Weblogs as Tools for Encouraging Self-Reflection and Peer Feedback among Student Teachers

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Abstract

A weblog is one of the most effective tools among the latest inventions that enhance student teachers' learning and practice. With technology becoming crucial for both personal and professional developments, this study focused on the effectiveness of using reflective weblogs in teacher education programs. In this regard, the research investigated the level to which weblogs successfully promote self-reflection and yield peer feedback among student teachers. Furthermore, it explored student teachers' perceptions regarding the use of weblogs as tools for self-reflection and peer feedback.

A case study of seven EFL student teachers taking a practicum course at Kuwait University was analyzed in this paper. The study was conducted in the English Curricula and Teaching Methods Department in the College of Education during the first semester of the 2013/2014 academic year. During the 4-week application period, participants were requested to reflect on their teaching practices and provide feedback on their peers' posts. The data were collected through different qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and content analysis.

The findings of the study suggest that the use of the practicum blog is considered to be effective in facilitating student teachers' ability to reflect upon their teaching practices and provide comments on their peers during the practicum course. Most participants agree on the usefulness of using weblogs in teacher education programs. Overall, the study results show that student teachers find the weblog as an effective tool for writing reflections, sharing ideas, providing feedbacks, and increasing proficiency levels. The results of the study provide the rationale for using weblogs in student teacher education programs.

Keywords: weblogs, practicum course, reflective practice, peer feedback

1. Introduction

The pre-service teacher education is a crucial component of the lifelong process of the teachers' professional development. This vital part of the teachers' training equips prospective teachers with the necessary subject knowledge and professional skills, as well as attitudes to effective teaching (Brook, Cock, Lim, & Lock, 2009). In fact, teaching practice has a leading position in the teacher educational program. Such a process usually takes place at the end of the teacher preparation stage. For many years, practicum has been a compulsory component within the pre-service English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher education programs since it provides an opportunity to practice teaching skills in authentic situations (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2012). Presentations throughout the teaching practice provide a foundation for predicting the success of the beginning teacher. For the period of teaching practice, working with student teachers in an academic institution requires an advanced level of active participation (Garther & Lipsky, 1998).

Teaching practice provides student teachers with the required knowledge and experience (Grimmet & MacKinnon, 1992). Moreover, they start to get acquainted with the culture of teaching. During the practicum, student teachers gain significant outcomes such as proper teaching competencies (Batu, Ergenekon, & Ozen, 2008). They have to work in a constantly changing and increasingly diverse environment in which they should accommodate conflicting and ambiguous demands (Haigh, McDonald, & Pinder, 2006). The key option of the practicum is to introduce them to the exposure to the realities. What is more, the aim of this process is to provide student teachers with the understanding of the context for teaching in education. Teacher educators should seek

to ensure student teachers during their course work with solid foundations and opportunities to make essential connections between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences (Haigh, McDonaldm, & Pinder, 2006). Hence, the practicum plays one of the main roles in bridging "theory and practice." However, more importantly, it makes the context available to student teachers, thus helping them improve their individual teaching experiences through reflection. It provides them with an opportunity to practice and reflect upon their practice. Therefore, the promotion of the reflective practice for student teachers is regarded as an established task and essential constituent of the teacher education program (Grossman, 2008). Nevertheless, in practice, such tools as weblogs and such techniques as self-reflection and peer feedback are neglected in the educational program, especially during practicum period.Thus, it is necessary to investigate the significance of weblogs as means of self-reflection and peer feedback in the student teachers' training on the basis of the case study.

1.1 Reflective Practice in Teaching

The importance of reflection in the teacher education is well known. Reflective practice can be a beneficial form of professional development at both pre-service and in-service levels of teaching ("Reflective Practice and Professional Development," 2004). Brookfield (1995) proposed four lenses that can be engaged by teachers in a critical reflection process: (1) the autobiographical, (2) the colleagues' experiences, (3) the students' eyes, and (4) theoretical literature. They all correlate with the processes of self-reflection, peer assessment, students' feedback, and engagements with scholarly literature. Thinking about these processes provides the foundation for good teaching and the means that can help become an excellent teacher. Reflection seems to be the ideal approach to the teacher education as it gives teachers a central role in their own development (Freeman, 2002).

Dewey (1993) stressed on the significance of integrating experience with reflection. The scholar explained the complexities of a learning process from the practical experiences and the need for teachers to develop a capacity for reflective action. According to Moon (2005), reflection is a form of mental processing—a form of thinking—which people use to fulfill a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome. Korthagen and Vasalos (2001) defined reflection as the mental process of restructuring experiences, existing knowledge, or insights. Teachers usually recall what happened in their classes and draw implications for their teaching practices in accordance with their reflections. This reflection may appear as a "self-reflection" when teachers think about the strong and weak points of their recent teaching practice. In this sense, reflection can sound like a daily activity for any educator. When teachers reflect after a lesson, they recollect their working day and relate events that took place in classroom to the cognitions. This process also includes special forms of knowledge and beliefs that influence their plans and expectations for the lesson.

Reflection can be described using three phases: (a) reflection in practice, which occurs during a lesson; (b) reflection on the practice that appears as post-instruction and includes teacher's thoughts of the lesson, certain components of the experience and students' engagements; and (c) reflection for practice, which presupposes thinking about future experience (Campbell, 2003). These phenomena will, probably, lead to advanced actions that will affect their planning of the subsequent classes.

Reflection plays a great role in the teaching experience. However, it is not a simple process since, as Bennett, Chant, & Heafner (2007) stated, "It requires critical thought, self-direction, and problem solving coupled with personal knowledge and self-awareness" (as cited in Lee, 2007, p. 322). Reflective practice presupposes thoughtful consideration of one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline (Schon, 1996). Shin (2006) asserted that student teachers are able to write their thoughts of how to connect theory and practice. This procedure will prepare them for solving the problems of a complex world where they have to analyze, evaluate, and revise knowledge in the context of constant practice (Weimer, 2002). Gaining a better understanding of their own style of teaching with the help of reflective practice, teachers are able to improve their effectiveness in the classroom ("Reflective Practice and Professional Development," 2004).

Camp & Levin (2002) stated that being unable to reflect on their performance, teachers have difficulties in improving their practice or are unable to see the links between theory and practice. Teachers can uncover the obstacles and discover the way their teaching beliefs have to change with the purpose of realizing transformative teaching strategies through reflective journal writing, peer feedback, and reading. Writing is frequently assigned as a reflective method in the pre-service teacher education courses (Campbell, 2003). With the introduction of the computer and other technological advancements, a weblog seems to be a promising electronic and web-based variant of a journaling tool.

Although reflection as a learning concept is well-researched by scholars like Cabot (2000), Campbell (2003), etc., its practical application in the student teachers educational program, especially in terms of English as a foreign

language (EFL) teacher education programs, needs to be studied thoroughly.

