

## **Facilitating Reflective Learning in an EFL Teacher Education Course: A Hybrid/Blended-Learning Approach**

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### **Introduction**

Reflection has been considered a crucial cognitive activity to deepen teachers' exploration and analysis of teaching beliefs and practices (cf., Dewey, 1910/1997; Schön, 1983; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). The notion of reflection is not new to the TESOL field (Burton, 2009; Farrell, 2007). Reflection, as well as its importance for professional development, has been discussed by such scholars in the field as Gebhard and Oprandy (1999), Murphy (2001), Richards and Lockhart (1996), and Richards and Farrell (2005) to name but a few. It is now widely acknowledged that the more teachers explore, the more they gain the abilities to reflect-in-action and reflect-on-action (Gebhard, 2005). Hence, in the process of learning to teach in teacher education programs, reflection plays a prime role in determining student-teachers' learning outcomes. In addition, being reflective promotes student-teachers' lifelong professional development. Practical issues which should be addressed by teacher-educators are around whether or not a comfortable, learning-conducive environment can be created, and how such an environment can be made best use of in various teacher education courses. Based on these observations, this research project was designed and implemented in an EFL teacher education course (EFL Teaching Methodology III) offered in the Department of English Language & Literature at the Prefectural University of Kumamoto (henceforth PUK), Japan. A hybrid/blended-learning approach was employed to build an environment in which student-teachers' reflective learning would be facilitated.

### **Student-Teachers and Teaching Practica**

In Japanese tertiary-level teacher education settings, a two-week practicum is required for student-teachers (i.e., senior students) obtaining either a junior-high

or high school teaching certificate; a three-week practicum for student-teachers obtaining both junior-high and high school teaching certificates. While taking regular university-based courses, student-teachers are placed in individually different practicum sites (a junior-high or high school) for two or three weeks. They are not expected to attend university-based courses during their teaching practica. Prior to their starting dates of teaching practica, they are supposed to complete and submit Absence Permission Forms to their university so that their absences during practica can be authorized.

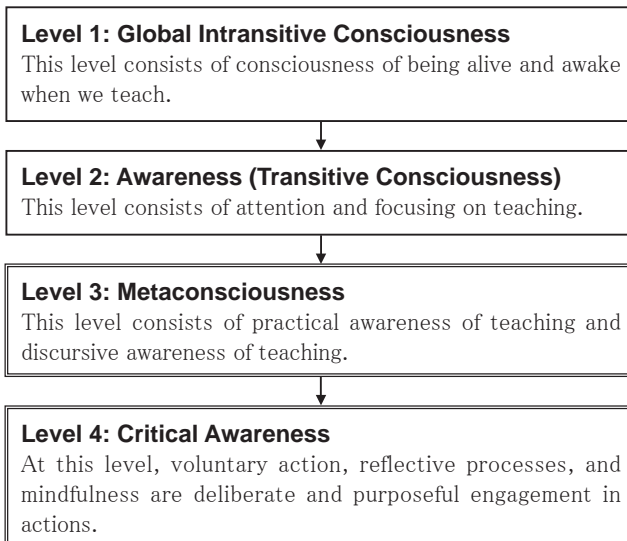
While student-teachers are gone to practicum sites, university-based teacher-educator's access to them is to a great extent limited (see Nagamine, 2008). A teacher-educator does not usually correspond with a student-teacher, which makes it difficult for a university-based teacher-educator to know and learn how well student-teachers are doing and what problems or concerns they have in often distant and inaccessible practicum sites. Even though an assigned faculty member (not necessarily a teacher-educator; for instance, a student-teacher's seminar instructor or an instructor of student-teacher's graduation-thesis study) from the Department of English Language & Literature at PUK can pay a one-time visit to each practicum site in order to observe student-teacher's teaching (class observation), which is often scheduled for the final week of the practicum period(s). The information obtained through such class observation is rarely shared or exchanged with other faculty members in the department. Furthermore, student-teachers do not usually contact one another unless one feels the necessity of urgent correspondence.

