of their experiences of constructing a portfolio to develop a more reflective portfolio construction tool

This doctoral research study is to be undertaken by Canan Perkan Zeki as part fulfillment of the professional Doctorate (EdD) in Teacher Education course at the University of Nottingham, School of Education. The study aims to examine how to make the practice of portfolio construction by student teachers a practice conducive to reflective thinking and self-assessment through using student teachers' perceptions of their experiences of constructing a portfolio and mentors' perceptions of their experiences in guiding student teachers during the construction of the portfolio.

The study will be conducted in EDUC 420 Practice Teaching course and will involve all 27 student teachers who have been randomly assigned to Canan Perkan's supervisory groups in the Department of Educational Sciences at the Eastern Mediterranean University. The cooperating teachers who have been randomly assigned to each of the student teachers depending on the suitability of their timetables at Çannakkale Secondary School and Mağusa Türk Maarif College will also be involved in the study.

Student teachers are free to choose whether or not to take part in the research. If not, their status in the course will not be negatively affected in any way. All the data will be collected at the end of the semester after the submission of their portfolios and even after the submission of the letter grades; therefore, student teachers will not feel themselves obliged to take part; unless, they are willing to do so. If the student teachers agree to participate in the research, as participants they will be requested to fill-in a questionnaire, write *a two-page long* end-of-the-semester reflection essay and to take part in *a 30-45 minute interview* to be conducted by the researcher. Some of the elements they produce for the portfolio may also be used for research purposes ensuring the anonymity of participants. The cooperating teachers as participants are only requested to fill-in a questionnaire and may also be asked to be interviewed depending on the results of the questionnaire.

Thank you very much.

Canan Perkan Zeki

EdD student

APPENDIX H: Participant Consent Form

Project title: An Action Research on the student teachers' perceptions of their experiences of constructing a portfolio to develop a more reflective portfolio construction tool

Researcher's name: Canan Perkan Zeki, Eastern Mediterranean University,
Department of Educational Sciences

Supervisor's name: Dr. Roger Firth and Tony Fisher, University of Nottingham,
School of Education

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I am aware that the purpose of this study is to improve the portfolio construction processes applied in EDUC 420 Practice Teaching course in the Department of Educational Sciences at Eastern Mediterranean University and there is no risk involved in my participation. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status as a student teacher on the course. I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will fill-in a questionnaire, write a two-page long end-of-the-semester reflection essay and be interviewed which will be audio-taped. I have also been informed that some of the documents I produced for the portfolio may be used for research purposes.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed (research participant)

Print name **Date**
.....

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APPENDIX I: Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. (a) What do you think of/ how do you feel about portfolio construction?
(b) What do you think is the point/aim of portfolios?
(c) What were your expectations of the teaching portfolio? Has the portfolio matched with your expectations (goals and objectives)?
2. What do you think about the components of the portfolio and the process/experience of constructing this portfolio as a prospective teacher?
3. (a) What have you found most beneficial in the portfolio and about the construction of the portfolio?
(b) In what ways do you think the portfolio construction processes (tasks) have been beneficial to you?
(c) What opportunities has it provided for you as a prospective teacher?
4. What have you found the weakest about the portfolio components and the construction processes? **In what ways do you think the portfolio components and the construction processes have been weak (ineffective) in contributing to your development and learning as a teacher? Why?**
5. What roles do you think the portfolio have in providing you with the opportunity to examine what your strengths and weaknesses are and what is to be done to improve your weak points?

What aspects of the portfolio have been effective in making you see your strong and weak points?

6. (a) What has been the effect of the portfolio construction tool in providing you with the opportunity to produce strategies (solutions) for your weak points and put them into action? How?
(b) What role do you see the portfolio having in providing you with the opportunity to examine whether a teaching strategy or a solution you produced worked or not and why?
(c) **How did you become aware of your progress?**
7. What you have learnt at the end of this portfolio construction process? **How? Which skills has the portfolio helped you to improve?**
8. **(a) What do you think of collaboration during the construction of the portfolio?**
(b) What about the dialogue/communication with your cooperating teacher/supervisor/ peers?
(c) What do you think of the peer observations/peer feedback sessions and peer reflective essays?
9. (a) What do you think of the guidance/feedback provided by your supervisor, cooperating teacher and your peer during the construction of the portfolio?
(b) What do you think of the feedback sessions? What aspects of these sessions do you consider effective or ineffective and why?
10. What do you think of the strengths and weaknesses of the portfolio construction process?
Which elements of the portfolio do you think have affected your reflective thinking skills?
which elements do you consider have been weak in contributing to reflective thinking and self-assessment?
11. Should the portfolio construction process be modified next time it is used? What suggestions would you give to improve the process? Why?

APPENDIX J: End-of-the semester reflection essay

In this portfolio assignment, you are expected to **reflect on the experience of constructing your portfolio and its impact on the development of your reflective thinking and self assessment skills as well as on the progress you have made in your professional development.** You are given the following questions to guide your reflections, yet you are free to structure the essay as you choose and to respond to those questions and issues that seemed most pertinent to you. The following questions may be offered as examples of issues to address:

1. Describe your understanding of the purpose of portfolio construction. What do you think is the point of constructing a portfolio?
2. Describe your reactions/feelings to your experience of constructing a portfolio in EDUC 420 course.
3. Has your awareness of your own professional development been heightened by the portfolio construction process? Do you believe that the portfolio construction process (**the supervisory and peer feedback sessions/post-teaching meetings**) and the components (**Student teacher's personal statement/reflective journals/progressive reflective report/final report**) of the portfolio have contributed to your development as a prospective teacher? If yes, please explain how. In what ways has this process helped you to improve your development as a teacher? What insights have you gained out of this portfolio construction process?
4. Do you believe that the process of constructing a portfolio and the components it contains have been beneficial in promoting your reflective thinking and self-assessment skills? **a)** If yes, in what ways do you believe the portfolio construction process has been beneficial in improving your reflective and self-assessment skills? How did you come to such a conclusion? **b)** What aspects and components of the portfolio do you believe have been influential in improving your reflective thinking and self-assessment skills? **c)** If not, what were the weaknesses of the whole process? What were the drawbacks of the portfolio construction? Which elements of the portfolio and aspects of the process have been weak in contributing to your professional development? Why?
5. What do you think about the guidance provided by your supervisor and cooperating teacher during the construction of the portfolio? What do you think about the impact of this guidance on the promotion of your reflective skills? What do you think of the **oral feedback** (post-teaching meetings/supervisory feedback sessions) and **written feedback** you received both for your teaching performances and written documents (journals/reports)? Do you think they have been effective or ineffective in any aspect? If yes, how and in what ways have they been effective? If not, why not?
6. What do you think of **peer observations, peer feedback sessions** and **peer reflective journals**? Have they been effective in any way? If yes, in what ways have they been effective? If not, why not?
7. Do you think teaching portfolios should continue to be one component of EDUC 420 – Practice Teaching course? Why or why not?
8. Should the portfolio construction process and its elements be modified next time it is used? How? Why? Provide suggestions please.

APPENDIX K: Sample coding for categories and themes – transcriptions

Theme 3: Suggestions in terms of close follow-up of the reports written systematically and support to be given via systematic feedback and guidance during the writing process

ST9: " I believe the supervisor **should collect these reports on a weekly basis** to ensure that all student teachers **write them immediately after** their formal teachings"

ST11: "Since **I did not get any negative comments** on my teaching, in my reflections **I couldn't develop new insights** that I can apply to my future teaching practices. **I was expecting to hear my weaknesses** and I wanted **to develop myself based on those negative comments**"

ST2:"**Reflective reports should be controlled by the supervisor after each practice teaching to follow and give feedback** by supporting the weakness and strengths"

ST3:"It was **so boring** to continue my self-evaluation in **just one direction**. They **didn't lead me to evaluate myself from different perspectives**. Besides, **If I had a chance to discuss** them (my self-evaluations) with my cooperating teacher and supervisor, they will be **more meaningful** since I **couldn't see my faults on my own**, and **couldn't find solutions quickly and easily to my problems**. I tried to reach to better solutions by trying them out in my coming teachings"

Category 10: The feedback and comments in the formal appraisal forms (FAF)

Theme 1: Insufficient feedback and comments in the FAF so difficult to follow progress and improvement

ST8:"They just give us a general idea about what we have done, **not the opportunity to check whether I have improved myself in the areas I was weak at or not**"

ST9: **I do not think** that my cooperating teacher **put much effort** into my appraisal forms"

APPENDIX L: Sample coding for categories and themes – end-of-the-semester reflection essays

continuously: Written feedback increased self-responsibility. Because I know that I will profit something useful from this information. Therefore, this process contributed self-awareness as well. We all directly get responsibility for our development. Indeed, journals/ reports were effective in terms of receiving valuable feedback and support.

↑ since they motivated! STS.

increase in self-responsibility

peer obs + peer feedback sessions

new ideas + new perspective

Peer observations and peer feedback sessions were effective. But at the beginning I thought that observing by my peer might not be useful, because our level and experience about teaching was approximate to each other. But I learned that in some aspects my peer was more capable than me and he could offer new ideas and new perspective for me. I learned that there was still something I would learn from others. My peer helped me to examine my weak aspects one more time by providing good critics. Actually his ideas became another voice in my head. When I did not have any awareness, he made me to realize something or made concrete whatever I had in my mind. As a result he leads me to self-criticism as well. Until I got the result that I want, I always cared people's opinions.

gradually Coop. learning

another voice in my head
★
raised awareness on weak aspects

on realization

I think that teaching portfolio should continue to be one of the component of EDUC 420- Practice Teaching course. Because, I had not remember that I had taken such a useful course before. I did everything with enthusiasm and desire. The role of my supervisor could not be disregarded. Her approach, patience and motivation skills made this course effective. We all know that portfolio construction is laborious and intense process which requires hard-work. Infact I realized that we learned unconsciously how to change ourselves thanks to this course. Self-awareness is the key word for this change. When I looked back, I saw how my reactions and emotions change in a certain situation.

dialogue with me myself

Self-awareness + change

self-awareness

To conclude, this portfolio broaden our horizon and I developed understanding myself and others. When I thought reflectively, I observed that I was more open to new ideas, new possibilities. I learned how my emotions, beliefs and cultural background affected my ideas. Most importantly, this portfolio was a backbone of my educational background so as to give decisions about what was right or wrong choices for me.

evaluation skills

**APPENDIX M: Extra quotations/excerpts for the previously implemented
tool –Phase 1**

Category 1 Purpose of portfolio construction tool

Theme 2

Awareness regarding teaching style, aims and objectives, lesson planning, beliefs about teaching

MA. 1 ST3: *“The purpose of the portfolio is to help student teachers to form some ideas and thoughts about classroom, writing a lesson plan or students”*

MA. 2 ST4: *“I think that the point of constructing a portfolio is to be aware of what we are doing, reflecting our thoughts, beliefs and come to a conclusion regarding our beliefs”*

Theme 2

Awareness regarding some steps to be covered while constructing portfolio

MA. 2 ST20: *“As a new graduated teacher, I think, the portfolio should provide prospective teachers to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses with their ways to get better; and evaluate by practising what are taught in theory”*

Theme 5

A tool for assessing student teachers’ ideas and developments

MA. 3 ST2: *“Also, teacher can evaluate the students easily by the help of the portfolio. Teacher can see the ideas of the students towards their teaching. Teacher can take deeper ideas from students”*

Category 2: Reactions/feelings to the experience of portfolio construction in terms of:

- **Benefits of portfolio construction in promoting reflective thinking skills (B)**