1.2 Weblogs as Tools for Reflection

A weblog is a web page with a regular diary or journal entry (Dudeney & Hockly, 2008). Winner (2003) defined a weblog as a hierarchy of images, texts, data and media objects arranged chronologically that can be viewed in a hypertext marked-up language (HTML) browser. Blogs, the contracted form of web-based logs or weblogs, are essentially online journals (Beatson & Larkin, 2010). According to Schmidt (2007), it is a frequently updated personal website with the dated entries displayed in an invalidated sequential order. Each student teacher is able to post reflections. Moreover, everybody can offer the opportunities for discussion and feedback. Weblogs are considered to be the most popular applications of the Web 2.0 as they provide bloggers with an opportunity to share their opinions, thoughts, experiences, and even media-rich files with others in the virtual world (Kuzu, 2007).

Weblogs allow people to exchange different information without time and space constraints, to broaden and extend their knowledge, as well as to meet personal interests and needs at the same time. Living in the 21st century gives educators a chance to simplify the educational process and improve it simultaneously. Campbell (2003) found that a weblog can be presumed as an online journal where individuals can constantly update their ideas, thoughts, and stories by using simple software, which does not require awareness of the hypertext marked-up language (HTML). The most common use of blogs in teaching is to encourage writing and motivate students to put more effort to provide authenticity that is valued by the audience (Jonassen, 2000). From learning and teaching perspectives, plain text blogs are viewed as the tools to promote reflective practice (Roberts, 2003).

Consequently, weblogs are useful means in the educational process, but there is a lack of the narrowed scientific highlighting of this issue regarding the EFL student teachers within the country in particular and the world in general.

1.3 Peer Feedback through Weblogs

Student teachers may also share their reflections with peers or invite co-workers or teacher trainers to their classes for the additional feedback. Recently, there have been a number of successful and influential demonstrations of various computer networks and their ability to support student groups actively engaged in learning and reflection (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000, p. 219). Luehmann (2008) clarified that weblogs enable users to apply the voice thinking processes and consequent review during their learning and teaching activities. As a result, they offer a number of opportunities for reflection and feedback. Therefore, collaborative writing allows students to share ideas and provide each other with feedbacks (Storch, 2005).

As Boud (1999) stressed, using peers as "critical friends" in the learning process is a prevailing instructional method. Freese (1999) suggested that "… reflection can be enhanced when conducted with another individual" (p. 2). Blogs can also be defined as virtual language classrooms. People from around the globe can share their opinions and express their ideas by using the language they can understand. Nowadays, blogging is very popular because of its essential role in the modern education process. Moreover, it is a great source of useful information that is available to everybody without any difference to the individual's social status or other factors.

Overall, blogging is a contemporary advanced tool for the student teachers' learning and practicing improvement, but its role in the EFL education is poorly researched by academic scientists.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Teaching is often treated as an isolated job where the teacher holds responsibility behind the closed doors of the classroom (Hawkes & Romiszowski, 2001). In general, teaching consists of several critical parts; however, some of them are neglected or pushed aside because of teachers' busy schedules. One of them is reflection that plays a vital role in shaping teacher's effective career, in particular efficient teaching. To be more precise, teachers spend much time preparing and instructing classes. As a rule, they simply have no time to think over what they have done. Even teaching programs in Kuwait do not pay a lot of attention to this significant aspect in preparing educators. The researcher did not have the opportunity to be engaged in the process of self-reflection or collaborative feedback during the studies at the College of Education in Kuwait; though, these options will be favorable to improve the teaching skills.

Teacher reflection should be a fundamental component of teacher's professional development. Also, it should become an integral component of every educator's job. Moreover, technology is becoming increasingly important in both people's personal and professional lives, and learners are using technology more and more (Dudeney & Hockly, 2008). Therefore, there is a strong necessity to apply modern popular communication applications like: podcasts, wikis and weblogs in the teacher education programs. These technological tools

allow student teachers to connect, communicate and collaborate online. Besides, there are number of researches that report on the benefits of engaging English language teachers in self-reflection and peer feedback using weblogs throughout the practicum courses. Unfortunately, there are no studies in the Kuwait context. Consequently, this study may contribute to the academic exploration of weblog usage in the context of teacher education programs.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

This study aims at examining the effectiveness of weblogs in the structure of professional development of student teachers. Hence, it investigates the extent to which weblogs can be successful in facilitating active reflection and peer feedback among student teachers. Furthermore, it explores student teachers' perceptions of weblogs as tools for self-reflection and peer feedback.

1.6 Research Questions

This study is focused on answering the following question: How effective is the use of reflective blogs in the professional development of student teachers?

For determining the usefulness of the study, the research will seek the answers to the next questions:

How effective is weblog usage in stimulating reflective practice of student teachers?

How effective is weblog usage in enhancing peer feedback among student teachers?

How useful do student teachers find reflective writing and peer feedback through the weblogs?

1.7 Significance of the Study

It is evident from the above-considered information that the correlation between weblogs, self-reflection, and peer feedback is an acute and topical issue in the current EFL educational training process. Therefore, this exploration will examine the effectiveness of weblogs in the context of the teacher education programs. Besides, the study will highlight the importance of engaging student teachers in the reflective practice and peer feedback during their preparation stage in college. Also, the research may help in encouraging student teachers to reflect about their teaching practices in order to increase their ability to identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as take action towards becoming more successful teachers. Also, they might be empowered to criticize each other and realize the necessity of peer feedback.

The study may assist the College of Education in developing its teacher education programs in Kuwait to consider reflective practice as one of the essentials in the teacher education field. In addition, the research may help keep technology within grasp while preparing the student teachers for the educational world, which is ahead of them, instead of using the traditional methods of teaching and learning. What is more, the results of this qualitative examination may be of great assistance to instructors in enriching English courses with new techniques and activities for preparing EFL student teachers. The researcher hopes that this study, based on the valuable academic scholarship exploring K-12 teaching, will be a sufficient contribution to the deeper understanding of the issue and creation of efficient methods for its improvement.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Teaching Language Education Programs

Scholarly discussion of the EFL education is not new, and there are current academic sources highlighting the issue. For instance, the importance of programs' evaluation for teacher education has been studied by Coskun & Daloglu (2010). The authors found that the English teacher education program components need improvement from both students and teachers' perspectives. Their study was based on the data collected from the fourth-year student teachers and teachers who have had experience with the new teacher education programs. Questionnaires and interviews were the source of research data. It was revealed that student teachers support the assumption that the pedagogical side of the program requires improvement. However, teachers consider that the program cannot improve the linguistic competence of student teachers.

Additionally, reflective journaling as a source of teacher education program evaluation has been analyzed by Minott & Young (2009). The authors introduced and developed the idea of a hybrid evaluation approach getting information from reflective journaling and evaluation survey. Al-Gaeed (1983) made attempts to analyze the strong and weak points of the English teacher education program. The research was carried out in Saudi Arabia and covered the areas ranging from methodology to teaching atmosphere and performance of the faculty members. It was found that the program got a positive evaluation in terms of methodology, teaching practice, linguistic courses, and the quality of the faculty members. Nevertheless, the literature courses were thought to be

irrelevant to the preparation for spoken English skills. The opportunities to communicate in English were also criticized.

