



Ministry of Education Youth and Sport  
Education Research Council

*Article*

## **Reflective Practice for Pre-service Teachers of English Language Teaching: A Case Study at the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Royal University of Phnom Penh**

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Received 2 April 2018; Accepted 20 May 2018

### **Abstract**

This paper is part of a bigger project on reflective practice organized for developing and improving the teaching quality of pre-service teachers in the field of English language teaching. This study aimed to uncover pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching, what reflective practice activities they used, and what views of being a teacher they have perceived. Four hundred and seventy-two pre-service teachers were involved in responding to the questionnaire regarding the concerns about teaching; eight pre-service teachers were involved in a narrative frame which focused on reflective practice activities; and nine students from the supplementary English class provided self-assessment of the reflective practice conducted in the study. The analyses reveal that pre-service teachers are highly concerned about teaching in five areas: theories of teaching, approaches and methods, evaluating teaching, self-awareness, and questions about teaching. The pre-service teachers have adopted effective reflective practice activities, such as self-monitoring, peer critical friendship and collaborative work (Farrell, 2015; Farrell, 2018) in order to improve their teaching practice in the practicum. The students in the SEC program did not only improve their English proficiency but they also developed essential skills for further development. The study therefore

suggests that reflective practice is an effective and practical strategy for improving the teaching quality of the pre-service teachers.

**Key words:** Reflective practice, practicum, pre-service teacher, Cambodia

**Citation:** Keuk, C. N., & Monh, S. (2018). Reflective Practice for Pre-service Teachers of English Language Teaching: A Case Study at the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Royal University of Phnom Penh. *Cambodia Education Review*, 2(1), 52–80.

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## **Background of Pre-service Teachers' Teaching in Cambodia**

The English language has become more commonly taught, learned and spoken in contemporary Cambodian society since the early 1990s, when international personnel and military forces from the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) arrived to assist Cambodia in organizing a fair and free general election, in which all Cambodian political parties were involved (Pit & Roth, 2003; Clayton, 2006). The Cambodian government's reforms of free markets and trading, the democratic political atmosphere and integration into various international organizations and communities (i.e., the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)) (Clayton, 2006) have contributed to the growth of English language teaching in Cambodia. As a result, English language teaching (ELT) has been integrated into curricula in public and private schools, universities and institutions (Neau, 2003; Keuk & Heng, 2016; Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, 2016). In order to fulfill demand while still achieving high quality in ELT education, ensuring the quality of pre-service teacher training is essential. One way of developing high-quality pre-service teacher training is to promote and implement reflective practice with pre-service teachers (Rhine & Bryant, 2007; Etscheidt, Curran et al., 2012; Robichaux & Guarino, 2012; Brooke 2014; East 2014; Uzum, Petróon et al., 2014). Richards and Farrell (2005, p. 7) describe reflection as "*the process of critical examination of experiences, a process that can lead to a better understanding of one's practices and routines.*" In this sense, within a framework of reflective practice, pre-service teachers undertake reflection on teaching before and after teaching. Before teaching, pre-service teachers may express their concerns regarding teaching (Liou, 2001). After teaching, they may reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of

their teaching, including aspects of lesson planning, activities and materials selected and designed for teaching, and students' learning outcomes and, in doing so, find more effective and practical ways to improve teaching (Brooke, 2014).

Moore (2008) describes the experience of one female teacher (Sorida) doing first-year teaching at a higher education institution in the Cambodian context. Sorida was trained in the pre-service teacher training program in the Bachelor of Education in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (BEd TEFL) to become a high school teacher, but was offered a teaching position in a tertiary ELT institution. Sorida stated that there were two sets of fundamental issues which assisted her in successfully teaching in the first and the subsequent academic years: institutional and personal. Despite the importance of such issues, Cambodian pre-service teachers' concerns, motivation, anxiety and struggle for survival in their teaching practicum and their institutional support remain unstudied empirically. It is therefore important to examine this practice in order to better understand the pre-service teachers' concerns regarding teaching (i.e., in the practicum and future teaching profession) and to find out appropriate methods to assist pre-service teachers achieve high teaching quality.

Reflective practice in language teaching has received strong attention from various scholars, applied linguists, researchers and ELT professionals. Prominent scholar Thomas S. C. Farrell, whose pioneering work on reflective practice has strong influence in ELT education, has examined reflective practice in different contexts of English language teaching and has published a number of important studies in this area (Farrell, 2008; Farrell, 2013a; Farrell, 2013b; Farrell, 2015; Farrell, 2016; Farrell, 2018). Farrell's (2018) review of 138 studies regarding reflective practice reveals six common elements of reflective practice: practical, cognitive, learner, metacognitive, critical and moral. These elements together define the concept of reflective practice. Farrell (2018, p. 27) defines the principles of reflective practice as

*a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships 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. Reflection is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking, with its roots in scientific inquiry. Reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with*

*others. Reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others.*

These principles were originally produced by Dewey (1933, as cited in Farrell, 2018) and later were summarized by Rodgers (2002, as cited in Farrell, 2018).

