

The Role of Reflective Dialog in Helping Pre-service Early Childhood Teachers Face Challenges of a Practicum

Dr. Buad Khales

Al-Quds University – Faculty of Educational Sciences-Department of Elementary and Kindergarten
bkhales@staff.alquds.edu

Abstract

This study aims to explore the role of reflective dialog in helping student-teachers to face difficulties in a practicum course. Twenty student-teachers enrolled in a practicum course in early childhood at Alquds University took part in the study. The research instruments included a questionnaire, reflective dialog sessions and reflective journals. Pair t test was used to assess difficulty in the pre- and post- reflective dialog sessions. The results show that reflective dialog eased the difficulties that practicum students faced and increased their self-confidence and improved their ability to communicate with their students as well as among themselves.

Key words:

Reflection, Reflective dialog, Practicum, Student teachers, Challenges

Introduction

Since the child is considered the center of the teaching process, early childhood programs generally seek to create kindergarten teachers whom are specially qualified to encourage children to learn, and whom can enhance the spirit and the skill of learning through experimentation, exploration and free play. Such programs also reject the principle and the practice of compulsion; instead, they focus on flexibility, creativity, and inclusion. The pivotal role of the KG teacher becomes even more apparent as he assumes the responsibility of providing a positive environment that enhances child learning. (Saluja, Early & Clifford, 2002).

Recognizing the significance of the quality of both pre- and in-service early childhood programs, the Palestinian Ministry of Education has emphasized in its strategic plan the necessity for empowering teachers with a system of general and specific knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. It was postulated that such a system would induce teachers to become more committed to the effective and successful learning of their students and to facilitate their overall development so as to become responsible contributors to the creation of an independent Palestinian society. It is also hoped that teachers would become deeply knowledgeable in the subject they teach, and would become better and more innovative teachers whom would respect students' minds and encourage them to be active in their own learning and to learn for understanding and application, to improve

their different life skills and help them enhance their critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (MOHE, 2008).

The Ministry of Education (MOHE, 2013) has also emphasized the importance of the practicum part of teacher training, which focuses on developing the student-teachers' positive attitudes towards their teaching career and on providing them with the opportunity to practice actual teaching starting from lesson and activity planning to class management, dealing with students, designing instructional aids and evaluating students.

Hamaidi et al (2014) , Qasi, Rawat, Thomas(2012) and Khales (2015) maintained that the practicum (and all the activities it includes) helps the student-teacher acquire the knowledge and the skills necessary for them to become creative and successful teachers in the future. The importance of the practicum can be attributed to the important goals that it seeks to achieve; it also bridges the gap between theory and practice. In addition, it agrees with the new trends in the preparation of students-teachers.

Practicum course at Al-Quds University allows students and teachers to experiment their new knowledge about child-centered teaching in local classrooms to put their university-acquired knowledge.

So Practicum is the first opportunity practical use to experience the real teaching practices and to become members of a profession (Gan, 2011).

Practicum develops the positive attitudes of student-teachers towards the profession and towards their students. Furthermore, it develops student-teachers' behaviors and practices in the teaching processes; it provides them with educational primary efficiencies and a clear understanding of the context of the school, enables them to recognize the reality of students' learning needs. The practicum also plays a key role in bridging the gap between theory and practice, and develops the student-teachers' professional and personal competencies (Hamaidi et al., 2014).

Changes all over the world affect education which springs out challenges in different areas of teaching profession. Challenges as: global economy, competitive market place, how people learn, what makes for effective teaching and advanced technology that changed the nature of jobs and prompted teacher education administrators to re-examine the basic principles and methodologies of teacher preparation. Therefore, research suggests that the teaching profession has become increasingly complex; where highly competent teachers apply a range of new practices for varying purposes, build up a sophisticated pedagogical repertoire. So, the teaching professionals are responsible for teacher preparation and must continually find ways to respond to these challenges (Tuli & File, 2009).