2.2 The Usefulness of Reflective Blogs

There are some studies that have explored the effects of the use of reflective blogs as a tool for self-reflection. For example, Albakri, Alias, & Ismail (2013) investigated the role of the personal self-reflective blogs for the academic writing activities among students of the ESL tertiary level at MARA, University of Technology. 18 ESL students took part in the study for a period of eight weeks. All of them took an ESL English proficiency course, which included improvement of the academic writing skills. The blog was developed through a Learning Management System that is a part of the special online activities for the students enrolled in a supplementary online writing program. The researchers used the tools in the form of students' reflective online journal entries and a questionnaire set. It was revealed that the students found their personal self-reflective blog effective and helpful as it enabled them to produce better written essays.

What is more, the effectiveness of web blogs has been studied by Wolfa (2010), as well. The analysis was carried out within the context of a compulsory placement unit of the final-year public relations students. The author stated that the key goal of Web 2.0 technology use is to encourage reflective practice through the students' exchange of thoughts. It limits the feelings of isolation that were reported during the course of an individual tuition unit. It was also aimed at encouraging participants to exchange information based on different campuses, as well as to integrate the insight into the best industry practice and an international perspective. The results indicated that the introduction of the reflective blog use was successful. Great effectiveness was achieved in the context of an individual tuition unit since the focus was shifted away from the teacher centric and textbook education to interactive opportunities of peer-to-peer learning.

Also, in their study, Poortman, Sloep, & Wopereis (2010) examined the use of weblogs as a means to support student teachers' reflective practice on action in teacher training. Analyses of the student contributions showed that weblogs were useful for reflection on critical incidents in the classroom. Furthermore, they stimulated interconnectivity within the students' groups. Scholars claimed that weblogs seem to be functional instruments for reflection on action. On the other hand, it is essential to understand that they are only instruments. Perhaps, the most significant precondition for gaining the first-class reflection skills is good guided practice. In any case, this investigation shows that good instruments are able to contribute to good teaching, practice, inspiration, and motivation. According to Chugh & Joshi (2009), important technological innovations, including the web, present the most valuable communication tools that have gained growing popularity. Their study mainly focuses on learning blogs as an appointment and reflective tool for accounting students and how they are able to get better edifying outcomes for this process.

Yang (2009) explored the appliance of weblogs at a reflective stage in the preparation courses for the English language teachers who were studying English for their prospect career in Taiwan. Students used blogs as a platform to reflect critically on their learning processes, as well as determination of the impact of blogs on their own professional growth. The outcomes demonstrated that the student teachers keenly converse various educational theories and their propositions with the help of blogs. The participants considered technology as a useful platform for reflecting and communicating with each other. Therefore, reflective teaching and practices prepare teachers to think critically and thoughtfully, thus allowing them to enter their careers with the ability for permanent professional growth. In addition, Back & Hain (2008) outlined experiences with weblogs as an instrument of learning reflection or a learning journal in the university environment. The investigation provided a structured method to support individual learning processes within a learning community realized via the weblog in the specificity of a learning journal. The study revealed an inventive didactical concept based on the Web 2.0 model and modern developing technologies. According to James (2007), the integration of a blog with a reflective learning journal is a useful tool for promoting personal investment and active engagement (p. 4). It provides an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to apply an appropriate online etiquette.

Hernández-Ramos (2004) reported on the use of weblogs and online discussion forums in an instructional technology course within a teacher preparation program. Data analyzed in this article were taken from printouts that students submitted to their blogs and from the archived online discussions. The author pointed out that the use of blogs and online discussion forums in the same course attained several pedagogical and learning goals. As Hernández-Ramos (2004) emphasized, blogs are effective in encouraging high-quality writing and more thoughtful students' reflection. Jacobs & Williams (2004) discussed the environment of blogging with a more personal reflective space to the email-labeled forum. They highlighted the benefits of using digital diaries and their usefulness for teaching and learning (Jacobs & Williams, 2004, p. 242). Philleo & Stiler (2003) examined

the use of blogs as a web-based journaling tool by the pre-service teachers. Because of its original and modern structure, the weblog appears with the purpose to support reflective practice. Furthermore, the author argued that student teachers and their instructors should promote blogging as an exclusive method to be applied to improve the growth of scholarly reflectivity.

2.3 Peer Feedback through Weblogs

In addition, there are several studies that have explored the effects of using blogs on peer feedback. For example, Kitchakarn (2013) covered the issue of peer feedback through blogs finding it a sufficient tool for improving students' writing abilities. The results of pretest and posttest showed that the students achieved significantly better skills in writing as an outcome of the process studied. It was stated that peer feedback activity using blogs encourages the participation of active learners, audience awareness, and an authentic communicative context. The author concluded that blog could increase interaction between students without any limitations related to time and place. As soon as students realized that their writings had been read and edited by their peers, they started to pay more attention to the use of language and grammatical structure in producing their written works.

Karaman (2011) analyzed blogging activities as a reflective activity in practice mathematics teaching course. Students were asked to provide constructive feedback on the classmates' instruction performance of a mathematics lesson. The study was carried out in an online discussion environment. The commenting process, online peer evaluation in particular, encourages student to learn. Besides, Gedera (2010) considered the role of blogs in receiving and providing peer feedback. It was investigated that students used blogs as online portfolios that enabled them to share experiences and post-writing assignments on the basis of their discussions and lessons. According to Chang & Liu (2010), students and teachers can effectively reflect upon their learning and teaching outcomes through blogs.

Wheeler (2009) explored Web 2.0 open content mash-ups or combinations. Two case studies of the new original teacher training programs were reviewed where blogs were blended to produce specified essential learning spaces. In two detached studies, students offered their opinions on using these gears and replicated on the powers and limitations of this approach. An innovative "learning spaces" form was presented. This aspect helped revelation of the process, domain, and territory that were brought into cooperation when content and Web 2.0 tools were mashed up within the same space. In Wheeler's opinion, blogs can support greater reflection on learning and allow students to come into conversation on explicit themes. Ke, Sharma, & Xie (2008) detailed the communication effects of peer response and blogging on institution students' reflective thoughts, abilities, and education advances. Approximately 40 first-year and second-year students kept blogs every week during one semester. Results demonstrated that learners' reflective thinking level improved considerably in a due course; though, peer feedback had a negative effect on students' reflective thinking abilities. Richardson (2006) listed some advantages of using blogs in education. He claimed that blogs erase the classroom walls and provide students with a splendid opportunity to connect with others and provide peer feedback.

2.4 Problem Areas in Reflective Blogs

In spite of the seemingly overwhelming evidence of the usefulness of reflective blogs in the process of reflection as illustrated by the studies cited above, there are inconclusive proofs of the usefulness of weblogs in promoting self-reflection and collaborative feedback among student teachers. Particularly, Hatton & Smith (1995) emphasized that it is not sufficient to know that reflection is fostered by a procedure or technique; and teacher educators should be able to specify the levels of reflection that take place. According to Ho & Richards (1993), some students simply describe their experiences while others take a critical step towards analysis. What is more, weblogs do not inflame deep reflection or spiral reflection that can only be the result of the clear instruction.

Deng & Yuen (2009) investigated the function of blogs in supporting a discrete society of pre-service educators throughout the content study of their comments. In addition, the issue concerning how blogs preserve to maintain articulateness, self-reflection, social contacts, and reflective discussion according to student teachers was discussed. The scholar discovered that the most important value of blogs is centered on personal conciseness and reflection. Therefore, the complementary functionality of blogs was generally used for replacing societal maintenance more willingly than reflective conversation. Furthermore, Brandt (2008) provided evidence of the importance of feedback in teacher education, on the one hand, and its perceived inadequacy, on the other hand. The researcher made a conclusion by identifying eight issues that have to be considered as crucial in giving and receiving the feedback and to be reflected on the potential problem areas in the existing feedback practice.