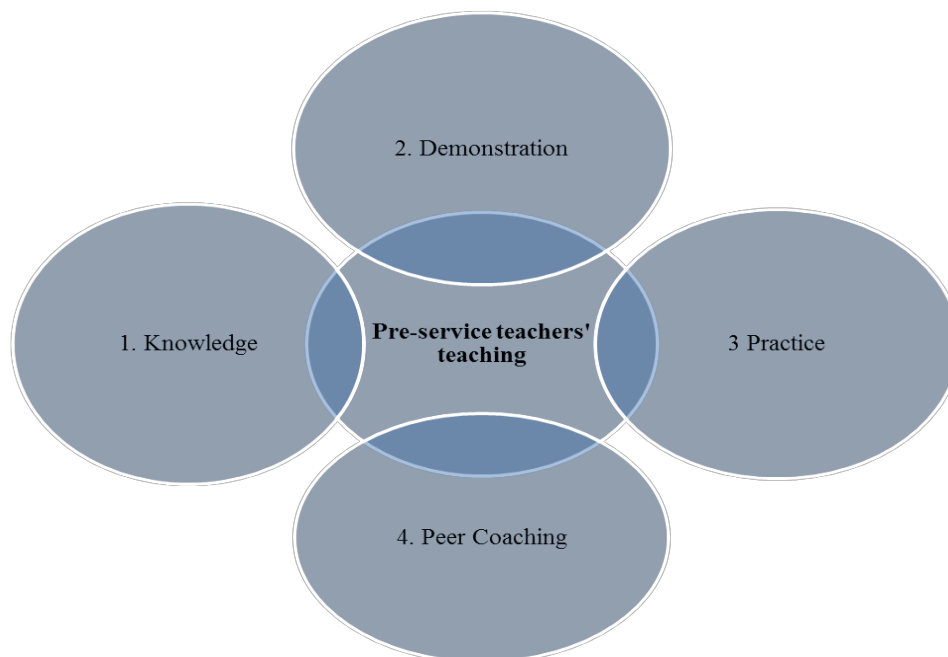
Given these principles of reflective practice, training pre-service teachers to reflect on teaching allows them to question teaching and systematically collect information on their reflected activities that they can apply in subsequent teaching as well as analyze the information and draw a conclusion on their reflective practice (Farrell, 2013a). This reflective practice will help pre-service teachers to build confidence in and enhance their teaching practice in the practicum and their future profession as teachers. It is therefore essential to train Cambodian pre-service teachers to have sophisticated knowledge and skills in reflecting on their own teaching practice so as to facilitate and develop their competence in teaching (Russel, 2005, as cited in Sofu & Easter, 2014). As stated earlier, pre-service teachers may undertake reflection before, during and after teaching. Before teaching, pre-service teachers think about their concerns regarding the teaching they will undertake in the practicum and future teaching. This thinking is what scholars who advocate reflective practice have called “reflection for action,” i.e., thinking about strategies that they will use to handle the possible problems that may arise in teaching in the future (Thorsen & DeVore, 2013; Sofu & Easter, 2014). Liou (2001) reveals a number of areas of concern highlighted by pre-service teachers encompassing theories of teaching: approaches and methods; evaluating teaching; questions about teaching; self-awareness; classroom management; and evaluation of lesson plans. Insofar as these concerns are questioned, one way to assist pre-service teachers in handling teaching effectively not only in teaching practicums but also in their future teaching profession is to train them with reflective practice (Richards & Lockhart, 2007; Etscheidt, Curran et al., 2012; Farrell, 2016).

During teaching, pre-service teachers may think about the teaching which is taking place in a real classroom setting. This kind of thinking is called “reflection in action,” i.e., thinking about actual practice happening in the setting, determining whether pre-planned activities are working well in the process of teaching, giving instruction and answering questions, using a timeframe and type of classroom management that is realistic, and adjusting the practice in order to fully achieve learning outcomes (Farrell, 2018). Although this strategy is more common among experienced

professionals than new teachers (Somerville & Keeling, 2004), pre-service teachers should be encouraged to undertake this strategy in order to attain a high quality of teaching and learning. After teaching, pre-service teachers could think about the teaching which has just been completed. They can identify their strengths and weaknesses and look for strategies that they think can help improve their teaching. This kind of thinking is called “reflection on practice” by reflective practice scholars. Taking into consideration the context of formal educational (training) programs, pre-service teachers’ teaching mostly takes place in the form of teaching demonstrations and practicums. In this regard, pre-service teachers’ teaching has four important components (Joyce & Showers, 2002), as shown in Figure 1. According to Joyce and Showers (2002), at the early stage of the ELT training program, pre-service teachers acquire knowledge regarding teaching. Drawing from Harmer (2014), this first component of knowledge includes theories of language, theories of language learning, approaches and methods as well as techniques for language teaching and learning and knowing about learners, social and institutional philosophies and policies. These are just some of the important component parts of the knowledge pre-service teachers are supposed to acquire before moving to the next stage. Joyce and Showers (2002) state that this acquired knowledge is essential for pre-service teachers to be able to plan for practice, provide and clarify feedback on practice and to promote high achievement of learning outcomes.

The second component of pre-service teacher’s teaching is demonstration. Pre-service teachers explore some modeling of skills in teaching through live teaching demonstrations in class and viewing videos of teaching and then analyze these instances of teaching, trying to connect theories and practices (Joyce & Showers, 2002). The third component of pre-service teacher’s teaching is practice. Pre-service teachers undergo a trajectory of a series of teaching practices (i.e., in small groups and formal teaching practicum) in which they apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired about teaching in the training program. The fourth component of pre-service teacher’s teaching is peer coaching. Joyce and Showers (2002) state that pre-service teachers work collaboratively with other pre-service teachers. They support and assist each other in planning teaching, providing feedback and handling any problem that might arise during the practice. In addition to this, in a formal practicum, pre-service teachers not only work with their peers, they are also working with assigned associate teachers and supervisors who help provide comments and feedback on planning and teaching. Given the context of pre-service

teachers' teaching, as described earlier, to successfully complete a training program, pre-service teachers have to undergo a trajectory of work that covers different types of academic coursework (including different types of assessment) and teaching. Thus, if they have little experience, pre-service teachers may be concerned about teaching (Brooke, 2014). These concerns may discourage pre-service teachers from completing the training program successfully. Accordingly, this paper has three aims: to examine Cambodian pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching in the teaching practicum and future teaching profession; to explore pre-service teachers' ways of reflecting on their own particular concerns regarding teaching; and to better understand the pre-service teachers' views of being teachers. In order to achieve these objectives, three main questions are developed: what are the pre-service teachers' concerns regarding teaching; what reflective practice activities are adopted by the pre-service teachers; and how do the pre-service teachers view themselves as teachers after the training?



**Figure 1.** Components of pre-service teachers' teaching, reproduced from Joyce and Shower (2002)

### **Study Area and Methodology**

This research is a case study of reflective practice in a pre-service teacher training program at the Department of English (DOE) of the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL) at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP).

It follows a problem-solving approach in the form of action research undertaken in two phases. Phase 1 examines the concerns regarding teaching of Cambodian pre-service teachers who were taking a teacher training program (Bachelor of Education in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)) at the IFL. This phase aims to better understand the trainees' uncertainties, worries and issues which might have serious impacts on teaching. Phase 2 explored reflective practice (RP) activities undertaken by pre-service teachers during the practicum and in the supplementary English classes (SEC) that were organized for the reflective practice project. The SEC was scheduled for Saturday mornings and afternoons.