Theme 1

Created awareness of the self as a teacher in terms of weaknesses and the strengths

MA. 4 ST1: *“I am only able to write my weak and strong sides that I realized. I just learned my drawbacks and strong areas but it didn’t require me to provide solutions and put them into practice to see the results”*

ST11: *“I think that constructing a portfolio was a good experience for me because I could see my weaknesses through some guidance questions and I had a chance to make up my mind and think about them. Portfolio construction process helped me set my mistakes into an order. I became aware of which mistakes I did and which aspects I should develop”*

ST12: *“The portfolio gives us a chance to reflect ideas about everything we have done so far. For example, after each formal teaching we wrote a reflective report about our strengths and weaknesses. Thanks to these self-evaluation reports, I became aware of the weak and strong aspects of my teaching.”*

Associated self-criticism with being aware of weaknesses and strengths

MA. 5 ST3: *“With micro-teachings, it is difficult to criticize yourself. However, being part in a real school lets you realize yourself and of course, saving it into your portfolio is concrete. Otherwise, it will be in the air. If I declare what I got, firstly, I learnt how to criticize myself. I spotted the areas I was good or bad”*

ST4: *“Constructing this portfolio gave me the opportunity to criticize myself both for my negative and positive sides. I realized my job’s challenges better while constructing it. I understood the importance of self-critique in the area of self-development in the teaching and learning area”*

Associated self-analysis with being aware of weaknesses and strengths

MA. 6 ST15: *“By the help of the portfolio, I had a chance to analyze my strengths, weaknesses, the aim of the activities, and the effectiveness of the lessons”*

Theme 2:

Lesson planning skills

MA. 7 ST1: *“I just prepared lesson plans and its materials for my activities systematically.”*

ST2: *“I can say that writing portfolio did not gain me too much. Of course, it was useful for making us prepared. We prepared lesson plans and wrote reflective reports. They were very useful things but mainly, I learned while teaching at the school”*

ST13: *“The portfolio work made me see my strong points as well. For example, I learnt how to prepare a good lesson plan as part of the portfolio work. I did it in my methodology courses before but it wasn’t as detailed as this one”*

Teaching style: techniques and methods

MA. 8 ST7: *“For example, I feel that I have definitely developed how I use the blackboard during my lessons over the course of this program*

To be organized, disciplined and responsible

MA. 9 ST14: *“I have learnt to be more organized by constructing it. It helped me record all the things related with my observations, teachings, lesson plans and reports in a sequence. So, I was aware of my weaknesses and strengths about my teachings”*

ST4: *"It also helped me to organize my plans for each teaching sections. Because when I was writing each reflection report, I realized my needs and I had a chance to think of how I could improve my weaknesses"*

Theme 3

A mutual dialogue with an open, helpful and friendly communication

MA. 10 ST5: *"Throughout all meetings, I felt that my supervising and cooperating teachers treated me as colleagues and equals rather than as student"*

ST8: *"The dialogue that I had with my supervisor was constructive. First, she let me to find solution on my own to my performance"*

Category 3: Suggestions for modification of the portfolio (S/M)

Theme 2

Importance of peers in observation and discussions

MA. 11 ST9: *"Formal teachings should be done with a peer in class because if I am observed by a peer, evaluation becomes easier for me. My peer's comments of my performance will help me understand myself better; peer support is necessary in this respect"*

Theme 3: Suggestions for a close follow-up: reports should be written and feedback and guidance should be given systematically during the writing process

Systematic feedback and submission of reports regularly

MA. 12 ST6: *"I took all my feedback about my formal teaching after all the process was completed from my cooperating teacher. But it didn't help me to improve myself because everything had finished by that time. So both the appraisal forms and oral feedback should be given soon after the teachings to the student teachers to see their mistakes and improve themselves"*

MA 13 ST9: *"Getting feedback from CT or Supervisor each week can be much more effective .I believe the supervisor should collect these reports on a weekly basis to ensure that all student teachers write them immediately after their formal teachings by using their fresh memory"*

Importance of feedback and guidance on development

MA 14 ST11: *"Since I did not get any negative comments on my teaching, in my reflections I couldn't develop new insights that I can apply to my future teaching practices. I was expecting to hear my weaknesses and I wanted to develop myself based on those negative comments"*

APPENDIX N: Student teacher's personal statement form regarding ELT

You are expected to write your personal statement regarding ELT by considering the following questions and **to email it to your supervisor during the first academic week**. You will also keep a copy of this personal statement in your file as a document for your portfolio.

1. What does teaching mean to me? What is my definition of teaching?
2. Do I see myself as a prospective/potential teacher? If yes, why? What aspects of my personality or academic background make me believe that I can be a teacher? If not, why not?
3. Do I have a teaching philosophy? If yes, what is my teaching philosophy? What do I believe about ELT? Why do I have such beliefs? How do I come to have those beliefs?
4. What do I expect to gain at the end of these portfolio construction processes?

APPENDIX O: Reflective Journals

Guidelines for Writing Your Reflective Journal

After each of your teaching experience at schools, you are expected to write a 'reflective journal' on the basis of the given questions and **submit it via e-mail to your supervisor within 2 days**. You are also responsible for asking for an appointment for a 'supervisory feedback session' to be held with your supervisor in her office within the same week. During this session, the issues you have reflected on in your journal and your teaching will be discussed to produce some solutions for your weak points or the points puzzling you. You will also keep a copy for each of your reflective journal in your file as documents for your portfolio.

1) Emotional Aspects of your teaching experience

This section of the reflective journal is going to function as a diary. You are free to talk about your feelings and emotions you have experienced during the day both during the pre-and post-teaching meetings with your CT and your teaching performance. You can talk about your sorrows, anxieties, worries, disappointments unhappiness as well as happiness and enthusiasm. You can talk about unexpected or critical incidents that have affected your mood or emotions.