It is needed to be underlined that most of the studies just analyze reflection in the learning journals. It is possible to find a few investigations that have examined the level of reflection in the written work in blogs. Moreover, it is difficult to find many academic works that have examined the usefulness of weblogs in yielding peer feedback.

Trying to fill in this gap, the given study examines the usefulness of using technological devices in the teacher education programs. This is to be done to provide the context for more active reflection and feedback. It specifically explores the necessity of using blogs for language learning and teaching in the EFL contexts. Finally, the researcher's expectation is that the findings from this study will contribute towards setting the scene for developing a framework for active reflection and effective feedback practice, which draws extensively from students teachers' opinions.

To sum up this part of the research, it is necessary to emphasize that the given study is an extremely topical one within the current academic science whereas there is no specified qualitative research on the problem stated.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Design

This is a case study as it is an in-depth examination of the use of reflective blogs by a group of student teachers. According to Yin (1994), this type of research is an empirical inquiry in which thefocus is on a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Case studies provide an opportunity to collect a lot of details, conduct scientific experiments, adapt ideas, and produce novel hypotheses (Boyce, Neale, & Thapa, 2006).

During the first semester of the year 2013-2014, the student teachers taking the practicum course at Kuwait University were requested to reflect on their teaching practices in the practicum blog. Every week, a topic had to be suggested for self-reflection and peer feedback, such as learning objectives and assessment. To help student teachers work on good reflective writings, guiding questions were provided to them. Furthermore, they were asked to read the reflection posts of their colleagues and provide feedback on them every week. Student teachers' posts and comments by colleagues were analyzed. After the application period, student teachers were interviewed by the researcher. The study took four weeks for application in October and November 2013.

3.2 Study Context

The research setting took place within the context of a teacher education program at the College of Education at Kuwait University. The study was conducted at the English Curricula and Teaching Methods Department. This undergraduate program is preparing primary, intermediate and secondary stage teachers in teaching English as a foreign language. The study was held at the practicum course in the last semester before students graduate. The researcher chose student teachers who are beginning teachers because they are the ones who need the guidance and immediate feedback.

3.3 Participants

The intended population of this research was 31 student teachers, attending the teacher training programs in the English Curricula and Teaching Methods Department at the College of Education in the first semester of the year 2013-2014. The study group consisted of 7 EFL student teachers who were taking the practicum course. All participants were females, and their age range was 21 to 23 years old. They were all assigned to different intermediate schools in Kuwait in order to do practical teaching.

3.4 The Practicum Blog

Weblogs were created for all student teachers using Word Press that is considered to be a tool of open source blogging. All weblogs were connected to the practicum blog that was created by the researcher. The published reflective posts and comments could be viewed by the instructor and all student teachers in the practicum course. For writing reflection posts and comments, students had to use their own blogs to access the practicum blog since the researcher invited them as authors. Hence, they had an opportunity to do anything they want with their posts (edit, publish, delete or upload images and files). Each reflection post could be commented upon by colleagues (see Figures 1, 2 & 3).
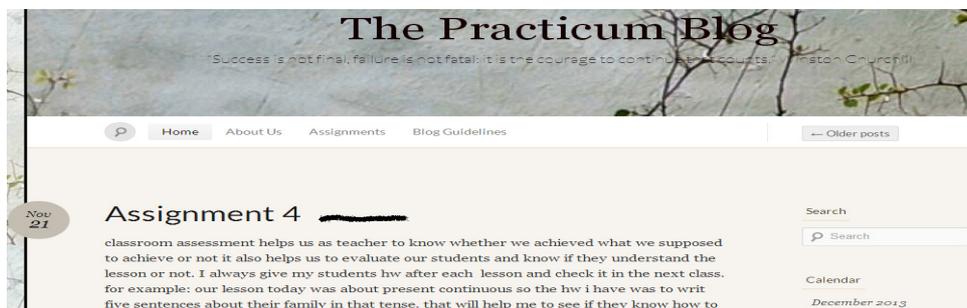
Figure 1. The practicum blog
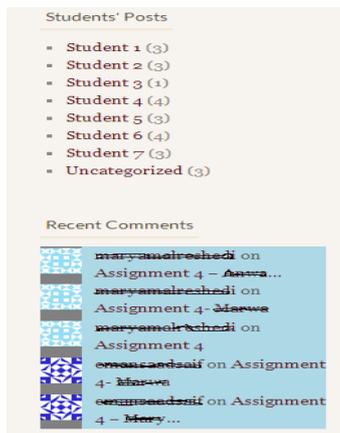
Figure 2. Students' posts and recent comments in the practicum blog
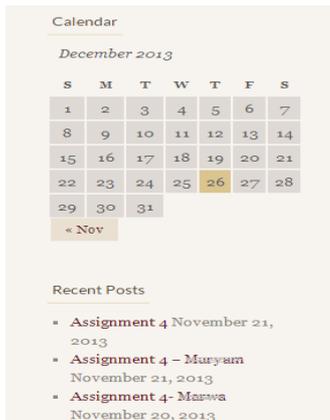
Figure 3. Recent posts on the practicum blog

3.5 Data Collection

In order to achieve major goals of the study, necessary data had to be obtained and analyzed. The data collection method is qualitative as it adopts an interpretive concept to information and considers the subjective meanings that people bring to the situation. Qualitative research is a way of the information collection usually brought into requisition in the social sciences that centers attention on the "why" and "how" of person's conducts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The chosen type of study provides a descriptive, rich, and valuable understanding of beliefs, attitudes, motivations, lifestyles, opinions, aspirations, and behaviors of an individual (Bennett, 2011). Among one of the best points in qualitative research is that it suggests flexibility in so far as positions and timing since the person does not need to hold an interview with a great number of people promptly. Therefore, text analysis and semi-structured interviews were to be used in the following study. These research instruments were appropriate in answering the research questions raised in the study. However, qualitative research does not allow the researcher to generalize research findings.

3.6 Instruments for Data Collection

3.6.1 Online Reflective Posts and Comments

This case study investigated the extent to which weblogs can be successful in facilitating active reflection and collaborative feedback among student teachers. Therefore, participants had to reflect on their teaching experiences during a 4-week application period. Seven student teachers were asked to post their reflections every week. They had also a task to comment on other parties' posts, as well. At the end of the application period, all reflection posts and comments were printed out from the practicum blog by the researcher.

3.6.2 Interviews

After the application, student teachers were interviewed individually to explore their opinions on the use of reflective blogs in improving their reflective practice and peer feedback. The interviewees were asked to provide their suggestions on further improvements. Student teachers could evaluate the idea of using blogs—from 1 to 10, where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent—as the tools of self-reflection and peer feedback in the practicum course. The semi-structured interviews were organized in a way that combines a pre-determined set of open questions with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore further particular themes or responses (See Appendix A). This flexibility, particularly as compared to structured interviews, provides an opportunity to the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants. Nonetheless, it has not previously been thought of as pertinent by the researcher (Chadwick, Gill, Stewart, & Treasure, 2008).