Practicum experience has been known to affect the (re-)construction of student-teachers' beliefs/cognition, their overall growth as language instructors and educators, and their decision to choose the career after graduation (Nagamine, 2008, 2009). As an EFL teacher-educator myself, I have pondered how I should monitor and/or assess individual student-teachers' learning processes during practica, how I can provide a necessary support or pieces of advice when necessary, and how I can promote student-teachers' engagement in reflective learning during their teaching practica. More importantly, since the collaborative-learning link established among student-teachers taking EFL Teaching Methodology III at the beginning of a semester is likely to be separated during teaching practica, I have wondered if an environment can be built in the course in a way that student-teachers in different practicum sites are all connected and can engage themselves in collaborative reflective learning. If such an environment

can be built in effect, their learning outcomes of not only the university-based course *per se* but also their practicum experiences can be enriched (cf., Gebhard & Nagamine, 2005). For these reasons, a hybrid/blended-learning approach was considered optimal and applied to the course in question.

### **Reflection and Teacher Learning/Development**

In spite of the importance of reflection, it has been pointed out that there is no clear definition of the term *reflection* (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001; Burton, 2009; Farrell, 1999, 2004, 2007; Griffiths, 2000; Stanley, 1998). According to Murphy (2001), there are three major purposes of reflection: (a) to understand one's teaching/learning process deeply; (b) to expand one's repertoire of strategic options; and (c) to promote the quality of learning opportunities one can provide for learners in classrooms. Thus, it can be postulated that reflection should ideally be connected with some change in teachers' action in such a way that learners can benefit in classrooms. From the same perspective to see reflection, Bailey et al. (2001) contend that constant reflection plays a critical role in empowering teachers, as well as student-teachers, to raise their awareness (i.e., transitive consciousness) to the level of metaconsciousness and further to the higher level of critical awareness (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Levels of Consciousness (adapted from Bailey et al., 2001).**

Gebhard and Oprandy (1999) and Johnson (1999, 2000) argue that critical reflection is necessary for teachers to identify who they are as persons and professionals and make sense of their professional experiences. According to Schön (1983), reflection, particularly reflection-in-action, should be practiced when teachers encounter and spontaneously cope with uncertain, unique circumstances (see also Dewey, 1910/1997). Farrell (2007) asserts that teachers who are engaged in reflection need to become aware of “the broader historical, sociopolitical and moral context of schooling” (p. 4) so as to become “agents of change” (Jay & Johnson, 2002, p. 80). By being reflective, teachers are expected to gain awareness of one’s teaching beliefs and practices, see teaching differently (Fanselow, 1988; Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999), and ultimately generate some change in action in order to serve learners better (Bailey et al., 2001; Murphy, 2001).

Accordingly, although the prime meaning of the term *reflection* is intrinsically retrospective, reflection needs to be linked with future action as well (Gebhard, 2005; Pennington, 1996; Stanley, 1998). It should be mentioned here that without “ample time and supported opportunities” (Johnson, 1999, p. 11) given to teachers, however, it is difficult, if not impossible, to foster and sustain reflection, and further generate change in their teaching beliefs and practices through reflection. Gebhard (1992) also gives us a cautionary remark that a primary goal of reflecting on professional experiences and gaining awareness is to “narrow the gap between an imagined view of their teaching and reality” (p. 5). Bearing in mind yet another cautionary remark given by Gebhard (2005), reflection was regarded in this research as an aspect (i.e., a process) of student-teachers’ exploration. In other words, reflection was not considered an end itself.

The following list illustrates my understanding of the term *reflection*. The listed features of the term collectively represent an operational definition used in this research project (the listing was adopted from Nagamine, 2008).

- (a) Reflection is teacher’s continuous, deliberate examinations of self, beliefs, attitudes, past and future behaviors in and outside of class, and socio-cultural, historical, and political factors of a schooling context.
- (b) It is a process of teachers’ exploration to gain awareness of and an understanding of teaching beliefs and practices.
- (c) It is an endless, cyclical mental endeavor that necessitates sufficient time and a supportive environment.

- (d) It is a means for teachers to reach critical awareness so as to face the reality and cope with problems (including unforeseen problems in the future) skillfully.
- (e) It enables teachers to expand their repertoire of strategic options and hence become more flexible, spontaneous practitioners.
- (f) It is a means for teachers to better serve learners.