- How do you feel about your teaching experience that you have had today? Explain why you feel this way by providing personal and contextual reasons. Is it due to personal reasons or contextual reasons?

- Do you feel better compared to your previous experience or worse? Explain why you feel better or worse by providing personal or contextual reasons. Is it due to personal reasons or contextual reasons?

2) Intellectual/Cognitive Aspects of your teaching experience

A) Evaluation of your teaching experience according to the aspects/ stages of the lesson

- What do you think about **your planning for teaching**? Were the objectives, the tasks/activities clear, easy or difficult, interesting, appropriate, useful and achievable for the students? Have you found your planning effective or ineffective? Why effective or ineffective? Explain by providing personal, contextual and theoretical support.
- What do you think about **your teaching act**? Evaluate your teaching act in terms of the following points:
 - *the stages (warm-up, pre- while- post-skill stages, OR presentation/practice/product stages and closing)
 - *motivation
 - *teaching materials and aids
 - *questions you posed
 - *feedback you provided
 - *error correction techniques you used
 - *teaching/learning activities appropriate to students' level of difficulty, well organized and well presented
 - * evaluation of the taught topic

*closure

Have you found your act of teaching effective or ineffective? Why effective or ineffective? Explain by providing personal, contextual and theoretical support.

- What do you think about **your classroom management skills**? Evaluate your management skills in terms of the following points:

*classroom control (maintained attention and interest, firm command of the class, good monitoring, dealt with misbehaviour)

*timing (time well distributed)

*classroom atmosphere (relaxed, fair to all learners, equal turn distribution, T-L / L-T interaction encouraged)

Have you found your classroom management skills effective or ineffective? Why effective or ineffective? Explain by providing personal, contextual and theoretical support.

- What do you think about **your personal qualities as a teacher**? Evaluate yourself in terms of the following points:

*manner (warm, friendly, confident, relaxed, enthusiastic, nervous, distant, unfriendly)

*speech and voice (accuracy, clear pronunciation, voice loud enough, intonation, clear expression)

Have you found your manner, speech and voice effective or ineffective? Why effective or ineffective? Explain by providing personal, contextual and theoretical support.

B) General evaluation of your teaching experience to raise awareness towards weak aspects, to define and locate the problem and to produce solutions/take action

Based on the answers you provided to the questions in section A, now consider:

- What problems have you experienced in this lesson? Which areas were you weak at?
- At which stage (s) have you experienced the problem(s)?
- Why do you think you have experienced the problem(s)? OR Why do you think you were weak in those areas? Is it due to personal or contextual reasons? Provide personal or theoretical grounds for your weaknesses/problems.
- How are you planning to deal with your problem(s)/weakness(es)? Provide a list of suggestions/solutions with personal, contextual and theoretical justifications. (Why do you believe that these solutions are appropriate for your weaknesses?)
- Do I still have the same weaknesses? Have I achieved anything since the last lesson? What differences have I got between my previous and current lesson? (to be answered beginning from the 2nd teaching)

C) Evaluation of your teaching philosophy/beliefs based on your current teaching in comparison to your previous teaching(s)

- Has there been any change in my beliefs /my philosophy regarding ELT at the end of this lesson? If so, what is it and why is there a change?
- Have I discovered anything new in this lesson? What is it and is it in contrast with what the theory or research is saying so far?

APPENDIX P: Progressive reflective reports

Guidelines for Progressive Reflective Report

In order to write your progressive reflective reports, you have to refer to your notes you have taken while writing your 'reflective journals' and 'peer reflective reports' (reflection requires looking back early efforts and revisiting and revising ideas over time). So make sure that you have performed your first formal teaching and have gone through all the steps required in completing the above mentioned reports and had a 'supervisory feedback session' with your supervisor during the week over your 'reflective journals'. This is a process which takes some time to complete the cycle and requires you to put the solutions you produce into action and observe the consequences. So you will only be dealing with two of your areas which you found the most problematic and attempt to solve them. You will only write TWO progressive reflective reports and email each step of it to your supervisor until you complete all the steps. You will get feedback and suggestions on the steps of the cycle from your feedback during supervisory feedback sessions weekly.

Step 1 A felt difficulty and selection of a key problem

Go back to your first reflective journal and read your answer, especially your notes on your weak aspects, very closely. Focus on/choose an experience of your own that you believe contains the most critical weakness/problem and needs special attention. This weakness of your own which you consider as a problem has to put you into a disturbing state of perplexity/confusion and you should feel curious to inquire about it. You should be willing to deal with the problem.

Step 2 Location of the problem and its definition

Before you produce some possible solutions, you have to locate the problem and define it. Go back to your reflective journal and try to locate at which point/stage of the lesson you experienced the problem. Try to make some necessary mental observations to bring to light just what is the trouble or to make clear the specific character of the problem. As you do this, try to remember your mini-teachings to find out whether you had the problem before as well and if you did, try to remember what the occasion was and which stage was it. Pose some questions that might help you in clarifying the nature of the problem such as:

- Why do you think you had the problem? Or why do you think you are weak in that aspect?
- What makes it a problem for you or for your lesson? Is this problem caused by a personal weakness, or is it due to contextual factors? Is it related with the student profile or the materials/activities or any other factors involved?

Step 3 Suggestion of possible solution(s)

Based on the location and definition of the nature of the problem, after carrying out the necessary observation and focusing on the possible causes of the problem, you are expected to produce some possible solutions or some alternative suggestions as how to deal with the problem. Your solution(s) or suggestion(s) has to very closely related with the location and definition of the problem. As you offer your solution(s), provide personal, contextual and theoretical justification. Make sure that you ground your possible solutions by comparing and contrasting your personal hypothesis with the theories of other educationalists. Confirm your hypothesis/interpretation with others (supervisor/cooperating teacher), relate to previous learning (mini-teachings/micro-teachings), compare with others' experiences (peers) and consult available authorities

(what educationalists or researchers are saying). The context you are teaching (student profile, activities/materials chosen or forced to use, technicalities, conditions) and its importance/effect should also be considered as you produce your solutions.