Research has shown that student-teachers face a lot of difficulties in the practicum (course) due to a variety of factors. Sefegrolu (2006) indicated that there are many serious problems in teacher education programs, which requires a serious review of these programs. Abu- Latifeh& Issa, 2011, and Al-'Abbadi (2004) referred to several problems facing early childhood student-teachers in the practicum, particularly in regard to supervision of the program, the existence of cooperative and non-cooperative schools and teachers, the unavailability of instructional aids and technology, and the fact that most student-teachers have a part-time enrollment in the practicum program. Student-

teachers are often given duties (by the home teachers) other than teaching, such as filling in classes for fellow teachers, who might be absent or sick, or being asked to give full classes, in addition to the large class size.

Gan (2013) investigation about the challenges results indicated that the pre-service teachers' practicum was characterized by a reality shock due to difficulties in experimenting with the pedagogical practices they were taught in the program, and a lack of sense of control in class.

The use of reflection and dialogue in the practicum experience as a professional activity help pre-service teachers to be more effective (Abeywickrama, Santos & Olsher (2015) because "Reflection" and "reflective writing" are umbrella terms to think about your own thinking. explain, reflection records as student's process of thinking about what they are doing while doing that. Reflective writing helps teachers to criticize themselves in order to get better understanding of themselves.

In addition, diaries provide teachers with opportunities to inquire about their thoughts, and to break the restrictions imposed on them by the daily chores. Reflective journals or diaries help students and teachers to improve their practices, thoughts and feelings (Khales, 2015). Lastly, the reflective dialogue enhances reflective thinking that will affect teachers' beliefs about their own learning, roles, and beliefs about children and teaching . (Khales, 2010).

It was shown that the reflective dialog improves teachers teaching practices Leaman (2006) and Palvovich (2007). Reflective dialog leads to pose questions and strategies about the process of teaching, planning and how to select instructional aids and how to do assessment. On the other hand, findings answered these critical issues requires a lot of reflective dialog sessions, to argue teachers exchange their teaching practices and to get feedback. In a similar way, Rath (2001) and Aisling, Fiona, & Lisa. (2007) found that student-teachers' concepts about the teaching/learning process can be changed through maintaining reflective dialog.

Reflective dialog enhances learners knowledge where it requires students to activate their previous knowledge, to make all the 'theoretical' courses that education programs include and develop reflective habits in pre-service teachers during their education.. (West, 2012) indicated that there has been great aid to the use of teaching cases in pre- in service teacher's education as a tool to promote this process of reflection in educational research.

Tavý (2014) indicated that using written reflective e-journals dialogue throughout the practicum period heightened the self-efficacy level of the pre-service teachers. Reflection is considered as a powerful tool for promoting in teacher education Dialogue journals for both teachers' and students' writings and the process of exchanging these writings. Furthermore, dialog journals help students where they have: difficulty, promote autonomous learning, enhance confidence, help students make connections between course content and teaching, create interaction beyond the classroom and face challenges (Lee, 2005).

Roxanne (2008), Basford & Thorpe (2004) and Palvovic (2007) agreed that reflective thinking and dialogues help pre-service teachers to confront the challenges they face in teaching as: employing teaching strategies, class management and solving students' problems. The power of

discourse to clarify meaning and understanding of novel dialogic interaction among peers enhanced understanding of complex situations and Collaborative conversation encourages relational knowledge that links what is learnt learn and understood about practices to other conditions that impact learning. Dialogue reflection allows teachers to understand their beliefs by interacting with others beliefs (Bowers, 2005).

Simoncini, Lasen and Rocco (2014) indicated that pre-service teachers need to be engaged in and to develop their skills, especially where the pre-service teacher is positioned and prepared for having some authority dialog about teaching and learning . It should be encouraged and investigated further, given the “significance of teachers’ collegial relationships as a factor in school improvement” due to the rapidly increasing interest in ‘professional learning communities’ across schools.