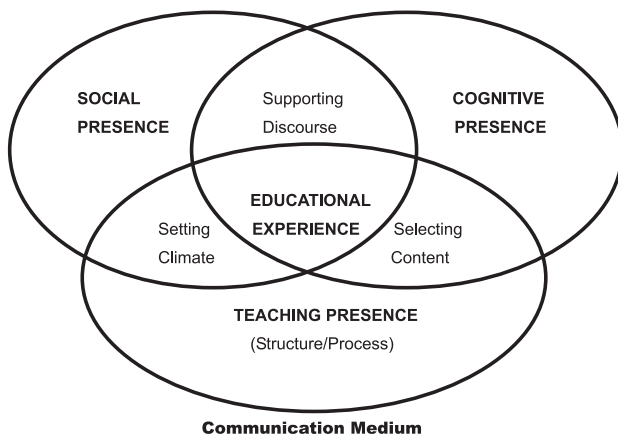
### **A Hybrid/Blended-Learning Approach**

A hybrid/blended-learning approach has been initially introduced by distance learning or e-learning communities for the purpose of complementing synchronous learning activities (as seen in traditional face-to-face instruction) with asynchronous learning activities performed outside class (Howard, Remenyi, & Pap, 2006). Such asynchronous learning activities are often text-based, learner-centered online activities (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Hybrid/blended learning is hence the integration of face-to-face classroom learning with distance learning or e-learning. When a hybrid/blended-learning approach is to be adopted, a community of inquiry should be taken into consideration. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) note:

Community provides the stabilizing, cohesive influence that balances the open communication and limitation access to information on the Internet. Communities also provide the condition for free and open dialogue, critical debate, negotiation and agreement --- the hallmark of higher education. (p. 97)

A group of learners (including a teacher or instructor) who are engaged in purposeful critical discourse and reflection constitutes the community of inquiry in which collaborative reflective learning takes place through the interaction of three core elements: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; see Figure 2). Among these elements, Garrison et al. (2000) state that cognitive presence is the most important entity for successful learning, for a tertiary-level education in particular, because “[c]ognitive presence is a vital element in critical thinking, a process and outcome that is frequently presented as the ostensible goal of all higher education” (p. 89). The second element is social presence which concerns with learners’ (as well as teacher’s/instructor’s) ability to present or project their selves (personal

characteristics) to others within the community. In order to build and sustain comfortable learning-conducive environment, social presence is inevitable. Social presence functions as a support for cognitive presence. The third element is teaching presence. In a hybrid/blended-learning environment, teaching responsibility can be shared among learners, but such sharing is usually initiated and directed by a teacher or instructor. Therefore, the challenge of applying a hybrid/blended-learning approach is building a community of inquiry in a virtual environment in which those three core elements can be reflected, actualized, and observed. In this research, the community of inquiry model proposed by Garrison et al. (2000) was used as a theoretical framework. As mentioned earlier, the most important concept in defining a community of inquiry is cognitive presence.



*Figure 2. Community of Inquiry (adapted from Garrison et al., 2000).*

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Research Context & Participants***

PUK offers an EFL teacher education program for prospective junior-high and/or high school teachers. Approximately fifteen to twenty students are annually enrolled in the program. Students who wish to obtain a teaching certificate and start their career as English teachers in public junior-high or high schools are required to complete the program successfully. Without a teaching certificate, students are not allowed to take an employment examination held

once a year by a prefectural board of education in Japan. Obtaining a teaching certificate does not guarantee their employment. The annually-held employment examination is known to be highly competitive, and no exemption is given to students no matter how good their academic coursework is (see Yoshida, 1999).

As previously mentioned, this research was carried out in EFL Teaching Methodology III offered in the EFL teacher education program at PUK. EFL Teaching Methodology III is a two-credit fifteen-week compulsory course targeting senior students enrolled in the teacher education program. The course includes a one-and-a-half hour class meeting once a week and overlaps the term(s) of required teaching practica. Participants of this research were 18 senior students (student-teachers; 16 females and 2 males) taking EFL Teaching Methodology III in the first semester (i.e., from April to August) of the 2009 academic year. The author of this paper (a teacher-educator) also took part in the hybrid/blended-learning community as a participant observer.