Step 4 Put your solution(s) into action

Indicate whether you have been able to put your solutions into action effectively as you planned or whether there has been some unexpected events which prevented you from applying your solutions with reasons.

Step 5 Consequences of your solutions and formation of a concluding belief

If you have managed to apply the solutions you produced, now it's time to report on the consequences of your implementation. Have your solutions or strategies been effective in solving the problem you identified? Have you managed to overcome your weak point? OR How much effective has it been? Comment on the consequences of the implementation of your solutions. This will lead you to the acceptance or rejection of your solutions; in other words, to the conclusion of your belief or disbelief. At the end of this process, you will either verify the belief behind your solution(s) or reject it and form a concluding belief.

- *What is your concluding belief at the end of this process?*
- *What is your personal theory? Has it changed, revised or verified?*

Writing your concluding belief will enable you *to construct your own meaning (personal theory)*

APPENDIX Q: Progressive Appraisal Form

This instrument is a guide for the evaluation of the teaching performance of the student teachers. The assessment criteria are divided into five dimensions:

- vi) Planning for Teaching
- vii) The Teaching Act
- viii) Classroom Management
- ix) Personal Qualities of the Student Teacher
- x) Student Teacher's Evaluation of Self and Teaching in cooperation with the cooperating teacher/supervisor

Each dimension includes items which correspond to important activities or aspects of teaching.

RATING SCALE

The instrument uses a 6 point scale. The rating categories are:

0	Poor	Far below adequate (clearly incompetent)
1	Weak	Below adequate (unsatisfactory)
2	Mediocre	An adequate performance
3	Good	A good performance
4	Very Good	A very good performance
5	Excellent	Excellent and outstanding performance

PROCEDURE

This appraisal form is made up of 3 sections: **Section 1** which includes 'Planning for Teaching'; **Section 2** which includes 'The Teaching Act', 'Classroom Management' and 'Personal Qualities of the Student Teacher' and **Section 3** which includes 'Student Teacher's Evaluation of Self and Teaching in cooperation with the cooperating Teacher/supervisor'. Therefore, it is advised to be completed in **3 steps**.

Section 1 – 'Planning for Teaching' is expected to be completed before the lesson or as close to the beginning of the lesson as possible. Section 1 functions as a '**Pre-teaching meeting**' with the cooperating teacher/supervisor and student teacher's lesson planning skills are discussed and evaluated.

Section 2 – 'The Teaching Act', 'Classroom Management' and 'Personal Qualities of the Student Teacher' are required to be completed/rated during the lesson or immediately thereafter (but before your discussion with student teacher)

Section 3 – 'Student Teacher's Evaluation of Self and Teaching in cooperation with the cooperating Teacher/supervisor'. This section is required to be completed after the lesson and will function as a '**post-teaching meeting**' with the cooperating teacher/supervisor. During this section, student teacher is expected to rate himself/herself and his/her teaching out of 5 after having an oral self-assessment of himself/herself in cooperation with the cooperating teacher or supervisor or both. The student teacher is guided or encouraged to

do self-evaluation while having a mutual conversation with the cooperating teacher/supervisor.

Student teacher: _____

Observer: _____

Date and School: _____

Teaching Point: _____

Grade: _____

SECTION 1 – PRE-TEACHING MEETING

PLANNING FOR TEACHING

(Assessment of student teacher's lesson plan)

Area of Assessment	0	1	2	3	4	5	Comment
1. Objectives and Instructional procedures -clear, appropriate, achievable aims -realistic timing -appropriate variety of activities -activities at appropriate level -content well sequenced -stages appropriate for the teaching point							

SECTION 2 – WHILE TEACHING ASSESSMENT

(Assessment of the student teacher's performance during teaching)

THE TEACHING ACT

Area of Assessment	0	1	2	3	4	5	Comment
2. Warm-up and Motivation -warms learners' up -arouses, maintains and controls Ls' interest/attention							
3. Introductory Activities/Lead-in -brainstorming/ checks schemata -develop readiness for instruction to follow							

4. Content – student specific -appropriate level of difficulty -adds to learners' knowledge -well organized, appropriate examples used							
5. Content – Teacher specific -shows good grasp of subject matter -presents correct information							
6. Teaching Materials and Aids - relevant and well made -usable in setting -appropriate use of technology							
7. Questions - appropriate to Ls' level of English -clear in meaning -aid in lesson development -use of questioning techniques							
8. Teaching/ Learning Activities -appropriate to objectives -suitable to Ls' interest and age -well sequenced and executed							
9. Timing/Organization -time well distributed to different steps in the lesson -lesson well organized (pre, while, post OR ppp are used) -learners involved into the lesson (pair/group work)							
10. Instruction Giving -clear instructions are given in simple language and in chunks							
11. Feedback - Learners' are reinforced/ praised appropriately -Appropriate follow-up and further explanations are made to Ls' contributions							
12. Correction -appropriate correction techniques are used -self and peer correction are encouraged							
13. Evaluation -assesses achievement of objectives							

14. Closure -ends lesson appropriately							
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Area of assessment	0	1	2	3	4	5	Comment
15. Classroom Control -captures and maintains attention/interest -monitors all learners -establishes authority -deals effectively with misbehaviour							
16. Classroom Atmosphere -relaxed -teacher-learner interaction encouraged -equal turns distributed							

PERSONAL QUALITIES OF STUDENT TEACHER

Area of assessment	0	1	2	3	4	5	Comment
17. Personality/ Manner -warm, friendly, confident, energetic and enthusiastic							
18. Speech -uses language accurately -speaks clearly (clear pronunciation) -expresses himself/herself so that his/her meaning is clear to learners							
19. Voice -speaks loudly enough to be heard - speaks with intonation							