The ELT pre-service teacher training program has been offered at the DOE since 1988. The program was originally called the Cambodian English Language Training Programme with support of the Quaker Service Australia. It was later developed into an undergraduate degree program titled Bachelor of Education in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (BEFL), which is a four-year language training program (Pit & Roth, 2003). The DOE has recently started offering both non-degree and degree programs. For the non-degree program, the English Language Support Unit (ELSU) offers various levels of English courses to non-English language major students from different departments of RUPP.

The DOE also offers a bridging course (BC) to help who students have attained general English competence with test-taking strategies to prepare them for the entrance examination to the DOE's undergraduate degree programs. For the degree programs, the DOE offers a postgraduate degree program, a Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MA in TESOL), which was established in 2006, a BEFL in TEFL, in which the reflective practice project was conducted, and a Bachelor of Arts in English for Work Skills, including English for International Business (IB), English for Professional Communication (PC), and English for Translation and Interpreting (TI). The students who enroll in an undergraduate degree program at the DOE are required to take courses for four years. In Year 1, which is a foundation year, students take various basic courses; in Years 2 and 3, students take general English courses, comprising Core English, Literature Studies, Global Studies and Writing Skills; and in Year 4, the students take specialization courses. For the Bachelor of Education program, in the final year the students (herein addressed as pre-service teachers) take three core courses (Applied Linguistics, Foundation of Education and Teaching Methodology) and do

a practicum. This ELT training program provides pre-service teachers with the theories, principles, approaches, methods and techniques necessary for teaching English, classroom management skills, and opportunities for teaching practice during the practicum. This current research study was conducted with this last specialization program: the BEd in TEFL (DOE, Student Information Booklet, 2017–2018).

Taking into consideration Joyce and Showers' (2002) components of pre-service teachers' teaching (as shown in Figure 1), the ELT pre-service teacher training at the DOE is viewed through two main stages: the building stage and the practice stage. In the building stage, which integrates Joyce and Showers' first two components (knowledge and demonstration), the program provides theories, principles, approaches, methods, techniques, assessment in language teaching, classroom management skills and other educational viewpoints (i.e., education and society, education and innovation and school effectiveness) in three courses: Applied Linguistics, Foundation of Education, and Teaching Methodology. These courses are taken in Semester 1 of the training program. In semester two, the students enter into the practicum. In this stage (in Semester 1), the pre-service teachers also perform teaching demonstrations of various language points and skills in class. The pre-service teachers plan micro teaching lessons, teach lessons to peer pre-service teachers, and receive feedback from other pre-service teachers and trainers. In the second stage of the training, which incorporates Joyce and Showers' third and fourth components (practice and coaching-mentoring), the pre-service teachers have opportunities for formal teaching in the practicum of a period of six weeks. As part of the practicum, they discuss lesson plans with and receive feedback from other pre-service teachers as well as an associate lecturer and supervisor. This stage allows the pre-service teachers to operate reflective practice activities through reflection for action, reflection in action and reflection on action, as revealed in the review of the literature in this study.

The participants in this study were divided into three groups. All the pre-service teachers in two academic years (2016–17 and 2017–18) of the DOE were invited to participate in a cross-sectional survey regarding concerns about teaching. The major aim for selecting all of the pre-service teachers to respond to the questionnaires was to gather all instances of concerns expressed by the pre-service teachers in order to help researchers, teacher trainers and pre-service teacher program developers and managers better discern the pre-service teachers' worries and issues and find out



workable strategies to help the pre-service teachers prepare effectively for teaching in the later stage of the program. Four hundred and seventy two pre-service teachers in total responded to the questionnaire. Among all respondents, 40.6% (191 respondents) were male; 57.5 % (271 respondents) were female; and 1.9 % (9 respondents) did not state their gender. The majority of the pre-service teachers (45.1%) were from the evening classes, followed by the morning classes (29.0%) and afternoon classes (25.8%). Eight pre-service teachers were selected to participate in the post-practicum reflection. The pre-service teacher participants were given pseudonyms (i.e., P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7 and P8). Among these pre-service teachers, P1, P5, P6, P7 and P8 were involved in teaching English in the SEC and using RP activities for their teaching during the practicum. The pre-service teachers' behaviors in preparing for the teaching in the practicum and the PR activities they used during the practicum to improve teaching quality were observed. Of the 40 Year 1 students who had low English proficiency and were invited to join the SEC, nine students stayed through in the SEC until the end of the academic year. The other Year 1 students (31 students) dropped out of the SEC classes, partly due to the conflicting class schedule. These nine students were involved in developing personal learning plans for self-improvement of English proficiency and self-assessment of the reflective practice. The students were trained to plan their learning activities throughout the SEC classes. In this study, these students were given pseudonyms (S1, S2, ... S9). Table 1 below summarizes the three groups of participants.

**Table 1.** Participants for the reflective practice project

Group	Participants	Phase	Description	Number
1	Pre-service teachers	1	Exploring pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching	472
2	Pre-service teachers	2	Implementing reflective practice professional development program	8
3	Students	2	Following trainees' teaching practicum	9

A set of questions was adapted from Liou (2001) and Brook (2014) to investigate the pre-service teachers' impression and concerns regarding the teaching that they would be conducting in the practicum. The questionnaire, comprising 26 items, mainly asks the pre-service teachers to rate their concerns over various aspects on a five-point scale using the following items: 1 (not concerned at all), 2 (not concerned), 3 (quite concerned), 4 (concerned) and 5 (very much concerned). The questionnaire was classified into five main categories of concerns: theories of teaching (items 1 and 2); approaches and methods in teaching (items 3 to 13); evaluating teaching (items 14 to 16); questions about teaching (items 17 to 18); and self-awareness (items 19 to 26) (Liou, 2001). At the end of the practicum period of six weeks, the participants were asked to write a reflection on the teaching in the practicum using the narrative frame adapted from Barkhuizen and Wette (2008). Barkhuizen and Wette's narrative frame is based on the use of writing frames suggested by Warwick Maloch (2003, as cited in Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008). Narrative frames provide guidance to the pre-service teachers in how to stay focused in the context of their writing. It consists of sentence starters, connectors and sentence modifiers (Wray & Lewis, 1997, cited in Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008). In this study, the narrative frame was modified to allow the pre-service teachers to reflect on their time during the practicum period. It was divided into three main stages: before the practicum, during the practicum and after the practicum. The narrative frame was also used to collect information regarding self-assessment from the students who joined the SEC. The data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data were tabulated and reported in the form of percentages as displayed in Table 2. The qualitative data were coded according to the frames included in the narrative frame as stated above, and themes were sought and reported.