### ***Research Questions***

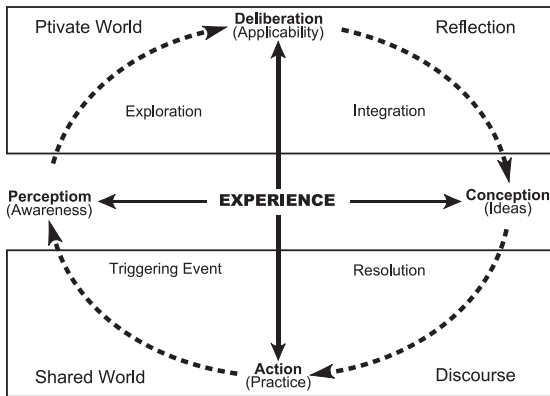
The major goal of this research was to examine and assess student-teachers' reflective learning manifested in a hybrid/blended-learning environment. E-learning and distance learning tools such as MLS (Mailing List System), BBS (Bulletin Board System), and cellular phones were fully utilized in tandem with traditional face-to-face lecture-oriented instruction in the aforementioned course. Thus, research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

- (a) How will a hybrid/blended learning environment created in a teacher education course affect student-teachers' reflective learning?
- (b) What characteristics/features can be found in student-teachers' textual interaction within an observed collaborative learning community?
- (c) How will student-teachers perceive their hybrid/blended learning experience?

### ***Data Collection & Analysis***

A qualitative approach (content analysis) was employed due to the nature of the inquiry. It was essential to use an approach through which the understanding of complex and nuanced textual interaction among the participants would be possible. Thus, an iterative process was used to guide the development of salient

or recurring patterns. Primary qualitative data analyzed in this research were hence textual messages exchanged among the participants with cellular phones through a Mailing-List named ‘PUK English Teachers’ Forum.’ All data were saved and printed out for later data analysis. The collected textual data were coded and categorized for qualitative analysis (cf., Miles & Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, the practical inquiry model advocated by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2001) was also employed to guide the analysis of critical discourse and reflection with much focus on the cognitive presence in this research (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3. Practical Inquiry Model (adopted from Garrison et al., 2001).**

For the coding and categorizing of obtained textual data, Community of Inquiry Coding Template was used (cf., Garrison et al., 2000; see Table 1). Indicators listed in Table 1 are examples of community members’ activities. At the end of the investigation period, a questionnaire was administered to investigate participants’ perceptions regarding the hybrid/blended-learning experience.



**Table 1. Community of Inquiry Coding Template (adopted from Garrison et al. (2000))**

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Indicators (Examples)</b>
<b>Cognitive Presence</b>	Triggering Event	Sense of puzzlement
	Exploration	Information exchange
	Integration	Connecting ideas
	Resolution	Apply new ideas
<b>Social Presence</b>	Emotional Expression	Emotions
	Open Communication	Risk-free expression
	Group Cohesion	Encouraging collaboration
<b>Teaching Presence</b>	Instructional Management	Defining and initiating discussion topics
	Building Understanding	Sharing personal meaning
	Direct Instruction	Focusing discussion

As Figure 3 indicates, cognitive activities have four phases: ‘Exploration,’ ‘Integration,’ ‘Resolution,’ and ‘Triggering Event.’ ‘Exploration’ and ‘Integration’ are core categories which constitute the reflective learning phase observed within the private world, while ‘Resolution’ and ‘Triggering Event’ are core categories which constitute the practical phase observed within the shared world.

## **Research Findings and Discussion**

### ***Coding Results of Textual Data***

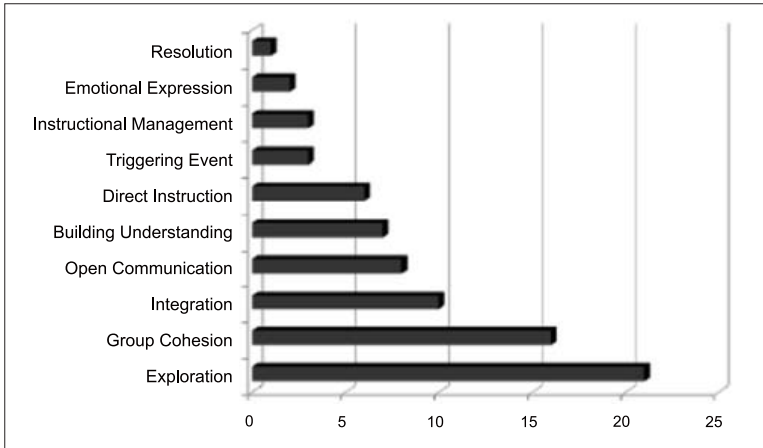
The participants ( $N=18$ ) and the participant observer posted and exchanged a total of 77 messages during the term of the investigation. Table 2 represents a general indication of the relative frequency of each category. Based on the data presented in Table 2, it can be said that all elements necessary for the building of a community of inquiry (i.e., cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence; see Figure 2) were observed in the participants’ textual interaction. To put it simply, the participants could successfully create a community of inquiry during the term of the investigation.