So, Schön (1983) mentioned that teachers develop their reflective thinking in reference to their work. Collin & Karsenti (2012) added that they are particularly likely to do so during the practicum, and even more so when they have a mentor at their side. On the other hand, DeMuldir & Rigsby (2003) pointed out that the voice of student-teachers is very low and requires reflective dialog to allow them to: express their feelings, to talk about their fears they face during the practicum and attitudes very honestly without any restraints, which generates a stronger motivation towards greater accomplishment leading to a boost of their self-confidence.

Reflective dialog allow student-teachers to overcome most problems and changes the practicum into an opportunity for learning and developing.

Purpose of the study

This study aims to explore the role of reflective dialog in surmounting difficulties facing student-teachers during early childhood practicum (in Al-Quds University).

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of reflective dialog on pre-service teachers’ ability to overcome difficulties and challenges facing them during an early childhood practicum?
2. What are the pre-service teachers’ reflections regarding the changes that take place as a result of using reflective dialog in practicum at kindergarten?

Problem of the Study:

While supervising several practicums in the Early Childhood Program, Faculty of Education, Al-Quds University), the researcher observed that the pre-service teachers face a lot of problems and challenges during the practicum, including class management, dealing with children, teaching and planning activities. This posed serious obstacles to the students as some did not want to carry on with this experience and others who expressed their unwillingness to enroll in the program altogether. The researcher also noted that these students often met to discuss the practicum program and to express their frustrations, fears, concerns and anxiety and to explore responses to some of their inquiries and reflections. Consequently, the researcher designed this study to ascertain the role

of reflective dialog in confronting the difficulties and problems that pre-service students face during the practicum.

Significance of the study

The significance of the study springs from the topic it aimed to examine. The study, which is concerned with exploring the role of reflective dialog in helping student-teachers to overcome the difficulties they face in the practicum, attempts to establish the foundational link between the theoretical and practical courses in early childhood programs. Such programs are expected to qualify and train competent early childhood teachers. This research is significant because it is expected to encourage further studies in the field of reflective thinking and reflective dialog.

Limitations of the Study

Following are the limitations of the present study:

1. The study includes only the students who were enrolled in an early childhood practicum course (Fall 2016) (at Al-Quds University).
2. The sample includes only 20 students who were enrolled in the researcher's section of the practicum course.

Methods

The researcher used a quasi-experimental (one group design with pre and post application of the instrument that were designed to identify their impact on the independent variables and the dependant ones, and the thematic analysis of the qualitative data.

Participants:

The participants in this study were twenty fourth-year pre-service teachers enrolled in an early childhood practicum course who expressly agreed to take part in the study. They had already studied many courses in early childhood teaching strategies, general teaching methods, and methods of teaching science and mathematics, instructional materials, foundations in practical education, measurement and evaluation, research methodology in addition to many other university and faculty requirements.

The practicum course met three days a week (8.00 to 2.00) for the duration of four months (or 15 weeks), totaling 220 hours. In the following semester, the students go on to a practicum for Grades 1-4.

The early childhood practicum course aims to provide the students with an opportunity for practical field training that includes: observation, partial participation, and full application. During the observation stage, which lasts for two weeks, the students engage in writing reflections about the class/home teacher's practices and behavior in dealing with the children, organizing the learning environment, organizing the actual teaching process, and facilitating the interaction among the students themselves and with the teacher herself. The program also aims at allowing the students to discover the various teaching strategies and methods of assessing the children used in KGs. In addition, it aims at introducing the student-teachers to all the KG activities, programs, daily and weekly plans. The early childhood practicum further provides the students with the opportunity to

participate, though partially, in the teaching process and later to take participate fully in the process of teaching the children.

Study instruments

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was designed to measure the effectiveness of reflective dialog in students' facing difficulties during a practicum. It consisted of 40 items divided into f different areas: practicums in general, planning, teaching, and managing the learning environment and evaluation. (Appendix 1)

Questionnaire Reliability and Validity

To check the validity of the questionnaire, it was evaluated by a group of four specialist referees and was changed according to their modifications and suggestions. In order to check its reliability, the questionnaire was piloted on a group of student-teachers outside the study sample and was repeated two weeks later. The Pearson correlation was calculated between the two trials and showed a correlation of (0.82), making the questionnaire valid and reliable for this type of study.