3.7 Data Analysis

The qualitative research data were collected from various sources. Every student teacher had to make four reflective posts in the practicum blog, which made 28 documents. They also had to write 168 comments, reflecting on each other's work. It is worth stressing that all the interviews of student teachers were transcribed. All research data were analyzed, and the process was thoroughly described. The data forms were detailed through the content analysis that is a basic method of interpreting qualitative data. The qualitative data analysis is usually defined as a systematic technique that enables the compression of many words of text into fewer content categories, based on the explicit coding rules (Stemler, 2001). According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), the greatest strength of content analysis is that it is unobtrusive and non-creative and can be conducted without disturbing the setting in any way. For the aforementioned method, the widely used procedure in qualitative analysis was applied. Attride-Stirling (2001) found that there are six analytic steps, which are:

Coding the data;

Identifying common themes;

Constructing thematic networks;

Describing and exploring thematic networks;

Summarizing thematic networks;

Interpreting patterns.

Thus, all visual materials were summarized, and a coding keyword system was developed. The data coding helped examine and compare the topics, as well as find the common ones. As a result, themes were reduced to find the common ground between the suggested topics. Pattern identification resulted in a number of generalizations and conclusions. The analysis of the posts focused on reflection topics and the depth of this reflection. Regarding reflection depth, posts were categorized as ''plain descriptive'' or ''deeply reflective''. As Poortman, Sloep, & Wopereis (2010) asserted, a post is plain descriptive when a student just records what happened, what is considered important, and which resolutions or learning wishes this gives rise to. On the other hand, posts are deeply reflective when, in addition, feelings are reported and students project themselves into the role of the pupil in the classroom. The analysis of the comments aimed at revealing feedback topics. The nature of the feedback was categorized as positive, negative, or neutral. Furthermore, the feedback content was scored as solution, suggestion, or question, etc.

4. Results

4.1 Study Results with Respect to the First Research Question

The first research question was "How effective is weblog usage in stimulating reflective practice of student teachers?" and it sought to examine the effectiveness of weblogs in stimulating reflective practice among student teachers. To address this question, all student teachers' posts were subjected to content analysis. Qualitative results showed that the usage of the practicum blog is considered to be useful in stimulating self-reflection

among participants. All student teachers were able to access the practicum blog without any assistance from the researcher. Most of them described the experience as different and rewarding, while a few parties wereunwilling to invest their time and effort in a practice they saw as time-consuming.

During the 4-week application period, student teachers were required to post a reply to an assignment that was posted by the researcher every week. Only two participants (out of 7) did not fulfill all requirements for reflective posting. They wrote a total of 20 reflection posts. The greater part of reflective posts were one paragraph long (about 100-300 words), but there was one that was under 100 words. The range of topics, ideas, and issues reported on the blog was adequately large in spite of the short period for application. Content analysis demonstrated that reflection posts were mainly focused on the following teaching issues: (a) setting purpose for learning; (b) learner-centered focus; (c) anticipation of problems in the classroom; (d) assessment. Table 1 below displays the topics reflectively addressed on the practicum blog and number of participants' reflective posts on the blog per week.

Table 1. Topics and number of participants' reflective posts on the practicum blog

Application Period	Topic Category	Number of Posts
Week 1	Setting Purpose for Learning	4
Week 2	Learner-Centered Focus	5
Week 3	Anticipation of Problems in Classroom	5
Week 4	Assessment	6
Total		20

Note. * Number of student teachers= 7.

During the first week, participants' reflective posts covered the issue of setting a purpose for learning English language. Most student teachers stressed the importance of setting learning objectives for both students and teachers. They highlighted that learners will care more about their learning progress as one of them commented, "Without knowing why we should learn something, we will not care about it as much as if we know why." At the same time, parties pointed out that setting clear learning objectives enables them to teach and achieve success in teaching. Furthermore, they pinpointed the value of learning objectives even with respect to the teaching and learning process. For example, one of the participants said, "Without a purpose, the teaching process will be aimless." Student teachers involved into the study also identified some advantages from sharing learning objectives with their students, like encouraging participation and increasing motivation among learners. In order to share learning objectives with students every class, student teachers suggested writing them on the board or discussing them orally. For instance, one of the participants stated, "Write them on the board without discussion," while other underlined, "I usually go around the objectives with my students after the warm-up procedure." On the contrary, some student teachers refused the idea of sharing learning objectives with students. As one of the opponents commented, "I think if students know about the lesson aims, they will spent their time trying to achieve them without following the appropriate way." Some of them believed that learning objectives for some daily routines and those for checking understanding should not be shared.

The second week of application period was dedicated to the student teachers' reflections about the learner-centered focus in their classes. Through their posts, parties inquired whether their lessons were appropriate for the students' age and level. One of the student teachers noticed that learners are all active participants of the process of the acquiring knowledge since they like the way the material is presented. In addition, they claimed that they build lessons on learners' prior knowledge: e.g., "I always try my best in using students' prior knowledge." Some of student teachers mentioned whether their lessons were related to students' interests or not. Most of the practitioners did their best to get attention of their students by using different techniques. Video application was supported by several student teachers as they stated that it is one of the most effective ways of grabbing students' interest: for instance, "I started with a video" or "I will try the video."

During the third week, student teachers identified the difficulties they had encountered in the classroom and the ways in which they had solved those problems. Time management was mentioned among such issues: as one participant said, "I have to finish too many tasks in a limited time." Also, they raised many solutions: like dividing some lessons into two periods, showing learners some videos about lesson topics and using iPad in presenting specified exercises. Some participants faced other problems due to the insufficient guidance notwithstanding they are beginners in teaching. In addition, teaching literature to the learners was a little challenging because learners did not want to read books and preferred watching movies instead. Hence, for

literature lessons, some suggested devoting one period for storytelling and the other for writing a story. Another problem was the difficulty in teaching grammar. One of the participants shared her experience in teaching passive voice through pictures. Moreover, one student teacher experienced difficulty in teaching a lesson with a difficult content. She asserted, "Explaining a scientific experiment in English was not as easy as I thought it would be because there were unknown terms for them." Thus, it was suggested using real objects to make it easier for learners to understand those unknown terms. Besides, extra classes were added on the basis of the shortage of time.

Week four covered the issue of assessment. Student teachers claimed that assessment was considered to be an effective way to measure students' understanding of the learning material. It was stated that classroom assessment is very important to give students feedback on their progress in learning. They treated assessment as a feedback even for teachers, which helps to improve their teaching methods and techniques. Furthermore, they agreed that there is a strong necessity to use different assessment tools like tests, quizzes, exercises, worksheets and verbal questions. After assessing learners, they suggested comparing lesson objectives with the results in order to focus on the weaknesses and decide whether students need more repetition or extra classes.

