

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Reflective practice has long been used as a medium to support teachers' development in teacher education (Yu, 2018). This vital role has brought many pre-service teachers (PSTs) become aware to implement reflective practice in their teaching practicum experiences. Certain studies pointed out that reflective practice could help PSTs to expand their own knowledge (e.g., pedagogical, conceptual, theoretical), own teaching strategies, and self-evaluated their own performances (Bruster & Peterson, 2013; Haugan, Moen, & Karlsdóttir, 2013). This issue responds to one of the global concerns in teacher education to preparing PSTs to teach effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Goodwin, 2010).

Besides reflective practice, Moorhouse and Harfitt (2019) found out that teaching in the international context also can support PSTs professional development to teach effectively in the 21st century. An ITP context allows PSTs to cope with various different aspects such as in geographic, social, cultural, linguistic, personal and/or professional identity which can contribute to their professional development (Williams & Berry, 2016).

Due to their significant impact in supporting PSTs' professional development, one of the English PSTs as a participant of this study had a chance to join the international teaching practicum (ITP) in Thailand. This program required him to teach English in the high school level and also did

some projects initiated to help students learn. During this program, he conducted reflective practice as a mean to constantly improve his teaching quality. From reflective practice, he found some challenges and every idea that he put into it also contributed to his professional development.

Previous studies in the ITP context conducted by Kabilan et al. (2017) investigated the impact of the ITP on PSTs' professional development and the result indicated that the PSTs who participated in the ITP program gained positive professional development. From the experience of conducting reflective practice, Tlali (2018) and Dumlao and Pinatacan (2019) examined the impact of reflective practice among pre-service teachers to their professional development. The results revealed in similar vein that the use of reflective practice regularly can foster teachers' professional development.

However, despite the myriad studies have investigated the reflective practice, ITP context and their impact to teachers' professional development, the study which focus to examine the use of reflective practice in the ITP context are still limited. In addition, previous study investigated by Kabilan et al. (2017) which conducted 2 weeks of ITP program suggested the next study to conduct longer ITP program so that PSTs would have ample time to self-evaluate their overall performance more effectively. To fill the gap, this study conducted ITP program for about 5 months.

The contribution of this study is expected to reveal professional development represented by English pre-service teacher from the use of

reflective practice during ITP experience in Thailand and make the other pre-service teachers to be aware of the use of reflective practice in the educational field.

## 1.2 Formulation of the Problem

One research question is addressed in the present study. It is “How does reflective practice shape PST’s professional development during the ITP program?”

## 1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding about the terms set out in this study, the author provides some definitions related to this study, as follows:

- 1.3.1 **Reflective practice:** A process of continuous learning to reflect on what happened, why it happened and how it happened as a means to improve the quality of teaching.
- 1.3.2 **Teachers’ professional development:** a process that develop an individual’s skill about teaching in the 21st century.
- 1.3.3 **Pre-service teacher:** an English undergraduate student who has conducted teaching practicum in Thailand for about 5 months.
- 1.3.4 **International teaching practicum:** a platform that provides experiences and opportunities for pre-service teacher to grow both personally and professionally in the teaching profession by conducting teaching abroad in Thailand.

#### **1.4 Aim of the Research**

This research aims to reveal how reflective practice shape pre-service teacher's professional development during ITP in Thailand.

#### **1.5 Significances of the Research**

- 1.5.1 **Empirical:** This study will offer empirical insights into how reflective practice shape pre-service English teacher professional development during ITP program in terms of teaching quality.
- 1.5.2 **Theoretical:** This study provides about the understanding of Goodwin's (2010) theory in how the use of reflective practice in the ITP context can promote the PST's professional development.
- 1.5.3 **Practical:** This study will provide experiences of pre-service teacher in conducting reflective practice to develop professionalism during ITP program in Thailand which perhaps can give an exposure to the next ITP teachers to be aware of the significant role of reflective practice in enhancing professional development so that they will become a better reflective teachers.