## **Results and Findings**

### ***Pre-service Teachers' Concerns about Teaching***

For ease of analyzing the pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching, the five-item Likert scales were divided into two categories: not (very) concerned and concerned (i.e., a combination of the scale 'quite concerned', 'concerned' and 'very concerned'). Table 2 illustrates the pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching. The analysis reveals that the pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching are centered around five areas: theories of teaching; approaches and methods; evaluating teaching;

self-awareness; and questions about teaching. The first area of the pre-service teachers' concern is theories of teaching. Here, the pre-service teachers were concerned about what learning strategies are appropriate to a task and learning purpose (94.9%) and students' attitudes about learning (94.7%). The second area of the pre-service teachers' concerns was the approaches and methods they would use to teach students. Their concerns in this area cover improving students' learning outcomes, i.e., how they can motivate the low achieving students to learn (94.8%) and how to give feedback to students (89.3%); maintaining a good classroom learning environment, i.e., how to manage classroom interactions (93.2%) and how to manage large and noisy classroom (92.5%); giving instructions, i.e., how to give appropriate and effective instructions (94.9%) and how to modify their language to suit the students' level (91.3%); planning lessons and developing materials, i.e., how to plan lessons (93.6%), how to decide the appropriate activities for teaching a lesson (93.8%), knowledge about the content of the lesson (92.4%) and how to supplement textbooks (88.4%).

The third area of the pre-service teachers' concerns is teaching quality. For example, the pre-service teachers questioned how they could identify problems occurring while they were teaching (95.4%) and they were concerned about which criteria they could use to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching (93%) and what the kind of on-the-spot decisions they would have to make if problems arose with some aspects of their lesson (94.2%). The fourth area of the pre-service teachers' concerns is how they could identify the root causes of any problems that might arise from aspects of lesson (93.4%) and, if they did have a problem, who they would approach for advice to deal with the problem (86.5%). The final area of concern is self-awareness about themselves as teachers. These concerns vary from what role they should play in the classroom (82.7%); how to communicate goals to students (89.4%); how to ask questions (84.4%); and their own English competence, encompassing grammatical accuracy (89.5%), breadth of vocabulary (94%), pronunciation (88.9%), oral fluency (91.9%), reading and listening comprehension (91.4%), and writing (91.3%). We have so far analyzed the pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching. The analysis suggests that the pre-service teachers are concerned to some degree about almost all aspects or areas related to teaching

**Table 2.** Pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching

No	Attributes	Not very concerned	Not concerned	Quite concerned	Concerned	Very concerned	Sum of concerned category
		Not Concerned (%)		Concerned (%)			
<b>Theories of teaching</b>							
1	What learning strategies are appropriate to a task and learning purpose?	0.9	4.3	20.2	45.7	29	94.9
2	What students' attitudes about learning are.	0.6	4.7	21.3	46.6	26.8	94.7
<b>Approaches and methods</b>							
3	How I can motivate the low achievers?	1.1	4.1	13.7	36.6	44.5	94.8
4	The strategies to maintain classroom interaction.	0.6	6	15.4	42.3	35.5	93.2
5	How to manage/organize classrooms (large, noisy classes).	1.3	5.5	20.1	34.7	37.7	92.5
6	How to give appropriate and effective instructions.	0.8	4.2	13.8	41.7	39.4	94.9
7	How to give feedback on students' tasks.	1.7	8.7	24.4	40.5	24.4	89.3
8	How to modify my language to suit students' level.	1.5	6.8	24.4	34.3	32.6	91.3
9	How to plan lessons.	1.5	6.4	23.4	32.6	37.6	93.6
10	Knowledge of the content of the lesson.	1.9	5.5	18.2	36.7	37.5	92.4
11	How to supplement textbooks.	2.1	9.4	35.5	40.5	12.4	88.4
12	How to decide on appropriate activities to teach a lesson.	0.6	5.5	25.5	42.3	26	93.8
<b>Evaluating teaching</b>							
13	The criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of my teaching.	0.6	6.4	21.3	43.3	28.4	93
14	How to identify problems occurring while teaching.	0.2	4.3	18.4	47.5	29.5	95.4
15	What kind of on-the-spot decisions I make use of if problems arise with some aspects of the lesson?	1.3	4.5	27.4	38.6	28.2	94.2
<b>Questions about teaching</b>							
16	What the strategies to identify the root causes of the problems arising with some aspects of my lesson are.	1.1	5.5	26.4	46.5	20.5	93.4
17	Who I should seek advice to solve problems from?	2.8	10.6	30.6	35.7	20.2	86.5
<b>Self-awareness</b>							
18	What role I should play in the classroom?	2.8	14.6	32.1	34.3	16.3	82.7
19	My knowledge about grammatical accuracy.	1.7	8.8	16.2	38	35.3	89.5
20	My knowledge about the breadth of vocabulary.	1.5	4.9	16.6	40.8	36.6	94
21	My knowledge about pronunciation.	2.8	8.3	15.1	32.4	41.4	88.9
22	My knowledge about oral fluency.	2.1	6	17.7	34.5	39.7	91.9
23	My knowledge about reading and listening comprehension.	2.1	6.4	20.2	35.5	35.7	91.4
24	My knowledge about writing.	2.1	6.6	19.1	40.9	31.3	91.3
25	How to ask questions.	3.6	12	33.1	37.2	14.1	84.4
26	How to communicate the goals to my students.	3.6	7	24	36	29.4	89.4