**Table 2. Coding Results of Textual Data**

Elements	Categories	Number of Textual Data
<b>Cognitive Presence</b>	Triggering Event	3
	Exploration	21
	Integration	10
	Resolution	1
<b>Social Presence</b>	Emotional Expression	2
	Open Communication	8
	Group Cohesion	16
<b>Teaching Presence</b>	Instructional Management	3
	Building Understanding	7
	Direct Instruction	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>77</b>

Figure 4 is a graph which shows the sorted data in accordance with the categorical frequencies. The most frequent textual entries were ‘Exploration’ which belongs to the reflective aspect of learning within the private world (see Figure 3). In other words, the participants of this research were engaged in reflective learning. The following is an example of the collected textual data indicating the category of ‘Exploration.’

Today was the fifth day of my practicum. So far, I have observed many classes including my supervisor’s classes, other English teachers’ classes, and classes dealing with different subjects. I learned that every high-school student in all classes showed differing attitudes and behaviors. Their reactions to each class vary to a great extent, even in classes dealing with the same themes or topics. I started thinking about the flexibility that an individual teacher should have in terms of teaching methods or approaches. (Mid-Practicum Phase; ‘Exploration’)



**Figure 4. Relative Frequencies for Categories**

The second most frequent textual entries were ‘Group Cohesion.’ This finding indicates that the participants supported and encouraged one another to actively participate in the socio-emotional textual interaction within the shared world. An example of the collected textual data indicating the category of ‘Group Cohesion’ is as follows:

My teaching practicum will start from May 28 and end on June 1. The term of my practicum will be two weeks. My teaching practicum site is Uto Kita high school (pseudonym). Student-teachers’ orientation will be held next week. So, for the next Monday, I scheduled to meet with my supervisor to discuss some pedagogical issues. Everyone! When my practicum begins, please support me by providing information or pieces of advice so that my teaching practicum will be meaningful! Let all of us collaborate and exchange information! (Pre-Practicum Phase; ‘Group Cohesion’)

The third most frequent textual entries were ‘Integration,’ which implies that the participants could integrate “the information and knowledge into a coherent idea or concept” (Garrison et al., 2000, p.98), and that the participants

successfully proceeded to the development of higher-level critical thinking and reflection (i.e., from ‘Exploration’ to ‘Integration’). The following example of the textual data exemplifies the categorized textual data as ‘Integration.’

I really appreciate your supporting me and providing me ideas and opinions (about the relationship issues between me and my supervisor). What you sent me (responses to my message: ideas and opinions) was so helpful! (After reading your messages,) I came to realize that I totally misunderstood my roles and my supervisor’s roles. My supervisor has been extremely busy as a homeroom teacher. Besides, he had to prepare for a PTA meeting and other things as well. I also realized that I did not really understand my supervisor’s situation, and that I, as a student-teacher, should not depend on him. Taking care of a student-teacher like me has been his additional work to do, and it has been his volunteer work! Even if my position is a student-teacher, I need to think and behave like a full-time, inservice teacher in the high school. I would like to become independent! (Mid-Practicum Phase; ‘Integration’)

‘Open Communication’ in the social presence deserves our attention. For effective learning in a community of inquiry, it is crucial to let learners engage themselves in reciprocal and respectful exchanges of experience-based opinions or ideas. ‘Open Communication’ necessitates participants’ mutual awareness and recognition. The participants of this research showed interpersonal support, encouragement, and acceptance of each participant by directing a comment to someone in particular, as well as by referring explicitly to the content of others’ messages. The following textual data exemplifies the category ‘Open Communication.’

Hello, everyone! For those who have already started teaching practica, I pray for your successful teaching so that you can make your practicum experiences meaningful! My teaching practicum has not yet started, but as I read your messages, I began to feel some pressure and tension. I became nervous, I think . . . I feel great, though, because I can learn (through the mailing list messages) how you have been doing in your practicum sites. (Pre-Practicum Phase; ‘Open Communication’)

Regarding ‘Building Understanding’ in the teaching presence, it can be said that the participants shared and discussed personal meanings discovered through the coursework and teaching practica. The obtained textual data clearly show such interactive processes such as taking on teaching responsibility in the community, offering pieces of advice to others, and discussing individual’s interpretation of critical incidents which occurred during their teaching practica. The following textual data exemplifies this finding.