Reflective Writing

The participating preservice teachers were asked to write reflective journals at the end of each day of the practicum in order to reflect on the happenings of the day and to review plans and activities and record their personal evaluation, determine the difficulties and challenges and record the ideas that are going on in her mind at the moment based on the reflective dialog that went on the discussion group.

-Discussion groups and Reflective Dialog

The researcher attended the discussion groups (N=16) that were held on campus for two hours once a week over 5 months. The students' discussion, ideas, suggestions, etc. that were related to the practicum were all recorded by the researcher and later analyzed.

Analysis of the Questionnaire Data

The questionnaire data were analyzed using Pair t test.

The data from the group discussions and reflective dialogs were analyzed qualitatively, thematically in order to investigate the role of the reflective dialog in helping pre-service teachers to confront the challenges and difficulties facing them in the practicum and describe the students' reflections about this experience.

The methods of the analysis of the reflective writing and the discussion groups

- Determining the goal of the analysis, which is to explore the role of reflective dialog in helping pre-service teachers to face the challenges and difficulties of the early childhood practicum
- Using the sentence and word as units of analysis
- The comprehensiveness of analysis of everything that occurred in the reflective journals and reflective dialog and the discussion groups.

The reliability of the analysis of reflective writing, reflective dialog and group discussions:

In order to establish the reliability of the data analysis, the following procedures were followed:

Inter-rater reliability: A random sample of the reflective writings and discussion groups was first analyzed by the researcher and then that sample was analyzed by a colleague after agreeing on a close definition of the word and utterance as units of analysis.-

Intra-rater reliability (i.e. Reliability over time)

N2: the number of categories analyzed in the first round

N1: the number of categories analyzed in the first round

2M: the number of categories agreed on in the first and second rounds

The inter-rater reliability was 87%, while the intra-rater reliability was 85%, which is deemed and acceptable result.

Research Ethics:

The ethics of research calls for the anonymity of the participants. For convenience sake, each participant was given a certain code that is kept confidentially with the researcher.

The Researcher:

The researcher is an integral part of the present study as she is the supervisor of the practicum course and is officially responsible for all the students enrolling in the practicum courses.

Study Procedures:

After assigning the participating pre-service teachers to local KGs, the researcher practicum supervisor met with the students to allow them to reflect on their expectations of the practicum. A week after the start of the practicum, the students were asked to respond to the questionnaire; they were also asked to keep a reflective journal at the end of each practicum day. A group discussion and reflective dialog followed and were facilitated by the supervisor. The students reflected on the

challenges and difficulties and that they expected to have and the possible ways of improving their teaching practices in the practicum. At the end of the practicum, the students were asked to respond to the questionnaire again and to reflect on their experience with the reflective dialog and practicum.

Results (of the Study)

In this section I present the results of the current research in an attempt to answer the two study questions.

First study question:

What is the impact of reflective dialog on pre-service teachers' ability to overcome difficulties and challenges facing them during an early childhood practicum?

to answer the research question the arithmetic mean and standard deviations of the subjects' scores in using reflective discourse in helping students to overcome the practicum obstacles in kindergarten, also the data were analyzed statistically to study the influence of using the reflective discourse in helping students to overcome the practicum obstacles in kindergarten using (t) test as shown in table (1)

Table (1) the significant differences between the students' mean scores

Pair	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig
Pre	20	3.9436	.21368	19	47.972	.000
Post	20	1.7988	.17292			

The pre-mean for the difficulties facing pre-service teachers was 3.94 with a standard deviation of 0.21 while the post-mean was 1.8 with a standard deviation of 0.17.

To test the hypothesis that there was no statistical significance at ($\alpha \geq 0.05$) between the pre- and post-means of the difficulties facing pre-service students in practicum by using (t) test, the means that there is a statistically significant difference of 0.00 for the post mean. In other words, the reflective dialog reduced the level of difficulty facing the pre-service teachers in the practicum. During the reflective dialog sessions the students are afforded the opportunity to interact with each other and to discuss issues that relate to the practicum and to talk about the challenges they face in the practicum and how to face them and how to develop the practicum.