Regarding reflection depth, the researcher categorized posts as plain descriptive or deeply reflective. In the plain descriptive post, the participant just recorded events, thoughts, beliefs and learning wishes. Oppositely, in the deeply reflective posts, student teachers reported their feelings and projected themselves into the place of the learner in the classroom. Generally, there were both descriptive and deep reflections on their own teaching. Figure 4 displays the total percentage of both types of reflections on the practicum blog.
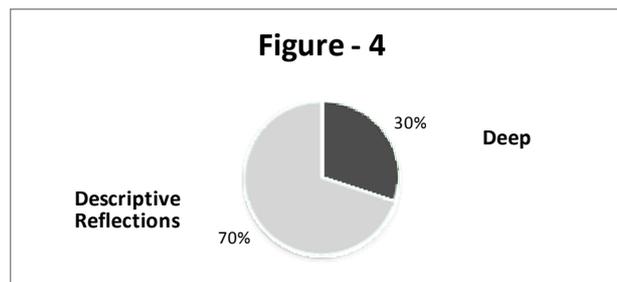

Figure 4. Total percentage of descriptive and deep reflections on the practicum blog

What is more, Figure 4 shows that the number of descriptive reflections is more than the number of deep ones. To be more precise, 70% of posts belong to the plain descriptive category as student teachers reflected on what happened during their lessons and what they considered to be important. 30% of posts are deeply reflective since the participants tried to project themselves in the classroom and treat the teaching conditions from the learners' point of view. However, a great number of the postings were self-reflective. For example, student teachers used expressions like "I think ..," "I noticed…" and so on.

All in all, the weblog was found an effective tool in stimulating self-reflection among student teachers. Regardless the most part of posts were of descriptive character, there were few deep reflections of the critical issues raised during the practicum.

4.2 Study Results with Respect to the Second Research Question

The second research question was "How effective is weblog usage in enhancing peer feedback among student teachers?" To answer it, all participants' comments were exposed to the content analysis. In accordance with the requirement for the practicum blog, student teachers were supposed to read their colleagues' posts and comment on at least five of those. Most student teachers did reply to their peers' posts and few of them carried on the online conversation. In total, they wrote 144 comments during the application period.

The results showed that all parties' feedback was positive. They used the following comments: "God job," "I agree," "You are right," "Excellent," "That's good," "A good start," "What a great idea," "Well done" and others. Additionally, it was revealed that the practicum blog was used to provide solutions, suggestions, questions and inquiries. Moreover, student teachers expressed their opinion, agreement and disagreement through replying to each other. They also showed their gratitude to their colleagues along with their feelings and thoughts.

During the first week, student teachers made no comments concerning solutions for their peers' problems.

Nevertheless, they provided suggestions (e.g., "We can teach grammar"), asked questions (e.g., "What do you think?") and got inquiries (e.g., "If the students tried to achieve the aims by themselves, wouldn't that be a good thing?"). They also expressed thoughts, feelings and reasons: such as "I believe that …," "I really liked your way …"; "To let them be ready for their lesson…" Furthermore, participants demonstrated their disagreement (for instance, "Well, I'm afraid I disagree with you") and shared teaching experiences with each other ("Actually I did …"). However, these types of comments were scarce. In fact, student teachers were active reporting their opinions (e.g., "We have to share some…," "In my opinion, it's not important") and gratitude (for example, "Thanks a lot" or "Thanks"). The research results regarding the content of peer feedback during the first week are summed up in Figure 5.
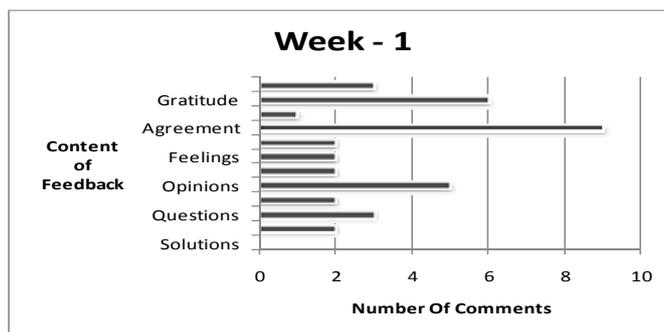

Figure 5. Week 1—content of feedback

The second week was not a period of student teachers' gratitude and disagreement. Nonetheless, a lot of encouragement was revealed: e.g., "Keep Going," "A good job!" "Well done!" "Great!" etc. In addition, student teachers provided advices to each other in terms of addressing difficulties during the practicum (e.g., "If they are still confused, you can always …") and made suggestions (like "It is good as a teacher to find ..."). Besides, they expressed thoughts, opinions, reasons, feelings and agreement: for instance, "I think …," "For me, I am always …," "I really like …," "I always do that …," "Agreed!" among others. The research results regarding the content of peer feedback during the fourth week are shown in Figure 6.
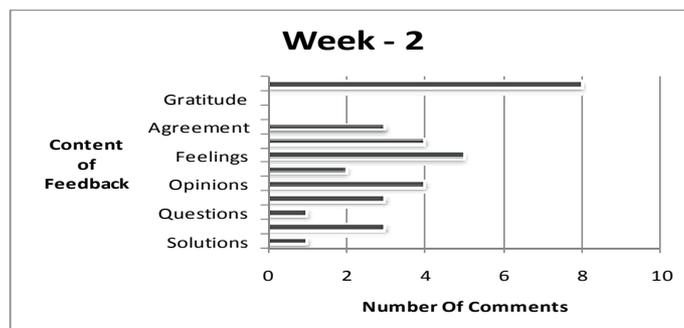

Figure 6. Week 2—content of feedback

When the third week of application was over, it was noticed that student teachers did not make comments related to asking questions and showing disagreement. Comments of that kind and sharing experiences were also scarce: such as "I also had difficult time …," "I totally agree with you," "Thanks a lot!" What is more, they expressed few thoughts and solutions: e.g., "You can solve," "I think that using technological tools in teaching will break the routine." Expressing feelings, encouragement and opinion were commented in the following way: "Good Luck," "Don't worry," "I like the idea of …," "I really like what you did." The research results regarding the content of peer feedback during the third week are represented in Figure7.
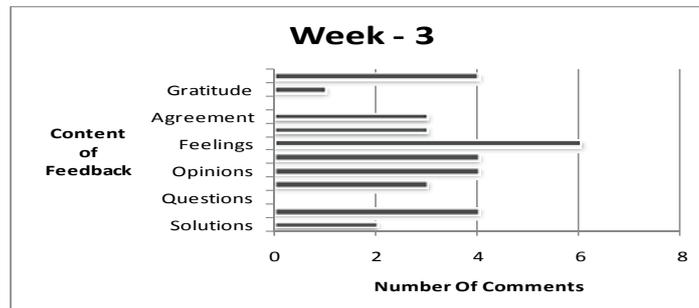
Figure 7. Week 3—content of feedback

During the fourth week, student teachers' comments did not contain solutions, thoughts, opinions, and gratitude. However, a lot of comments were related to expressing agreement and gratitude (e.g., "I agree with every single point"). Participants also shared their experiences (for example, "I used to do the matching exercise") and provided encouragement and solutions to each other: "I really like your different ways of assessments," "I think homework can be given…," and others. The research results regarding the content of peer feedback during the fourth week are shown in Figure 8.
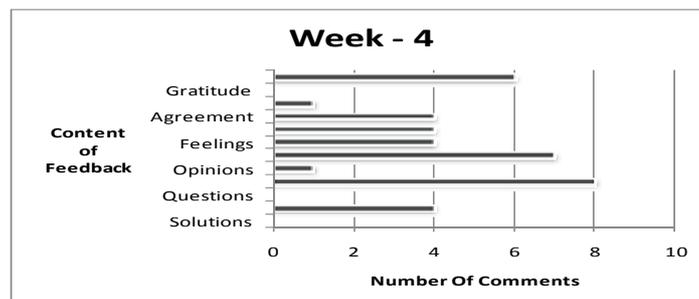

Figure 8. Week 4—content of feedback

It may be concluded that all comments were related to TEFL issues teachers experience in the field of teaching during their practicum. Furthermore, on the various stages of the application period, there were different topics in the student teachers' comments. For instance, the fourth week was marked with reflection of their thoughts about the process while the third one was more devoted to their feelings, etc.