[Regarding whether or not we should change our teaching style to those of our supervisors in the teaching practica,] I do not think we should change our teaching style to suit supervisors’ expectations. The process of, as well as the speed of, covering important points in class can vary among teachers. Though, of course, too much delay might be detrimental for inservice teachers. If we attempt to change our teaching styles in accordance with our supervisors’ expectations, the quality of our teaching is likely to be affected. I believe that as a student-teacher, how fast we can teach the content of a textbook should not be our concern; the important thing is how we can carefully plan and prepare for our lesson/class. What I did was this: I selected the most important point(s), examining the content of a textbook. It is not always simple for me to do that, but it is worth doing before teaching a class. It might be boring for the teacher and students to translate each word, phrase, or sentence, using the whole class time. So, I need to think how effectively I can teach and how fun it is for students to learn in my class. So far, I have taught three classes in total, and I still struggle a lot. Anyway, our preparation for every class is absolutely important. I am convinced that class preparation should be carefully done, and it is very important for us to spend much time for doing it beforehand. (Mid-Practicum Phase; ‘Building Understanding’)

As for ‘Emotional Expression,’ only a few participants expressed their deep feelings or emotions. The following message is an example of the category ‘Emotional Expression.’

Hi, there! Today, I had to stay in school until very late at night. Other student-teachers (from different universities) stayed in school until late

at night . . . I taught a class today, but my teaching did not go well. It was pathetic! I was totally disappointed . . . But, after my class, one male student came to me and said, “A lecture you gave to all students in the morning was interesting!” [the lecture was not given in a regular English class meeting; the lecture in question was given in a whole-school meeting.] His compliment made me feel very happy. I was moved by his positive comment although his comment was not about my pathetic class! I could feel relieved, and I think I will be able to continue my teaching practicum! (Mid-Practicum Phase; ‘Emotional Expression’)

This finding (low frequency of the category ‘Emotional Expression’) might be culture specific (Nagamine, 2009). Sharing emotions and sharing information are two different things (see Table 1). The participants of this research tended to refrain from sharing their deep feelings and emotions; however, sharing information (i.e., ‘Exploration’) was frequently observed in the hybrid/blended-learning environment. The frequencies observed in such categories as ‘Instructional Management,’ ‘Triggering Event,’ and ‘Direct Instruction’ would seem to be reasonable because the problem or issue was to some extent guided and framed by the participant observer in an educational context.

The issue worthy of special consideration is why ‘Resolution’ in the cognitive presence was so few. ‘Resolution’ is closely related to ‘Action/Practice’ (see Figure 3) in the shared world. One possible explanation for this finding would be that the participants were all student-teachers who were supervised by inservice teachers at their individually different practicum sites. Hence, during their practica, it might have been difficult for the participants to test their ideas and resolution in supervised class settings. Another explanation would be that the application of ideas or testing of ideas may be difficult even in synchronous face-to-face instruction; an asynchronous text-based learning environment might have been more challenging to the participants to demonstrate the ‘Resolution’ phase of cognitive activities. The other explanation would be that the hybrid/blended-learning environment built in this research, as well as the practical inquiry model used in this research, is not suitable for the observation and/or assessment of such participants’ higher-level cognitive activity (cf., Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001). An excerpt of the textual data indicating the category ‘Resolution’ will be presented and discussed in the next section.

### ***Observed Reflective Learning Process***

As for the participants' reflective learning process, it was obvious that the participants engaged themselves in 'Exploration' first and then moved into 'Integration.' To the participants, 'Exploration' might have been easier than 'Integration,' and hence, 'Exploration' possibly preceded 'Integration.' The participants demonstrated that the most difficult activity was 'Resolution.' Only one participant reached the level (or phase) of 'Resolution.' Let us examine the participant's development; the following excerpts imply the shift observed in the textual data from 'Exploration' to 'Integration' and further to 'Resolution.'

I met my supervisor for the first time today. She graduated from our university and became an inservice teacher! She said to me, "I would like to learn from your teaching. Let us learn from each other during the practicum!" I was very happy to hear such comments. I also felt happy when I knew that even inservice teachers have such motivation to grow and develop as greater teachers! But, after talking about the class (as well as students' characteristics) I would teach during the practicum, I started to feel some anxiety, though. I will do my best, everyone! I have a question for you. What is an effective way to use flash cards? (Pre-Practicum Phase; 'Exploration').