Results of the second study question

Second Questions: What are the pre-service teachers' reflections regarding the changes that take place as a result of using reflective dialog in practicum at kindergarten?

To answer the second study question, the group discussions, reflective dialogs and reflective journals were analyzed thematically by examining each word and sentence that were uttered by the

students very closely. The students' responses were then classified into several thematic categories using a set of codes that was devised by the researcher. Based on the analysis, the researcher was able to conclude that the difficulties faced by the pre-service teachers in the practicum fall under several main themes and suggested ways of dealing with these challenges.

Understanding practicum structure

Sixteen students indicated that the reflective writing and dialog helped them to understand what the practicum was and what its characteristics and requirements were through reviewing the concepts that relate to the practicum and what relates to it as mentioned in the reflective dialog meetings. In their reflections, each student wrote her about her fears, concerns and expectations of the practicum course in addition to the concepts that she had. The individual reflections were later discussed in the group discussions.

Following are two extracts from the students' reflections.

Student 12: In my reflections, I wrote about the responsibilities of the student-teacher in the practicum course. We discussed this and I got knowledge about the tasks and duties that are assigned to me in the practicum. This helped me to understand the practicum in a much better way.

Student 3: I wrote my reflections about the practicum program and how it is scheduled together with work. My colleagues and I discussed this together with our practicum supervisor.

Communication with each other

The reflective dialog sessions helped the students to communicate with the students and among themselves. They exchanged reflective writings and ideas and conceptions about the practicum, which lead them to build positive and closer relationships among them and it enhanced the interaction among the students

Student 1: The reflective writing added much to my knowledge during the discussions with my colleagues. I came to know more and my experience increased as a result of the dialog.

Student 6: The dialog sessions opened up the horizon for me to know how my colleagues thought and became closer to them. I felt that we could exchange experience among us. In my opinion, teaching children is a difficult task and it requires a lot of cooperation and coordination. I'm certain the reflective discussions supplied us with that opportunity.

Communication with children

The results show that reflective dialog helped the participants to discuss the characteristics and needs of children at this particular age (i.e. early childhood) and to review the children's behaviors and practices in view of their developmental characteristics. This lead to a better understanding of the children. Students used to write about the situations facing them during the day and they would discuss them in the reflective dialog session when each student would read her journal.

As for dealing with children, fourteen of the participants indicated that they did not achieve the required degree of achievement. However, reflective dialog, they said, helped them to understand children and their requirement and needs. In the meantime, how this reflects on dealing with children requires a lot of practice and years of experience teaching children and dealing with them.

Planning activities and teaching children

Most of the participants (n=17) indicated that they had faced some difficulty at the start of the practicum in planning activities to develop children's higher thinking skills, in addition to the challenges and problems that face the students in planning activities that are compatible with the child-centered approach. During the reflective discussion sessions, several activity plans were discussed. Reflective dialog also helped solve other problems facing the participants regarding how to write activity plans and goals and how to write child-centered activities.

Student 8: *During the reflective dialog meetings, I was able to know new methods of teaching children. I also planned activities for teaching children about magnets. My activities were very deep interesting that my children asked me to use more activities.*

Student 12: *Planning is a very important task in the practicum, and if we don't know how to plan, it will affect our work. During the reflective dialog sessions, I learned how to write goals that measure higher thinking skills, and I planned an activity to solve problems. I presented the students with some problems and asked them to solve them. I was very happy with the children's solutions. I discussed these activities with my university colleagues during one of the reflective dialog meetings and was glad to get a lot of new ideas for further activities.*

Regarding the evaluation of children, the participant student-teachers indicated that the reflective dialog sessions helped them to produce better worksheets for their children. Yet, undoubtedly, their use of evaluation tools still requires long experience before these student-teachers master their correct use.

Trust and self confidence

All participants, except two, indicated that the reflective dialog sessions enhanced confidence in themselves and in their capacity and readiness to become good teachers. The dialogs helped them to get free of their fears and to understand the requirements of the practicum as well as to better understand children.