### ***Pre-service Teachers' Experiences of Teaching in the Practicum and Their Motivation***

As stated earlier, eight pre-service teachers were involved in telling stories of their teaching experiences during the practicum through a narrative frame. The analysis of the narratives focuses on the pre-service teachers' motivation, concerns, their views of being a teacher, moving from the pre-practicum to the post practicum stage, the reflective practice activities the pre-service teachers have undertaken, and self-assessment conducted by the pre-service teachers and the students in the SEC classes. The first narrative analyzed here is the pre-service teachers' experiences in teaching English language. All of the pre-service teachers had experience in teaching English in both formal and informal English classes before starting the practicum. Some of the pre-service teachers (P2, P3, P6, P7 and P8) had taught English to young and/or adult learners in private English institutes for around one or two years; one pre-service teacher (P1) had taught English to his relative at home; and one pre-service teacher (P5) had only experienced teaching English in the SEC class in the reflective practice project, as stated earlier. Participant P4 did not provide information regarding their experience of teaching English before the practicum. During the six-week practicum, these pre-service teachers taught adult learners in the BC program in the DOE. Analysis of the pre-service teachers' narratives suggests that the pre-service teachers (P1, P2, P5, P7 and P8) have had high motivation and the clear goal of becoming an English teacher since they started studying at the IFL. Some pre-service teachers reported that they had wanted to be teachers since a young age; for example, P2 had wanted to be a teacher since he was young. P7 wanted to be a teacher even before she entered in the DOE's undergraduate degree program. Some pre-service teachers became interested in the teaching profession when they entered the DOE's undergraduate degree program. For example, P8 became interested in teaching when she began Year 1 of the program, while P5 stated that she had developed and pursued her dream of being a teacher of English since she was a junior.

The incentives of becoming a teacher include the pre-service teachers' own goals and passions, family background, experiences and advice from their friends and teachers. P7's choice to teach was influenced by her family background, i.e., her parents were teachers. She stated that she had developed an interest in teaching through observing her parents' work with students. P1 became interested in and enthusiastic about teaching when he was involved in tutoring his relative in English. P4's

interest in the teaching profession was influenced by her friends' and teachers' advice and encouragement. In the participants' own words *I always followed the dream of being a teacher of English. When I was a junior, I was so eager to know the feeling of being a teacher. I always kept my dream alive until the teaching practicum day.* (Pers. Comm. P5)

*Frankly speaking, I have always wanted to be a teacher, even before I studied at IFL. My parents are teachers, which somehow shaped me to follow their path since I have seen them preparing lessons, correcting homework and doing a lot of paperwork since I was young.* (Pers. Comm. P7)

*I thought my ability was not good enough to be a teacher because there was a hesitation of my speech . . . Then my lecturer and friends encouraged me to choose a major of BEd. They said I could do it.* (Pers. Comm. P4)

*Before studying at IFL, the thought of being a teacher did not cross my mind at all nor did I consider choosing the Bachelor of Education as my Year 4 major. The idea of being a teacher did not come to me until I had to teach one of my brothers English at home.* (Pers. Comm. P1)

### ***The Pre-service Teachers' Views of Being a Teacher Before and after the Practicum***

The analysis finds out that all of the trainees perceived the roles of being a teacher as someone who inspires, guides, facilitates, provides a role model, transfers knowledge and controls the classroom. It is positive that all of them believed that even though their salary was low, they still had a responsibility to watch their students grow academically and professionally. P1 viewed the role of teacher as helping learners grow with knowledge. P2 saw teachers as knowledgeable people who can instill knowledge in students. P4 stated that as teacher, one should teach, guide, help learners acquire knowledge and treat learners fairly. P6 pointed out the roles of teachers in teaching, providing good advice as well as considering learners' concerns. The pre-service teachers viewed teachers as role models (P5), people who inspire learners to become better people (P7 and P8), people who inculcate moral values, attitudes and norms (P5), second parents (P7) and protectors who assist learners in growing and developing themselves as good people in society (P8). In the participants' own words:

*Teacher means a person who is knowledgeable who can impart knowledge to the students. (Pers. Comm. P2)*

*A teacher means a controller, facilitator and a role model. Exactly, a teacher controls the students, manages the class, support students, and be a model for the students in terms of moral values, attitudes, and norms. (Pers. Comm. P5)*

The pre-service teachers had positive attitudes toward their teaching experience. They described their experience being a teacher as exciting and memorable as well as challenging. They were able to put the theories and methods they had learned in the training program into practice as well as improve their communication skills. The practicum brought them a new perspective of being a teacher in comparison to the view they had of being a teacher before they began teaching. They started to view their roles as a catalyst, a guide, a person who improves the students' creativity and self-directed learning and watches the students grow. Moreover, being a teacher encouraged them to dress and behave professionally and boosted their self-esteem. It was interesting that the pre-service teachers viewed themselves as professional teachers after completing the practicum. In their own words:

*The feeling after the practicum changed. For this reason, I think that I made the right decision in my life for choosing to be a teacher. . . . I feel so good when my students call me "teacher." (Pers. Comm. P4)*

*Also, I found my strengths, such as preparation, punctuality, flexibility, and creativity for my lesson plan. (Pers. Comm. P4)*

*The way I wore a uniform enabled me to see myself as a mature lecturer. . . . It is surpris[ing] that I looked more professional in teaching. (Pers. Comm. P2)*

*I felt excited when I saw that my students actually learned and got back home with something beneficial. (Pers. Comm. P5)*

*Even though I still made mistakes I was much more confident and I welcomed any mistakes and criticisms for I see that it is the opportunity for improvement. (Pers. Comm. P1)*

Through the trajectory of teaching during the practicum, the pre-service teachers perceived that the teaching practice provided opportunities for collaboration and communication between students and pre-service teachers, and pre-service teachers and supervisors/associate lecturers

through their face-to-face and virtual interaction with each other. P1 and P4 stated that they had observed various classes to learn new techniques, teaching styles, strengths and weaknesses. P2 pointed out that he had worked with his assigned associate lecturer and supervisor in terms of planning lessons and selecting materials, thus improving his lesson plans with clear objectives and practical techniques. P5 consulted their associate lecturer, supervisor and other pre-service teachers' lesson plans, materials and teaching. The participants said *A teacher is more than someone who teaches. It involves the strong bond and good relationship between students and teacher.* (Pers. Comm. P7)

*I took the opportunity to observe more classrooms and learnt a lot more in terms of techniques and I wish I had more time to do so before my teaching.* (Pers. Comm. P1)

*When I had problems or questions about my teaching such as planning my lessons and materials, I worked with my associate lecturer and supervisor. They helped, made suggestions and corrected my lesson plans so that I could have appropriate lesson plans with effective objectives and techniques.* (Pers. Comm. P2)