Hello, everyone! Thank you very much for giving me a lot of advice (regarding the use of flash cards). Those pieces of advice were all helpful for me. I could learn a lot! When I asked the question, I didn't think (about the difficulties or issues as they relate to the use of flash cards) that much. I just wanted to use flash cards. And, also, I thought that with using flash cards, I would be able to check my students' pronunciation effectively. But, well . . . maybe not, if I use it in a wrong way! I don't think I will be able to use flash cards effectively at this point in time. As the other members posted to the mailing list, I need to practice using flash cards many times, right? I didn't think about that necessity!!! (Mid-Practicum Phase; 'Integration')

Regarding the use of flash cards (for vocabulary teaching), I did not think that it was hard. I thought it was very simple. So, in today's class, I used flash cards for the first time. But, I didn't feel comfortable using them. I

think my way of using flash cards was not effective. While reading your messages and advice, I learned that using flash cards is not simple at all. I came to understand that we need to practice using flash cards and acquire some techniques beforehand. To be honest with you, I thought it was enough to use flash cards in class. Using flash cards was an end to me. I did not think deeply enough about the reasons why I used them, and I did not see flash cards as an effective means at all. As my friends wrote in their messages, the tempo/timing of showing flash cards is very important. I will think about whether or not I really need to use flash cards in class, and I will be ready to explain my reasoning regarding the use of flash cards. In tomorrow's class, I will try to use flash cards differently, taking into consideration what I learned from you guys (through the mailing list) (Mid-Practicum Phase; 'Resolution')

With reference to Figure 1, it can be said that 17 participants reached the level 3 Metaconsciousness (i.e., practical awareness of teaching and discursive awareness of teaching) and failed in reaching the level 4 Critical Awareness (i.e., voluntary action, reflective processes, and mindfulness are deliberate and purposeful engagement in actions) during the term of the investigation. This finding is in line with Garrison et al.'s study (2001). To reiterate, cognitive activity 'Resolution' in the shared world (Discourse; see Figure 3) might have been challenging to the participants learning in the hybrid/blended-learning environment built in this research.

### ***Perspectives to View a Hybrid/Blended-Learning Approach***

At the end of the investigation, a questionnaire was administered to the participants ( $N=18$ ) to investigate their views regarding the hybrid/blended-learning experience. Two questions were asked in the questionnaire (see Appendix A). The following Tables 3 and 4 represent the results of the questionnaire items (1) and (2) respectively.



**Table 3. Result of the Questionnaire Item (1)**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>I strongly agree.</b>	14	78
<b>I agree</b>	3	17
<b>I disagree.</b>	1	5
<b>I strongly disagree.</b>	0	0
<b>Total</b>	18	100

As you can see in Table 3, 95 percent of the participants viewed hybrid/blended learning was effective or helpful. That is to say, the hybrid/blended-learning approach applied in this research was perceived positively by almost all the participants. This finding clearly shows the high applicability or feasibility of a hybrid/blended-learning approach in teacher education settings.

**Table 4. Result of the Questionnaire Item (2)**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Statement (a)</b>	3
<b>Statement (b)</b>	10
<b>Statement (c)</b>	18
<b>Statement (d)</b>	6
<b>Statement (e)</b>	17
<b>Statement (f)</b>	12
<b>Statement (g)</b>	13

In Table 4, we can see that the main reason why the participants thought hybrid/blended learning was effective or helpful. The hybrid/blended-learning environment built in this research allowed the participants to share information, problems, issues, concerns, or anxieties during teaching practica. The participants (including the teacher-educator as a participant observer) could know and learn what and how other student-teachers were doing during teaching practica. It is interesting to see that the participants did not regard building their network with alumni and alumnae as important; they found it more important and

meaningful to build their network with other student-teachers who were situated in individually different practicum sites. Moreover, the participants seem to prefer sharing information, problems, issues, concerns, or anxieties to sharing successful teaching or positive experiences during their teaching practica. These findings may indicate that the participants tended to pay particular attention to their unsuccessful teaching or negative experiences due possibly to the lack of confidence and/or knowledge, and that they wanted to receive pieces of advice from other community members regarding their unsuccessful teaching or negative experiences.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This research project was designed and implemented to investigate student-teachers' reflective learning manifested in textual interactions within a hybrid/blended-learning environment. The term of the investigation was one semester (fifteen weeks) and covered student-teachers' teaching practica (two or three weeks). The research questions addressed in this study were:

- (a) How will a hybrid/blended learning environment created in a teacher education course affect student-teachers' reflective learning?
- (b) What characteristics/features can be found in student-teachers' textual interaction within an observed collaborative learning community?
- (c) How will student-teachers perceive their hybrid/blended learning experience?