Student 20: The reflective dialog is very important. It makes us bring out all that is inside us. The feedback that we receive allows us to know our strengths and weaknesses and lessens our anxiety. I now feel confident because I have discovered that I have a lot of ideas that my colleagues can benefit lot from when they work with children.

Student 1: During the reflective dialog meetings I proposed a lot of ideas about the practicum and my colleagues accepted them. This encouraged me to improve my capabilities and boosted confidence in myself.

Discussion

The results of the mean of difficulty encountered by the student-teachers in the practicum showed a significant difference between the pre-mean (3.49) and post-mean (1.08), i.e. before and after the reflective dialog sessions. The analysis of the reflective dialog and reflective writing showed that these teachers had problems relating to the requirements of the practicum, activity planning, teaching, and designing a learning environment. These results agree with Seferoglu (2006) who pointed to the existence of serious problems in teacher training programs, though there may be some variation in the nature of the problems faced by the students. For instance, Al-'Umayreen (2007) and Al-'Abadi (2004) found that the problems facing early childhood student-teachers in the practicum relate directly to the supervision of the program, finding cooperative schools and teachers, the scarcity of instructional aids, in addition to the fact that most student-teachers and supervisors are not engaged in the practicum program on a full-time basis.

The findings also show that the reflective dialog alleviated some of the problems faced by pre-service teachers in the practicum program. In particular, it helped the participants to know the tasks that they are expected to accomplish and to understand the requirements of the practicum course, including discussing the plans they design during the practicum and how to improve them, discussing their teaching practices, watching and discussing videos for individual student's classes.

This is in agreement with Roxanne (2008), Basford & Thorpe (2004) and Palvovich (2007) who claim that reflective thinking and reflective dialog help teachers to face the challenges and difficulties in teaching particularly in correctly employing teaching strategies and class management and solving children's problems, and so on.

The analysis of the reflective writing and reflective dialog meetings shows that the reflective dialog helped the student-teachers to understand the requirements and regulations of the practicum. It can be argued that the reflective dialog meetings allow the students to read the written reflections and discuss them and ask questions and engage in discussing the answers and getting a lot of knowledge that relates to the practicum and discuss all inquiries they have in mind about the practicum in an environment that permits them to express their fears and concerns and the challenges they face without feeling intimidated or anxious. This result is supported by DeMuldir & Rigsby (2003)'s findings that indicate that the reflective dialog makes teachers' voice heard affording them a forum to express their concerns and experiences.

The analysis of the reflective writing and reflective dialog sessions further shows that the reflective dialog enhanced the students' ability to design a variety of learning activities that are suitable to the children but it did not help them in assessment particularly regarding the employment of the authentic assessment tools. This result may be attributed to the fact that assessment requires a lot of and practice and training in the use of multiple assessment tools and not only the worksheet. It is known that authentic assessment is characterized by certain features which distinguish it from assessment that is based on worksheets and tests. In authentic assessment, children are given certain tasks that relate to their daily life and learning contexts allowing the possibility of observing the development of each individual child. It is worth noting that the number of reflective dialog meetings over one semester was not enough to allow the development of the teachers' ability to employ assessment tools especially the use of authentic assessment.

The present research shows that the reflective dialog helped the pre-service teachers to appreciate the characteristics and needs of children and associating them with their development stages. This reflected on their ability to design and manage a learning environment though it was not enough to help them to solve the children's problems, specifically those relating to class rules, activities, and the relationship among the children themselves. It could be said that this requires the home teacher to devise a foundational system for building an interactive relationship with the children and sharing with them the regulations and rules and helping them to work together. This, of course, is quite difficult for the pre-service teacher to accomplish during the practicum. This explains why the reflective role did not have any role in the area of managing and designing a learning environment and also in regard to dealing with children's problems.