SECTION 3 STUDENT TEACHER'S EVALUATION OF SELF AND TEACHING POST-TEACHING MEETING

(This is for discussion with the student teacher after Teaching Act. Student teacher is encouraged and guided to rate himself/herself and his/her teaching after holding a post-teaching discussion in cooperation with the cooperation teacher/supervisor)

Area of assessment	0	1	2	3	4	5	Comment
20. Assessment of teaching performance - good and poor effects of what s/he did and why - suggestions for improvement of lesson							

Guidelines for Section 3 Post-teaching meeting

(The same questions can be used during supervisory feedback sessions if student teacher would like to discuss his/her teaching especially)

The cooperating teacher or supervisor does not ask the following questions in a structured way one after another as if in a highly structured interview mode but in a mutual conversation manner expressing his/her own ideas on each question as well. As the student teacher answers, the cooperating teacher and/or supervisor is expected to react, indicate to what extent s/he agrees with the student teacher's ideas and fill-in the gaps making sure that the student teacher becomes aware of his/her strengths, weaknesses and produces some solutions/ideas for the next teaching by the end of the meeting.

- Give student teacher a chance to express his/her **feelings** about his/her performance first
- Ask him/her to carry on with his/her strengths. Encourage her to provide justification/support for her strengths. E.g. 'Why do you believe you were good in those aspects?' What do you think has been the effects of these strong aspects on your teaching, learners' learning, class atmosphere?'
- Ask him/her to talk about his/her weakness. Encourage him/her to provide justifications/reasons for his/her weaknesses. E.g. 'Why do you think you were weak in those points? What do you think has been the effects of these weak aspects on your teaching, on learners' motivation/understanding? How has those weaknesses affected your teaching or learners' understanding?'
- Encourage the student teacher to produce solutions for the weak areas. E.g. How are you planning to deal with your weak aspects? What suggestions can you offer for your weaknesses? How would you behave next time if you were in the same situation? What would you do? What would you never do? Why?'
- What points/areas will you pay attention to and you would especially like to be observed in your next teaching?'
- Give student teacher a chance to ask you (the cooperating teacher or supervisor) questions that puzzle him/her about his/her current teaching or questions regarding actions to be taken for future performances.

The following are asked after the student teacher's first teaching:

- To what extent do you believe you have managed to put your solutions/strategies into action? Why do you believe so?'

- What have been the consequences of your solutions? To what extent have your solutions/strategies worked? Why? Provide clues, evidences or support from your lesson.
- Have you been aware of anything new regarding ELT or yourself as a prospective teacher from this teaching experience? Any personal constructs from the experience?

At the end of the meeting the following are noted down:

Student teacher's weak points to be observed in the next lesson:

-
-
-
-
-

Some suggestions produced in cooperation with the cooperating teacher/supervisor for the weak points that can be applied in the next lesson:

-
-
-
-
-

Consequences of the solutions put into action:
 To what extent have the solutions worked? Why? Why not?
 Provide comments regarding what actions to be taken for future teachings:

Some parts of the appraisal form have been adapted from 'Instrument For The Assessment of the Instructional Competence of Student Teachers' , School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados and some parts from the 'Formal Appraisal Form' used in the Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus. Guidelines for post-teaching meeting have been originally created by the researcher based on the reflective cycle proposed by many authors and the participants' perceptions in the 1st phase regarding how they would like to have the post-teaching meetings.

APPENDIX R: Peer Observation Checklist

You are advised to use the following points while observing your peer's teaching performance. This checklist will enable you to evaluate your friend's performance easily by offering you some dimensions of teaching to take into account. As you watch, mark the given dimensions as weak, average or strong. Comment in the given boxes why you consider your friend weak, average or strong in those aspects by providing evidences, examples or clues from your peer's teaching. Keep in mind that this checklist is a guideline to raise your awareness towards the dimensions of teaching and enable you take notes to be reviewed during 'peer feedback session'. It is both for better equipping you for an effective 'peer feedback session' and making you more aware of areas of assessment for your own teaching as well.

Name of the peer to be observed: _____
Name of the observing peer: _____
Teaching point: _____
Class/Grade: _____
Cooperating School: _____
Date: _____

AREAS OF ASSESSMENT	WEAK	AVERAGE	STRONG	COMMENT
PLANNING FOR TEACHING 1. Objectives and Instructional procedures -clear, appropriate, achievable aims -realistic timing -appropriate variety of activities -activities at appropriate level -content well sequenced				
THE TEACHING ACT 2. Warm-up and Motivation -warms learners' up -arouses, maintains and controls Ls' interest/attention				
3. Introductory Activities/Lead-in - brainstorming/checks schemata -develop readiness for instruction to follow				
4. Content – student specific -appropriate level of difficulty				

-adds to learners' knowledge -well organized, appropriate examples used				
5. Content – Teacher specific -shows good grasp of subject matter -presents correct information				
6. Teaching Materials and Aids - relevant and well made -usable in setting -appropriate use of technology				
7. Questions - appropriate to Ls' level of English -clear in meaning -aid in lesson development -use of questioning techniques				
8. Teaching/ Learning Activities -appropriate to objectives -suitable to Ls' interest and age -well sequenced and executed				
9. Timing/Organization -time well distributed to different steps in the lesson -lesson well organized (pre, while, post OR ppp are used) -learners involved into the lesson (pair/group work)				
10. Instruction Giving -clear instructions are given in simple language and in chunks				
11. Feedback - Learners' are reinforced/ praised appropriately				