4.3 Study Results with Respect to the Third Research Question

The third research question was "How useful do student teachers find reflective writing and peer feedback through weblogs?" To address this question, qualitative data was obtained by interviewing 7 EFL student teachers. The aim was to clarify the usefulness of weblogs as tools for self-reflection and peer feedback from student teachers' perspective. All interviews were conducted after the application period. The participants were contacted and interviewed on the phone due to the spatial barriers. The interviews lasted for 30 to 45 minutes; meanwhile, they were tape-recorded and then transcribed by the researcher.

Qualitative results demonstrate that participants have been learning at Kuwait University for four years. They claimed that writing reflective posts in the practicum blog was a great and useful technique that enabled them to share experiences with other student teachers and talk about events and problems in the practical teaching. For example, one of the participants said: "It was a better chance to express my feelings and opinions on teaching than meeting every week in the class." Furthermore, the parties claimed that writing reflections was important in terms of shedding light on the strong and weak points in the course and discovering the potentials. According to the student teachers, reflective writing through weblogs provided teachers with the insights into students' thinking and development and offered good judgment concerning the teacher's behaviors and reactions. The experience was found to be useful as it provided valuable information on how to deal with naughty students and grab their attention.

It was suggested that it would be nice to participate in the blog during the whole semester because it would bring

more benefits. The student teachers asserted that it enhanced the development of their writing skills and encouraged them to share their ideas and opinions. The participants assumed that it would be better if it were one of their requirements in the practicum course.

The interview results showed that five teachers experienced difficulties when writing reflective posts in the practicum blog. The challenges included the lack of time to write in the blog, poor internet connection, and fear to express their views openly. Two participants had no difficulties as the blog was designed in an easy way, and there were many guided questions that helped them to reflect on the main topics. The idea of using blogs to encourage self-reflection through the posts was evaluated as Table 2 illustrates:

Table 2. Evaluation of weblogs as tools for self-reflection

Number of Participants	Rate (1 is poor and 10 is excellent)
4	10
1	9
1	8
1	5

Note. * Number of Student Teachers= 7.

The table above proves that the majority of student teachers followed the idea that blogs encouraged self-reflection through posts to a great extent.

It was stated that the practicum blog was a good communication channel with the colleagues. However, one of the student teachers rejected this idea. Another participant stressed that commenting in the blog generates a healthy atmosphere for group discussions. It provides an opportunity to exchange knowledge, share ideas, and suggest solutions to each other. For instance, some parties stated: "It helped me in exchanging thoughts, sharing experiences with my colleagues, and staying up-to-date; It is good to write every problem that we face and their solutions so that we can refer to them whenever we need." In addition, the blog provided emotional support and encouraged positive communication.

Most interview participants (60%) did not face any challenges when commenting on their colleagues. Nevertheless, 40% of student teachers involved in the research had difficulties, such as unacceptance of comments, lack of flexibility, initial difficulties in using the practicum blog, and lack of time to read all posts and comments. Five participants did not encounter any problems while receiving their colleagues' comments in the practicum blog while two student teachers had some technical problems as they could not receive all comments and some of them were not clear or useless. The idea of using blogs to encourage peer feedback was rated in a manner depicted in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Evaluation of weblogs as tools for peer feedback

Number of Participants	Rate (1 is poor and 10 is excellent)
4	10
1	9
2	8

Note. * Number of Student Teachers= 7.

The table above shows that all student teachers perceived the practicum blog as an effective tool in encouraging peer feedback. To conclude, the interview results showed that student teachers found the use of reflective writing through weblogs an efficient way of sharing their ideas, providing peer feedback, and increasing the level of their proficiency. In the next section, results will be discussed in relation to both research questions and existing knowledge.

5. Disscussion

The rapid expansion of technology has become commonplace in the market of education over the past decade. The most technically advanced devices and techniques on their basis are widely applied in the field in order to enhance student teachers' learning and practice. As a result, this case study investigated the effectiveness of

using one of such tools in stimulating reflective practice and collaborative feedback among student teachers in the TEFL sphere. The research results showed that the practicum blog fulfilled several goals. It enabled student teachers to raise many questions concerning the important issues that they face in the process of teaching English as a foreign language in Kuwait. The blog was a good experience for participants of the project who were beginners since they were able to express their worries, concerns, and anticipations. It provided a good opportunity for them to share their bad and good experiences in their classes during the practical teaching. Student teachers reflected on everything, starting with their opinions, feelings, and beliefs about TEFL issues and ending with the evaluations of their EFL class performance.

The analysis of reflective post content showed that most posts addressed topics that were related to the classroom management, learners' characteristics, teaching methods, learning activities, and teaching aids. Teaching English language skills is frequently mentioned as a subject that concerns student teachers. However, they also addressed topics regarding assessment and curriculum. These results are consistent with the studies by Poortman et al (2010), Chung & Joshi (2009), and Yang (2009). The scholars claimed that reflective weblogs are extremely useful to improve the teaching process effectiveness. Furthermore, the reflective weblog was efficient in improving their English writing skills: as one participant said in the interview: "Writing reflective posts developed my writing skills." In addition, student teachers checked the content of their posts and comments for grammar and spelling because they were afraid of losing face. The same idea was presented in researches by Kitchakarn (2013), Hernández-Ramos (2004), and Albakri et al. (2013).

There was strong evidence that student teachers were more comfortable while critiquing themselves. This helped them to evaluate their performance and identify the strong and weak points in their practices. For example, one of the student teachers stated: "The timing of the class was perfect, and I did everything I wanted to do." Moreover, they pointed out the difficulties they faced in classroom. On this topic, one of the participants asserted: "I couldn't capture students' attention." What is more, student teachers have had an opportunity to suggest sufficient advancements to solve such issues and prevent those in the future. In other words, one of the parties said: "If I presented this lesson again, I would use the iPad in presenting some exercises in their students' books." These study results are similar to those proposed by Chang & Liu (2010), Philleo & Stiler (2003), Jacobs & Williams (2004), as well as James (2007). Regarding depth of reflection, 30% of the reflective posts were found to be deeply reflective. Therefore, it can be seen that the few reflective writings were insightful and thoughtful. It should be noted that this is also evidenced by earlier researches conducted by Ho & Richards (1993) and Poortman et al. (2010).