The study findings also show that the reflective dialog increased the student-teachers' trust in themselves and in their abilities. This came through the feedback that they received during the reflective dialog sessions and it helped them to liberate themselves of the fears, concerns and inhibitions as well as relieving them of some of the difficulties they were facing with the practicum. Our results are supported by Simoncini, Lasen and Rocco (2014) who indicated that reflection had a positive effect on their subjects' confidence at work.

The relationship among the student-teachers developed as a result of the reflective dialog sessions. During these meetings, the teachers interacted continually and discussed their fears and concerns. They also evaluated themselves, and presented and discussed ideas and feelings in a non-intimidating educational atmosphere. Khlaes (2010) showed that reflective writing helps teachers to criticize themselves in order to better understand themselves, that provide teachers with opportunities to inquire about their thoughts,

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the present study, the researcher recommends that is recommended that teacher training programs should focus on reflective dialogue and reflective thinking and on applying it in the various university courses in general and in early childhood programs in particular. It is also recommended that education practicum courses in higher education institutions be developed.

References:

Abeywickrama, B., Santos .M., & Olsher, D. (2015) . Reflecting on the Practicum: An Invitation to Continue the Conversation, *The CATESOL Journal*, 27.2, 239- 248.

Abu-Latifeh , R.,&Isaa , S. (2011). Difficulties Facing Practical Education Students at the University of Jordan at the Practical Training University, *Dirasat Educational Science*, 38 (2), 2224-2236 .

Aisling, L, Fiona, Mc, Lisa, B.(2007). An examination of what metaphor construction reveals about the evolution of preservice teachers' beliefs about Teaching and Learning, *Teaching and Teacher Education*,23 (7) 1217-1233.

- Alabadi, H. (2004). Practicum problems as it is seen by student teachers and their relationship with their attitudes towards the teaching profession, *Dirasat Educational Science*, 31(2).
- Basford, L & Thorpe, K. (2004). *Caring for the Older Adult*, Nelson Thornes, Ku.
- Bowers, C. (2005). Emergent reflective dialog among preservice teachers mediated through a virtual learning environment. *Journal of Computing in Teacher Education*, 21, 85–90.
- Collin, S., Karsenti, T. (2012). Reflective practice in initial teacher training: critiques and perspectives. *Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, 14 (1), 104-117.
- De Mulder, E and Rigsby, L. (2003). Teacher voices on reflective practice, *Reflective Practice*, 4(3) 267- 272.
- Gan, Z. (2013). Learning to Teach English Language in the Practicum: What Challenges do Non-Native ESL Student Teachers Face? *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38 (3), 92-108.
- Hamaidi, A., Al-Shara , I., Arouri, Y., & Awwad, F. (2014). Student-teacher's Perspectives of Practicum Practices and Challenges, *European Scientific Journal*, 1, (13), 191-214.
- Khales, B, (2015) The Power of Reflective Writing for Early Childhood Teachers in Palestine, *World Journal of Education*, 5(1), 94-101.
- Khales, B. Reflection Through Story Strengthening Palestinian Early Childhood Education, in Kroll, L.R. & Meier, D.R. (Eds.). (2015). *Educational change in international early childhood contexts: Crossing borders of reflection*. New York: Routledge.
- Khales, B. (2010). Reflective Thinking missing in curriculum and instruction. Chapter in Book "Reading in Curriculum and instruction": (Harb, M). Dar Wael ,Publication, Jordan.
- Leaman, L. (2006). *The naked teacher*, Continuum, London.
- Lee, H. (2005). Understanding and Assessing Preservice teachers' Reflective Thinking. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(6), 699-751.
- Ljubetić, M. (2012). New Competences for the Pre-school: Teacher A Successful Response to the Challenges of the 21st Century, *World Journal of Education*, 2(1), 82-90.
- MOEHE (2008). Education Development Strategic EDSP Plan 2008-2012, Ramallah: Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
- MOEHE (2013) Practicum Development, Palestine.
- Pavlovich, K. (2007). The Development of Reflective Practice through Student Journals, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 26 (3) 281-295.
- Qasi, Rawat, Thomas. (2012). The Role of Practicum in Enhancing student Teachers' Teaching Skills, *American Journal of Scientific Research*, 44, 44-57.
- Rath, J. (2001). Teachers beliefs and teaching beliefs, *Early childhood research and Practice*, 3(1)