It was found that the participants successfully created a community of inquiry and demonstrated reflective learning phases (especially the shift from 'Exploration' to 'Integration'). Although cognitive activities in the shared world such as 'Resolution' seem to be challenging to the participants, it can be said that a hybrid/blended-learning approach to teacher education settings is an effective way to support, observe, and assess student-teachers' reflective learning during teaching practica. It should also be mentioned that almost all the participants perceived their learning experience within the hybrid/blended-learning environment in a positive manner.

Student-teachers in general might go through 'Exploration' and 'Integration' phases, perhaps in a cyclical fashion to reach 'Resolution' or the critical

awareness level. Having said that, though, the term of the investigation should have been much longer, and it should have been extended to examine their cognitive activities even after they pass teacher employment exams and become inservice teachers. Though speculative, the more the participants of this research gain teaching experiences, the more the application of ideas or ‘Resolution’ may be observed.

The analysis of qualitative textual data with reference to Community of Inquiry Coding Template revealed that the participants’ discourse had unique characteristics. It is suggested that researchers use the same coding template and analyze their participants’ reflective learning to re-examine and verify the feasibility or applicability of the coding template in other teacher education settings. The practical inquiry model used in this research is a model developed on the basis of Dewey’s experience-oriented conceptual framework. This research suggests that the model be modified, especially when assessing or examining student-teachers’ reflective learning in the shared world. Most student-teachers lack sufficient teaching experience, and thus, as this research shows, they may demonstrate a tendency to stay in the private world of the practical inquiry model. Thus, the important issue which should be addressed in the future is whether or not (and how) a teacher-educator can enhance cognitive activities within the shared world. If researchers would like to examine student-teachers’ action/practice-related cognitive activities in more depth, the coding template and/or the practical inquiry model may be modified to suit differing student-teachers’ needs, traits, or characteristics in diverse teacher education contexts.

Finally, as this research demonstrates, it seems to be quite reasonable to apply a hybrid/blended-learning approach to university-based coursework for the purpose of enriching student-teachers’ reflective learning experience through their coursework and teaching practica. By making best use of a hybrid/blended-learning approach in tandem with face-to-face instruction in university-based coursework, a university-based teacher-educator can create a collaborative, learning-conducive environment in which student-teachers’ reflective learning during their teaching practica and/or coursework can be efficiently monitored and objectively evaluated/assessed from a different angle. A hybrid/blended-learning approach to teacher education settings may have a great potential to change teacher-educators’ perspectives to see student-teachers’ learning or development processes.

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### Appendix A: Questionnaire

- (1) In EFL Teaching Methodology III, hybrid/blended learning was incorporated in the coursework which covers teaching practicum period(s). Do you agree that hybrid/blended learning was effective or helpful?
  
- (2) E-learning and distance learning tools such as MLS (Mailing List System), BBS (Bulletin Board System), and cellular phones were fully utilized in tandem with traditional face-to-face lecture-oriented instruction in EFL Teaching Methodology III. Did you think such tools were effective or helpful? Read each statement and put a circle round the alphabet which best represents your views. You may choose multiple statements.
  - (a) It was effective or helpful because I would be able to build my network with alumni and alumnae.
  - (b) It was effective or helpful because I could build my network with other student-teachers during teaching practica.
  - (c) It was effective or helpful because I could share information, problems, issues, concerns, or anxieties during teaching practica.
  - (d) It was effective or helpful because I could share successful teaching or positive experiences during teaching practica.
  - (e) It was effective or helpful because I could know and learn what and how other student-teachers were doing during my teaching practicum.
  - (f) It was effective or helpful because I could share information regarding university-based coursework (i.e., EFL Teaching Methodology) during teaching practica.
  - (g) It was effective or helpful because I could obtain pieces of advice from other student-teachers and/or a university-based teacher-educator during my teaching practicum.