*I started observing the other trainees in order to learn their styles of teaching, strengths and weaknesses.* (Pers. Comm. P4)

*Planning was not enough if there were obstacles waiting for me ahead, so I asked or discussed with my supervisor, associate teacher and my co-trainees to get some ideas and advice as much as possible because I believed that different perspectives could improve my teaching from one session to another.* (Pers. Comm. P5)

*To my supervisor and associate lecturer who had devoted their time, best effort and crucial guidance for my work. These two people were my primary support and help whenever I ran into problems related to my practicum teaching.* (Pers. Comm. P6)

### ***The Pre-service Teachers' Feelings Before and After the Teaching Practicum***

In the narrative frame, the pre-service teachers were asked to express their feelings before the practicum. The analysis shows that as the practicum was approaching, they had 'status anxiety', which is a mixture of feelings of nervousness and excitement, even though they had been equipped with knowledge about and strategies for language teaching and learning and some teaching experience. Moreover, some pre-service teachers expressed



their fear of being judged and observed by several people while teaching, especially by the supervisors, making unexpected mistakes, and even having low self-esteem. Some were afraid because the students were adult learners and their experience of teaching young learners would not match with those of adult learners' expectations. In their own words:

*My feelings are mixed with joy and nerves. The joy was I would put what I have learnt into a real situation and could meet many new students; In contrast, being judged by the students and many observers upon my performance was my fear. (Pers. Comm. P6)*

*Even if I felt afraid like I was in the middle of nowhere, I felt excited too because I acknowledged that I was mature enough to be called "teacher" already. (Pers. Comm. P5)*

Only one trainee (P7), who had two years of teaching experience as a part-time teacher, reported not having much concern about her teaching during the practicum.

The analysis shows that the first five to 10 minutes of teaching was described by the pre-service teachers as "a nightmare," as they were worried about their performance in terms of pronunciation, time management and their teaching pace. However, the feeling of worry and nervousness subsided after one or two techniques were implemented. The pre-service teachers started to feel confidence and energy as they became more familiar with classroom environment. The students were sources of comfort to the pre-service teachers, as the students were reported to be active, collaborative, cooperative, nice, friendly and welcoming. In the participants' own words:

*When I first started to teach I was really confident with my performance, yet my mouth and hands started to shake since I realized that every moment I did would be considered. (Pers. Comm. P6)*

*I also noticed that all my students participated actively in the class. They cooperated with other students to learn the lesson, and I remembered why I wanted to be a teacher at that time. (Pers. Comm. P2)*

*The best thing was my students never dragged me down. They were active, energetic and cooperative and eager to learn, responded to any questions asked, and participated well in my class. (Pers. Comm. P5)*

### ***The Pre-service Teachers' Reflective Practice Activities***

The analysis of the narratives provided by the pre-service teachers related to the teaching journey reveals the useful reflective practice activities that the pre-service teachers conducted.

#### ***Classroom Observation***

Before the actual teaching, the pre-service teachers had a chance to observe some classes taught by the associate or in-class lecturers and other pre-service teachers in order to understand and familiarize themselves with the teaching routines of the classes, especially to help them understand the students' abilities and what kind(s) of learning activities the students preferred so as to easily set their expectations of the classes. The participants reported that this classroom observation helped prepare the pre-service teachers a great deal for their actual teaching.

#### ***Lesson Preparation and Material Selection***

The analysis shows that the pre-service teachers' successful teaching derived from collaborative work with other concerned professionals and among the pre-service teachers themselves. For instance, each pre-service teacher reported that after they planned a lesson, they discussed it with their supervisor and associate lecturer, observed classes taught by other pre-service teachers who were teaching similar themes, and then re-planned the lesson several times before the actual teaching. At this stage and through observing other classes, they felt that talking to people around them could help them improve their teaching. They could learn new teaching styles and exchange materials used by other pre-service teachers that were considered effective. In the participants' own words:

*I asked or discussed with my supervisor, associate teacher and my co-trainees to get ideas and advice as much as possible because I believed that different perspectives could improve my teaching from one session to another. . . . They lighted the color of my journey.*  
(Pers. Comm. P5)

*With encouragement from my close friend and lecturers, my second teaching was much improved from the first one.* (Pers. Comm. P1)

The pre-service teachers spent a lot of time searching for new classroom activities that were interesting and fun while also promoting learning and critical thinking at the same time, as they believed that the students would engage in the lessons better if they could introduce games or fun activities

in the classrooms. The engaging activities described were guessing words from hints, role-playing, and pair and group work. Not only did the pre-service teachers talk to their peers and experienced lecturers, but they also searched on Internet for some related activities. P7 stated that, “*Also, I usually search for new ideas or teaching style from the Internet.*”

Because of the trust status, the pre-service teachers took the time to consult with supervisors and associate lecturers about lesson plans. They had a positive attitude towards the support they received from their supervisors and associate lecturers in terms of guidance, suggestions and feedback on their performance and used the support to improve teaching quality in subsequent teaching. P2 stated that:

*I had some ideas about my lesson plan, but after I met him, he gave a logical suggestion about each technique and he also gave feedback on my first teaching and told me what I should do in the next teaching. (Pers. Comm. P1)*

### ***Teaching and Learning Principles***

The pre-service teachers were perplexed when asked about the specific teaching and learning philosophies or principles they had adopted in preparing the lessons. They only could describe that when planning the lessons, they preferred enhancing the communication as much as possible, which is the reason why they spent time looking for games and engaging class activities involving role-play and pair and group work.

### ***Teaching Problems and How to Overcome Them***

During the teaching practice, the pre-service teachers were asked to reflect on their teaching, especially their strengths and weaknesses, and think about solutions to handle those weaknesses in order to grow professionally in teaching in subsequent lessons. The common weaknesses during the first teaching they identified included low voice projection, grammatical errors and hesitation, poor classroom management, giving instructions, time management, whiteboard management, standing position, not being able to build rapport with students, not being flexible enough to modify the activities they were implementing in the class to fit the time, problems with writing lesson objectives, and dealing with students’ disruptive behaviors.