- Roxanne, M. (2008). Improving college student reflective journal writing, *College Student Journal*, 42(2).
- Saluja, G., Early, D. & Clifford, M. (2002). Demographic characteristics of early childhood teachers and structural element of early care in the United State. *Early childhood research and practice*, .4(7).
- Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective Practitioner*, New York, Basic Book.
- Seferoglu, G. (2006). Teacher candidates' reflections on some components of a pre-service English teacher education program in Turkey. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 32, 369- 378.
- Simoncini, K., Lasen, L., & Rocco, S. (2014). Professional Dialog, Reflective Practice and Teacher Research: Engaging Early Childhood Pre-Service Teachers in Collegial Dialog about Curriculum Innovation, *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39 (1), 27-44.
- Tavýl, Z.M. (2014). The effect of self reflections through electronic journals (e-journals) on the self efficacy of pre-service teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(1), 1-20.
- Tuli ., & File,. (2009) Practicum experience in Teacher Education, *Ethiop. J. Educ. & Sc.* Vol. 5 No 1, 106-116. <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/ejesc/article/viewFile/56316/44756>
- West, C . (2012). Developing Reflective. Practitioners: Using Video- Cases in Music Teacher Education , *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 22(2) 11–19.

Appendix (1)**Questionnaire**

The researcher is conducting a research entitled “The Role of Reflective Dialog in helping Pre-service Teachers Confront Difficulties in an Early Childhood Practicum”

The questionnaire consists of 40 items followed by five choices. After reading the item, put (X) under the proper degree of difficulty that you feel applies to you.

Q #	ITEM	Very big	Big	Middle	Little	Very little
1	I have difficulty recognizing the tasks I am required to do in the practicum.					
2	I suffer from the routine of the practicum.					
3	The duration of the practicum is not enough.					
4	I feel afraid at the start of the practicum.					
5	I suffer from being unable to attend the practicum on a full-time basis.					
6	I have difficulty understanding the requirements of the practicum.					
7	I suffer from not having the opportunity for discussion with my colleagues in the practicum					
8	I suffer from being unable to organize the class environment					
9	I have difficulty teaching a large number of students.					
10	I suffer from being unable to organize activity time.					
11	I suffer from being unable to divide children into groups.					
12	I have difficulty managing class discussion.					
13	I suffer from fear of dealing with children.					
14	I suffer from being unable to solve children’s problems.					
15	I have difficulty dealing with children in the KG.					
16	I have difficulty controlling children in class.					
17	I suffer from my lack of knowledge of KG syllabus.					
18	I have difficulty planning child-centered activities.					
19	I have difficulty making an annual plan.					
20	I have difficulty making a daily plan.					
21	I have difficulty making a semester plan.					
22	I have difficulty planning according to children’s needs and interests					

23	I have difficulty selecting activities that are compatible with the comprehensive integrative approach.					
24	I have difficulty planning activities that are compatible with a student-centered approach.					
25	I have difficulty teaching children language skills.					
26	I have difficulty teaching children mathematical/athletic skills??physical education/arithmetic					
27	I have difficulty teaching children science.					
28	I have difficulty in applying art and drama activities.					
29	I have difficulty in making instructional aides.					
30	I have difficulty employing games in teaching.					
31	I suffer from being unable to employ activities that develop higher thinking skills.					
32	I suffer from being unable to employ child-centered teaching strategies					
33	I have difficulty using activities that consider the children's needs and characteristics.					
34	I have difficulty using activities that consider the children's various developmental needs (emotional, knowledge, social, linguistic)					
35	I suffer from being unable to design a worksheet.					
36	I have difficulty of using a children's portfolio.					
37	I have difficulty writing down class notes about children.					
38	I have difficulty transferring the notes to the children's evaluation lists					
39	I have difficulty assessing children according to the various developmental aspects.					
40	I suffer from being unable to consider individual difference among children.					