A weblog can be private or open for the community. It works with small and large groups of participants (Gedera, 2010). Unlike other technological tools, weblogs allow collaborative feedback. Thus, the student teachers were able to read each other's posts and provide a variety of comments. They could express their thoughts, beliefs, feelings, agreement, and disagreement. There are similarities between these findings as compared with particular other current studies that found that weblogs play a vital role in receiving and providing peer feedback (Richardson, 2006; Yang, 2009; Wheeler, 2009; Wolfa, 2010; Gedera, 2010). Some comments that appeared to be the positive feedback and encouragement expressions served as emotional support for colleagues. They even called each other's names, which made the blog very personal.

It was proved that the online peer evaluation enhances student learning (Karaman, 2011). Student teachers were able to dialogue and express views concerning the TEFL issues online without any need to converse in class. For instance, one of the parties of the study underlined: "When the lesson matches students' interests, you really get good results." Hence, weblogs provide shy students with the chance to participate in the online discussions. Working together in one group enabled student teachers to think about their problems and suggest solutions for each other. To be more precise, some of them proposed that learners may be asked "to summarize the story events in groups" while another said: "You can also do a role play to attract their attention."

It was revealed that participants faced several problems through their experience with the practicum blog, such as the lack of time to read all posts and comments because student teachers had other course requirements. Some practitioners did not like the idea of expressing their viewpoints openly. Others complained about unclear and useless comments, as well as some technical problems in using the practicum blog. Problems of the parties of the project arose as they were unfamiliar with reflective writing since it is not common in the Kuwaiti education system. Other difficulties were caused by the fact that there are student teachers whose English is poor. Student teachers could have had fewer problems if immediate feedback had been provided by the instructor. Comparatively, challenges concerning using blogs were highlighted by Poortman et al. (2010).

To summarize the chapter, it should be noted that most student teachers in this study perceived using weblogs

positively as it is a useful tool for self-reflection and peer feedback. Furthermore, most participants were actively involved into the research process. However, motivation is strongly needed for the student teachers to feel free in such an environment and apply the weblog tool to its full extend on the daily basis.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

This case study examined the reflective practice and peer feedback in the online journals and comments of seven EFL student teachers who are taking the practicum course at the College of Education in Kuwait. The participants posted their reflections and comments every week. In order to get the research data, the weblog content was analyzed and parties were interviewed. It was revealed that the use of such technology facilitated student teachers' ability to reflect on their teaching practices and provide comments to their peers during the practicum. Most participants agreed to the usefulness of applying weblogs in the teacher education programs. As there were no time and space limitations, posts and comments were easy to make. The main part of student teachers appreciated the value of incorporating this electronic communication tool in teacher training. This research indicated that weblogs are efficient in encouraging student teachers to express their opinions, beliefs, thoughts, and feelings. Furthermore, participants had a splendid opportunity to get engaged in healthy discussions concerning TEFL issues through reading posts and adding their comments. Also, weblog posting enhanced writing and grammar skills.

Regardless a number of advantages provided by the reflective blog, some student teachers had difficulties in using it. They were related to unfamiliarity with reflective writings and comments on the weblogs. It is worth mentioning that they experienced this practice for the first time. In addition, the low levels of English proficiency caused trouble to particular participants. However, using such a tool with its easy design helped student teachers who are beginners in the teaching process and usually overwhelmed by teaching duties. It enabled them to think of their performance trying to identify their weaknesses and strengths. In fact, using technologies of this kind will save their time and effort. Moreover, it is a good chance to evaluate the experiences of others and get new knowledge. Blogging is also treated as a process of inquiry that serves as the anchor that helps student teachers to explore the world of teaching.

Thus, students, teachers, researchers, curriculum developers, and educators must be encouraged to incorporate the modern technological advancements and applications, such as weblogs, in the field of education.

6.2 Limitations

Because of the case study method and the small number of participants, the analysis of the findings of this study had been executed carefully. More importantly, it is unclear whether any generalizations concerning the findings of this exploration are possible. The research involves the description of the behavior of some student teachers in a following practice. Nonetheless, the behavior of a small quantity of individuals may not reflect the behavior of most people. For instance, some participants considered the reflection practice as an important tool while others refused applying it because of a busy schedule. Furthermore, it tended to be time-consuming.

Most educational institutions cannot provide students with proper current informational technologies and techniques that are enormously significant in the given educational program. Therefore, it is difficult to predict the exact success of such a study held elsewhere when a big sample will be involved.

6.3 Recommendations

As a result of the study conducted, the researcher has found several issues that may become both recommendations for further, improved research on topic and a more detailed and general exploration of this aspect of the TEFL educational programs.

Consequently, factors that are to be taken into account by scholars can be outlined as following:

With respect to the value of using weblogs in stimulating reflective practice and peer feedback, it should be considered as a requirement in the context of the teacher education programs. Therefore, student teachers will be more motivated to use it.

Reflective blogging takes a lot of effort as the writings are not in the student teachers' first language. Hence, it is suggested to provide participants with examples of reflective writings, as well as appropriate training. They need much practice in using weblogs for posting and commenting as well.

It would be good to make this blog a communication channel not only with peers, but also with instructors. In this way, an immediate feedback from instructors will really help student teachers in their professional growth and solve their problems in the sphere of teaching. Additionally, the extent to which the instructor can participate

in such activities ought to be examined.

Student teachers must be taught the best strategies in order to reply to each other. They have to feel free to criticize others and not be afraid of losing face while receiving others' comments.

The study may give better results if it is carried out through several courses because reflection is a complex process that needs much time, effort, and experience.

Further studies could also focus on investigating the factors that facilitate or hinder the experience of using weblogs in self-reflection and peer feedback from the point of view of the student teachers and other educators.

Other studies may examine the effects of peer feedback on the level of reflection on student teachers' posts.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Date: …………………………………………

Place: …………………………………………..

Interviewee: …………………………………

****

You were invited to this interview because you agreed to participate in a case study on reflective writing and peer feedback through blogs. I will ask you a few questions related to your opinions and feelings toward this experience. Answers will not be considered as correct or incorrect, they will simply reflect the ways in which you perceive the experience and the written work you had to do, and that's what I am interested in. Let's start.

A. Interviewee Background

1. How long have you beenstudying at Kuwait University?

B. The Usefulness of Reflective Blogs

How useful did you find writing reflective posts in the practicum blog?

Probes: How was it useful? Could you give me an example in which the practicum blog was useful to you?

Why wasn't it useful? What could have helped you more?

Were there any difficulties when writing reflective posts in the practicum blog?

Probes: What were your difficulties? Please give examples.

Why do you think you had no difficulties when writing reflective posts in the practicum blog?

3. On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is poor, rate the idea of using blogs to encourage self-reflection.

C. Peer Feedback through Blogs

1. Do you perceive the practicum blog as a good communication channel with your peers?

Probes: How did you find the opportunities to make this communication?

Could you give some examples?

2. Were there any challenges you face while commenting on your peers' posts in the practicum blog?

Probes: What were the challenges? Please give examples.

Why do you think you had no challenges while commenting on your peers' posts?

3. Were there any problems you encounter while receiving your peers' comments in the practicum blog?

Probes: What were your problems? Please give examples.

How can barriers be overcome?

Why do you think you had no problems while commenting on your peers' posts?

4. On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is poor, rate the idea of using blogs to encourage peer feedback.

D. Post Interview Comments and/or Observations.

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