To overcome these weaknesses, the pre-service teachers were positive, persistent and committed to getting the best results in the practicum. They stayed focused and wrote down what they would be talking about in the lesson plan. In their own words:

*Luckily, I overcame those problems due to my own commitment and constructive comments from my supervisor, associate teacher and my co-trainees. (Pers. Comm. P5)*

*I kept these [failing to look confident, follow lesson plan, control the class] from happening in my second teaching by being more focused. I told myself that I had prepared everything, so there was nothing to be afraid of. I can see some improvement in my second teaching. (Pers. Comm. P8)*

### ***Future Improvement***

Through successful completing the teaching practice, the pre-service teachers identified aspects about their teaching to improve in the future. These aspects include giving clear instructions, classroom management, teaching lessons clearly, improving their fluency, building better rapport with students, appearing confident in front of students, and techniques to promote student engagement and dealing with productive skills.

### ***Self-assessment of the Reflective Practice***

This section briefly reports on the feedback received from the students who attended the SEC. As stated earlier, in the SEC class, the students were involved in planning learning activities through a personal learning plan (PLP). Nine students who were able to stay through the SEC until the end of the academic year were invited to self-assess the reflective practice activities. In general, the students were positive and highly valued the SEC. They found the training of developing a PLP as well as being taught time management, vocabulary lessons, speaking lessons and TOEFL listening lessons in the SEC really useful. In their own words:

*Teachers always asked what we needed and shared their personal experiences in studying English. (Pers. Comm. S1)*

*Teachers helped me to improve all of my skills. Although my English isn't good, it is better than before. (Pers. Comm. S3)*

*After taking this course, I felt delighted. I think I can improve many skills such as vocabulary . . . especially listening, which I've never learned before. I want to give sincere thanks to all of my teachers teaching every single week without caring about their tiredness, time. (Pers. Comm. S4)*

*I think it is very good because it can help me improve a lot. I want teachers to continue. (Pers. Comm. S5)*

*This course meets only once a week, but it can help me improve my major English skills at least. (Pers. Comm. S6)*

*I do like PLP. (Pers. Comm. S8)*

*I like the course because this course is very important for me and teachers always suggest how I can improve my English. (Pers. Comm. S9)*

The students also pointed out that the training did not only help them improve their English language skills, but it also enriched them with other skills, including self-improvement (S4, S6); how to prepare lessons, time management and scheduling (S3); building the confidence to go on (S7, S8); developing the habit of reading books (S7); appropriate use of free time to improve English skills (S7); motivation, bravery, and attention (S8); and study skills (S9).

## **Discussion**

The analysis of the data collected in this study has yielded some important issues of concern regarding the ELT educational training program. First and foremost, the important issue of concern is preparedness. The findings in this study indicate that the pre-service teachers are concerned about teaching in five areas – theories of teaching, approaches and methods, evaluating teaching, questions about teaching, and self-awareness. Such concerns may suggest that the pre-service teachers, despite going through the training program, may not be ready for formal teaching, especially during the practicum. In other words, the pre-service teachers are absolute neophytes in the teaching profession (Ferguson, 1989; Brooke, 2014). They may merely apply theories in teaching without any appropriate consideration of effective and practical strategies, the practice of which is only to fully achieve an application of technical competence rather than the professional pedagogical growth of the pre-service teachers (Ferguson, 1989). Instead, to assist pre-service teachers in reaching their potential as professional teachers, they should be strongly encouraged to critically evaluate which teaching techniques they select for the classroom (Brooke, 2014). For this reason, prominent scholars strongly recommend that reflective practice is instilled in pre-service as well as novice teachers (Ferguson, 1989; Rhine and Bryant, 2007; Etscheidt, Curran et al., 2012; Brooke, 2014). The reflective practice should allow pre-service teachers to undertake the three forms of reflection: reflection for action, reflection on

action, and reflection in action (Rhine and Bryant, 2007; Thorsen and DeVore, 2013; Sofu and Easter, 2014; Farrell, 2015).

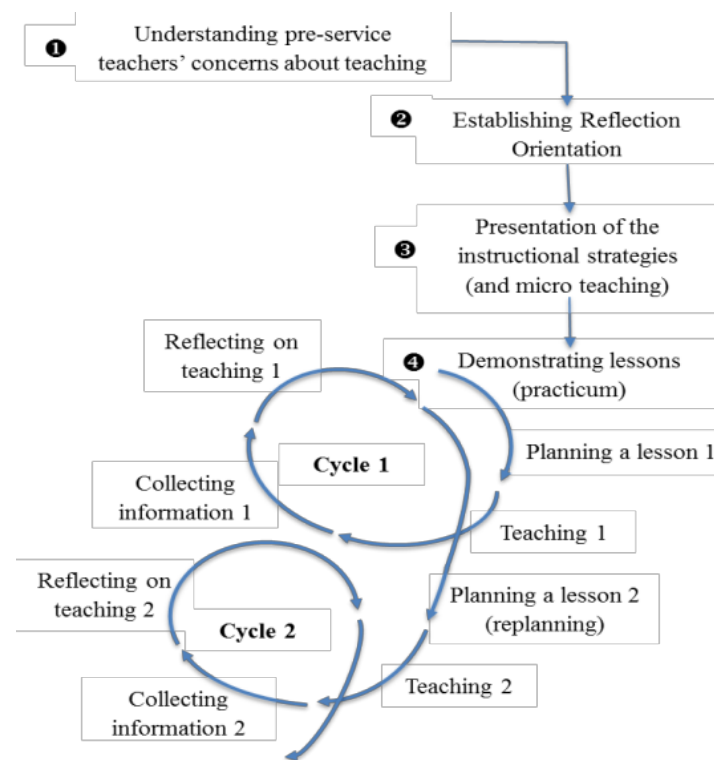
Another important issue of concern is motivation in the teaching profession of the pre-service teachers. As revealed in the analysis, the pre-service teachers have high motivation in teaching and the motivation is derived from the pre-service teachers themselves (i.e., intrinsic motivation) and their peers, lecturers and family members (i.e., extrinsic motivation). With such high motivation in teaching, pre-service teachers are actively engaged in successfully undertaking teaching not only in the practicum in the training program but also in subsequent teaching in any institution where they will be teaching. As Harmer (2014, p. 98) states:

*It is accepted in most fields of learning that motivation is essential to success: that we have to want to do something to succeed at it. Without such motivation, we will almost certainly fail to make the necessary effort.*

The next important issue of concern is the effective strategies adopted by the pre-service teachers. In this current research, the pre-service teachers have adopted various effective strategies for completing their teaching practice. Some of the strategies include self-monitoring and peer critical friendship (Farrell, 2015) and using collaborative strategies (Farrell, 2018) to undertake their teaching and reflection to achieve their full potential in teaching. As reported earlier, the pre-service teachers have observed classes taught by associate teachers and other peers in order to learn more about the class and students. They discussed lesson plans with peers, associate teachers and supervisors. Some pre-service teachers have created Facebook groups for communication and explored various social networks to learn more about relevant tips for improving teaching. With the adoption of the reflective practice activities, it can be seen by the students that the pre-service teachers' teaching has improved and they have even become more confident in teaching. This current research has yielded a significant insight in that if the practicum is seen as the main component that pre-service teachers have to undertake in order to complete the training program successfully and prepare for future teaching, it should be developed and operated appropriately. The future ELT pre-service teacher training should engage both trainers and pre-service teachers in undertaking reflective practice in the program. Figure 2 illustrates a proposed model that integrates reflective practice activities in the ELT pre-service teacher training program, adopted from Ferguson (1989), Liou (2001), Joyce and Shower (2002), Burns (2010) and Brooke (2014).

The model comprises four steps. In Step 1, the model begins with understanding pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching. As stated earlier, pre-service teachers are completely new to teaching and they may have many concerns about teaching (Liou, 2001; Brooke, 2014), which may discourage them from active engagement in teaching. Hence, understanding pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching is helpful for both trainers and pre-service teachers to work together to find out appropriate and effective yet practical strategies to handle those concerns.

In Step 2, the model involves establishing a reflective practice orientation, i.e., training pre-service teachers to reflect on their concerns about teaching and set appropriate activities for overcoming those concerns (Ferguson, 1989). Step 3 of the reflective practice model is presentation of the instructional theory, i.e., pre-service teachers receive inputs in terms of the nature of language, nature of learning and various other relevant theories about teaching and learning (Ferguson, 1989; Joyce and Shower, 2002). In this step, pre-service teachers are also involved in micro-teaching activities in class to uncover interconnections between theories and practices. Step 4 of the model is the demonstration of lessons, i.e., pre-service teachers plan lessons with peers, teach the lessons, provide and receive feedback, and re-plan lessons. This step allows pre-service teachers to explore a trajectory of reflective teaching during the practicum and involves several cycles of reflective practice, drawn from Burns' (2009) action research framework. Figure 2 portrays two of a series of cycles, each of which has four steps: planning a lesson, teaching, collecting information and reflecting on the teaching. This knowledge base model has prepared readiness so that pre-service teachers can enter the practicum as well as the teaching profession with confidence and satisfactory outcomes.



**Figure 2.** A model of reflective practice in ELT pre-service teacher training

## Conclusion

This study has shed light on the development and integration of reflective practice into pre-service teacher educational programs. With little experience of teaching, pre-service teachers have many concerns about teaching. Their concerns are centered around students' learning outcomes, quality of teaching, knowledge of theories and principles about language teaching, and their own English proficiency. The findings have revealed the pre-service teachers' reflective practice activities, which include self-monitoring, peer critical friendship and collaborative strategies. The findings have also confirmed that the pre-service teachers grew more confident and passionate about teaching after completing the practicum. The study suggests that reflective practice, when undertaken appropriately and systematically (Farrell, 2013a), is an effective yet practical strategy to assist pre-service teachers in learning to teach. Not only do pre-service teachers develop knowledge base practice but they also develop motivation, interest, passion and confidence in the teaching profession. Therefore, an integration of the reflective practice into the existing teacher training program can create a more effective knowledge base for the pre-service teacher training program in the field of English language teaching.



This current study focused only on the pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching and explored the reflective practice activities undertaken by the pre-service teachers in the practicum. For the reflective practice activities to be successfully operated in the ELT pre-service teacher training program, future studies regarding the perceptions of the ELT teacher trainers and ELT program management teams about reflective practice should be undertaken. Moreover, in-depth studies of different groups of pre-service teachers involving implementing reflective practice activities in the training program, following the reflective practice model displayed in Figure 2, are needed to examine whether the model could have an impact on the pre-service teachers' teaching performance. Only when such in-depth studies of the practice of reflective teaching undertaken by the pre-service teachers are understood will the reflective practice model be able to be integrated in the ELT pre-service teacher training program effectively and efficiently.

### **Acknowledgments**

This current research project was completed with financial support of the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) Research Fund Round 1 (2016–2017). We would like to sincerely thank the RUPP Board and RUPP Research Committee for providing this research grant to enable our reflective practice project to take shape and to be successfully completed. We are also grateful to the head of the Department of English for his heartfelt and motivational support for us to undertake the reflective practice research activities in the department. We would like to thank our pre-service teacher and student participants for their consent in participating in this project. Last but not least, we are thankful to the CER reviewers for assisting us in revising the manuscript.

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## Appendix

Pre-service teachers participating in narrative frame and students participating in self-assessment in the supplementary English class.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>
Pers. Comm. P1	Pre-service teacher	March–April, 2017
Pers. Comm. P2	Pre-service teacher	March–April, 2017
Pers. Comm. P3	Pre-service teacher	March–April, 2017
Pers. Comm. P4	Pre-service teacher	March–April, 2017
Pers. Comm. P5	Pre-service teacher	March–April, 2017
Pers. Comm. P6	Pre-service teacher	March–April, 2017
Pers. Comm. P7	Pre-service teacher	March–April, 2017
Pers. Comm. P8	Pre-service teacher	March–April, 2017
Pers. Comm. S1	Year 1 student	July, 2017
Pers. Comm. S2	Year 1 student	July, 2017
Pers. Comm. S3	Year 1 student	July, 2017
Pers. Comm. S4	Year 1 student	July, 2017
Pers. Comm. S5	Year 1 student	July, 2017
Pers. Comm. S6	Year 1 student	July, 2017
Pers. Comm. S7	Year 1 student	July, 2017
Pers. Comm. S8	Year 1 student	July, 2017
Pers. Comm. S9	Year 1 student	July, 2017