-Appropriate follow-up and further explanations are made to Ls' contributions				
12. Correction -appropriate correction techniques are used -self and peer correction are encouraged				
13.Evaluation -assesses achievement of objectives				
14. Closure -ends lesson appropriately				
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT 15. Classroom Control -captures and maintains attention -monitors all learners -establishes authority -deals effectively with misbehaviour				
16. Classroom Atmosphere -relaxed -teacher-learner interaction encouraged -equal turns distributed				
PERSONAL QUALITIES OF TEACHER 17. Personality/ Manner -warm, friendly, confident, energetic and enthusiastic				
18. Speech -uses language accurately -speaks clearly (clear pronunciation) -expresses himself/herself so that his/her meaning is clear to learners				
19. Voice -speaks loudly enough to be heard - speaks with intonation				

APPENDIX S: Peer Reflective Journal Guidelines for writing 'Peer Reflective Journal'

The peers are advised to take notes during 'peer feedback sessions' because those notes will help them write their 'peer reflective journal' which is to be written collaboratively within the same day at a time convenient for both of the peers and to be e-mailed to the supervisor until 12.00 pm on the same day. The peers are given the following guidelines to enable them construct their collaborative journal:

- Discuss the areas 'the peer under observation' was strong at by indicating the reasons. Provide commonly agreed justifications from the lesson.
 - Discuss the areas 'the peer under observation' was weak at by indicating the reasons. . Provide commonly agreed justifications from the lesson.
 - Discuss the solutions/strategies or techniques 'the peer under observation' is advised to apply in his/her future teachings by providing theoretical and contextual support.
 - Set goals for future teachings based on the feedback session
- Write your concluding belief regarding what you have discovered or became aware of about ELT based on that lesson and your discussions

APPENDIX T: Final Report

SECTION 1: This is the final profile regarding your act of teaching that came out at the end of this practice teaching course. This report aims at making you summarize your profile at the end of your teaching practice to be able to start your teaching career more conscious and aware of who you are as a teacher candidate so as to have your professional development on a more sound basis.

1. What were my weak areas that came out after my first mini- or formal teaching? (Go back to your reflective journals and list them one by one.)
2. Which one of these weak aspects have I managed to improve? (Go back to your reflective journals and list them one by one.)
3. Which ones do I still need to improve/work on? (Set goals or think over actions to be taken for future teachings after you graduate).
4. What changes have occurred in my teaching philosophy/beliefs? In what ways have my beliefs or philosophy of teaching changed? (Discuss).
5. What discoveries have I made regarding ELT? (Explain them if there are any).
6. What does teaching mean to me now? How would I define teaching now? (provide a very personal/original definition of teaching based on what you have experienced so far)

SECTION 2: Effectiveness of the Practice Teaching Course in special reference to the portfolio construction processes.

1. How do you evaluate the Practice Teaching course? Respond indicating the strong and weak aspects of the programme.
2. How do you evaluate the portfolio construction processes that you have gone through? Has it been effective in
 - improving your reflective thinking skills? If so, how?
 - developing you as a teacher? If so, how?
 - in making you develop your teaching philosophy or change it? If yes, how?
3. What are the weak aspects of the portfolio construction processes? Should it be modified next time it is used? If yes, in what ways?

APPENDIX U: Peer Feedback sessions

Guidelines for Peer Feedback Sessions

Student teachers are paired with each other and placed either into the same classroom or timetabled accordingly to be able to observe each other's teaching and hold peer feedback sessions at least 2/4 times during the construction of their portfolios. After their teaching performances, peers get together to discuss the teaching of one. The observing peer reviews his/her observation notes in a 'Critical Friend' mode. The observing peer is free to use his/her observation notes in providing feedback for his/her friend; however, the following points can also be used as guidelines in leading the feedback session:

The observer as a 'critical friend'

- discusses the areas s/he found his/her peer **strong**. S/he indicates the reasons why s/he considers her friend strong in those areas. S/he uses the evidences s/he collected during observation.
- discusses the areas s/he found his/her peer **weak**. S/he indicates the reasons why s/he considers her friend weak in those areas. S/he uses the evidences s/he collected during observation.
- suggests **solutions/strategies/techniques** s/he thinks his/her peer might apply in dealing with his/her weak points in future teachings.
- elaborates on the issue by giving examples regarding 'what s/he would do or how s/he would behave in such situations?'

The observed peer

- indicates how much s/he agrees with his/her peer – which points s/he agrees and which points s/he disagrees with by explaining the reasons (by taking his/her beliefs, ideas and contextual clues – student profile, lesson plan, activities, materials into consideration)

At the end of the session, the peers collaboratively form **a concluding belief** regarding what they have discovered or what they have become aware of regarding ELT as a result of their discussions based on that lesson.

APPENDIX V: Extra statements, quotations and excerpts for the newly developed and implemented tool- Phase 3

VA. 1 The following are the commonly and frequently expressed reasons/statements for defining portfolio as “**a tool showing personal development**” as a result of the analysis of the transcribed interviews and end-of-the-semester reflection essays:

- It shows how a teacher develops personally
- It is a process reflecting what student teachers do, why they do what they do, what they have, and what they experience and encounter during the portfolio construction
- It is a process reflecting what student teachers total situation actually is
- It is the compilation of the reports done from the beginning till the end which shows the student teachers’ progress.
- It is a tool reflecting back to student teachers their experiences from their own perspective so as to see their whole progress
- It is a documentation showing student teachers’ progress
- It is a mirror showing student teachers who they are, and what they are lacking or what they have as a teacher candidate

VA. 2 The following are the commonly and frequently expressed reasons/statements for defining portfolio as “**a tool/process helping student teachers define and develop themselves**” as a result of the analysis of the transcribed interviews and end-of-the-semester reflection essays:

- It is a tool which helps a student teacher develop himself in many respects such as classroom management, teaching style, personal manner, feelings, attitudes towards teaching
- It is a tool enabling a student teacher to see his/her weak and strong points
- It is a self-awareness process; or a self-identification process
- It is a timeline during which student teachers can go back, look for previous experiences and learn from them by becoming aware of their weaknesses and overcoming them
- It is an ongoing process which helps student teachers improve themselves step by step in terms of methodology and teaching strategy

Category 2

Theme 1

Awareness regarding learning by doing/being an insider within the classroom context

VA. 3 The excerpt below underlines the ‘learning by doing’ aspect of the portfolio criticising the observation aspect of it:

ST6: It was a very good tool for me except for the observation reports we filled in at the beginning of the term to get to know the class. I realized that I learnt about the class when I started teaching them not by observing because students react differently with different teachers. What I observed was their communication and interaction to their English teacher so it didn't mean that we would have the same communication or they would react to me in the same way so just one or two hours of observations would be enough”

Theme 2

Solution via reading from different sources

VA. 4 The excerpt below explains the solution aspect of the portfolio made possible via reading from different sources:

ST2: *“When I also critiqued about my voice and intonation in my reflective journals and progressive reflective report in detail and tried to produce solutions and strategies to minimize it also by reading from different sources; I became much more effective in using my voice. After reading from different sources I paid attention to use it with intonation; to speak louder and with emphasis from time to time. Lack of this was causing me a very big problem with my classroom management as well. Using my voice effectively, helped me control my class better as well”*

Solution via the step-by-step approach of the reports

VA. 5 The excerpt below confirms the solution aspect of the portfolio made possible with the help of the guiding questions and the steps in the reports:

ST4: *“Portfolio construction process definitely led us to produce solutions because there were a lot of steps; I mean questions in the reflective journals and progressive reflective reports which required us to produce solutions ...err... strategies for our weak sides; to note these solutions down and put them into action in our next teachings. We were also expected to report on the results like whether the solutions worked or not; whether we managed to minimize our weak points or not. During the supervisory and peer feedback sessions we needed to discuss and comment on the solutions we produced and applied as well”*

VA 6

ST4: *“the steps as well as the questions in the reflective journals and progressive reflective report made me go back; refer to my previous experience and compare my previous and current practices continuously to produce solutions and see the difference. There were also questions which asked about my beliefs; views so I needed to go back; read and see whether my beliefs, my ideas changed or not. All these enabled me to follow my progress; to see whether I improved myself in my weak areas or not; whether I need to produce some other alternatives or not. I was able to see myself; where I stood and what else I needed to do to become better was so clear in the portfolio. What I believed in and what I believe in now was very clear”*

Category 2

Theme 2

Monitoring progress via looking back and forth

VA. 7 The following excerpt demonstrates how ‘looking back and forth’ aspect of the portfolio components enabled student teachers to monitor their progress:

ST3: *“The journals and reports made me become aware of my progress. I observed my self-development during the process because we turned back continuously and looked back on our previous experiences and then came back to our current situation and made a comparison. We looked where we were, how we were and how we are at the moment and how we will be teaching in our next teaching because we planned for strategies to apply in our next teachings. So the portfolio made us think on our previous, current and future performance continuously”*

VA.8 The following excerpt demonstrates how the portfolio provided opportunity to follow up progress by raising awareness towards change in personal beliefs and attitudes; hence in professional identity.

ST5: *“The personal statement report and the final report also made me see the changes in my beliefs and views about teaching. My beliefs about teaching and myself as a teacher were quite different at the end when I wrote my final report. My perspective to ELT everything was so different when I read my personal statement report and my final report at the end of the process. It was like a student has written the personal statement report and a teacher has written the final report – that is how I felt about my personal statement and my final report. They were so different from each other”*

Theme 3:

VA. 9 The following quotation demonstrates how reflective journals helped STs understand the function and logic of the theories

Portfolio elements (reflective journals) illuminating the function and the logic of the theories

ST1: *“Writing reflective journals also helped me how to use my theoretical knowledge in real classrooms. I became aware of what the theoretical explanations were for my practices; weak and strong points – like how theory explains these and what solutions theory or research offer for these weaknesses. I started to make sense of the theories we read before in our language, linguistics and methodology classes. They were not flying up in the air anymore. I could make sense of why and what for they were produced.”*

VA 10 The following excerpt discusses how the guiding questions in the journals and the reports improved problem-solving skills of the student teachers

Problem-solving skills were provided through the guiding questions as a habitual act

ST4: "Even today when I go into my bed, I still think what I would do or how I would behave if I faced with X or Y situation. So I realized that I became a solution-focused teacher and I am prepared to produce solutions for many different cases and conditions. This portfolio construction process made me produce solutions for my problematic areas on my own. It was a very problematic class in terms of classroom management. I discovered it on my own that 'smiling at them' was not a solution. But the reflective journals and feedback sessions made me aware of this because I spent so much time on the reasoning of this with the help of the guiding questions in the journals and the reports. I discovered of myself how to behave at what stage and towards what condition"

Category 3
Theme 2

VA. 11 The following quotation underlines the importance of having discussion at various levels on raising awareness

Awareness was provided through horizontally and vertically at a multidimensional level (at instructors' and peer's level simultaneously)

ST7: "Discussing our performance and ideas with our supervisor, cooperating teacher, with our peer and all of us together made me become more aware of myself in many respects. I had many perspectives regarding my teaching; in other words, I had a chance to see myself both horizontally and vertically not only from instructors' but also from my peer' perspective. This provided a multidimensional perspective of me which gave me better ideas; clues, understandings while preparing for my next teachings"

Category 4
Theme 2
Continuous peer observation

VA. 12 Some suggestions about the implementation of peer collaboration were made in order to optimize its effect on the student teachers' professional development as indicated below:

ST2: "We were asked to observe our peers twice in formal teachings and to write two peer reflective journals. It was a very creative technique to use in this portfolio construction process but I may say that peer observations were crucial components of this portfolio and they should be more than two, because I observed my peer in all her formal teachings and I commented on her progress in her teachings with every single detail because I was there and experienced everything with her. And my peer did the same. So we were able to follow each other's improvement step by step so the feedback we provided was much more meaningful"

