Becoming a Reading Teacher: Technical, Practical, and Critical Reflections on Service-learning in a Developmental Reading Course

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Much has been hoped for and said about reflection as an essential attribute of effective literacy teaching. Equally as much remains muddled and confused, however, as to its purpose, development, and role in preparing new teachers of reading. How to help aspiring teachers become more reflective about their literacy teaching across the preparatory years is not clear, and proven strategies for improving reflection through professional education are lacking.

-Roskos, Vulelich, & Risko (2001)

This study investigated the extent to which reflections done by pre-service teacher education students on a service-learning component of a Developmental Reading course demonstrated the technical, practical, and critical levels. Using axial coding, data from nineteen reading tutors' journals and responses to an open-ended questionnaire were analysed to determine the level of reflection used and the merits, limitations, and promise of using reflective journals for the improvement of reading instruction and teaching in general. Findings suggest that although reflection is a crucial component of service-learning, its potential may only be fully exploited if students are provided specific or focused stimuli for reflection. Explicit instruction on the three levels of reflection may also be necessary to ensure that students go beyond mere description of their experiences.

Keywords: Reflection in service-learning, Service-learning in pre-service teacher education

Reflection is critical to teaching practice. Educators have long been advocating teacher and student engagement in reflection as part of their practice. For example, Piaget (1972) posited that human beings engage in the process of interacting with the environment, interpreting it, and relating their interpretations to their internal schema or cognitive structures. Freire

(1973, 2000) posited that learning is a dynamic process of action-reflection-action, and change can only take place when there is dialogue and reflection on one's practice, and when students engage in transformative practices. In teacher education, Giroux (2009) challenged teacher preparation institutions to transcend the practice of developing teachers as technicians, expert at the craft of replicating supposed generic "best practices" instead of developing among them "a level of awareness that allows them to raise questions about the principles underlying different classroom methods, research techniques and theories of education." As transformative intellectuals, teachers critically reflect on and modify their practices since teachers shape the purposes and conditions of schooling (Giroux, 2009, p.3).

This paper describes my attempts as a teacher educator to engage first year pre-service teacher education students in the process of reflection on their practice through a service-learning activity. Moreover, I reflected on my own practice as a novice in facilitating a course with a service-learning component. Particularly, I was interested in seeking answers to the following questions: 1) What are the merits, limitations, and challenges of using reflective journals in pre-service education students' initiation to the practice of teaching through a service-learning activity? 2) How may I, as a pre-service teacher educator, improve my practice particularly in facilitating reflective thinking among pre-service education students who are engaged in service-learning activity?

My experience in incorporating service-learning in the teaching of reading came as response to an immediate need. I was teaching Developmental Reading classes for Bachelor in Elementary Education students in a Teacher Education Institution (TEI) in one of the Centers of Excellence in Teacher Education at a University in the southern Philippines. Although the university accreditation status granted it a level of autonomy from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the college had to meet CHED minimum requirements for all its programs. CHED mandated that for Bachelor in Elementary Education (BEEd), TEIs require 174 units of courses, of which 54 units comprise professional education subjects (CMO 30, s 2004). Among these are Developmental Reading 1, which focuses on the perspectives, principles, and stages of the reading process; and Developmental Reading 2, which emphasizes the approaches and methods of teaching reading (PAFTE VII Professional Education Curriculum Guide, 2007).

When I started the syllabus for these courses, I realized that the teaching of Developmental Reading 2 paused a challenge to both the students and the teacher. The subject was primarily an introductory course on methods of teaching reading in the early grades. Yet, the course was required of first year students, many of whom would have taken only two or three professional educational courses and no units in methods of teaching. Considering that all of the students in class majored in Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd), I prepared a syllabus that emphasized the discussion and demonstration of various methods to develop children's Early Literacy Concepts (Oral language development, concepts about print, alphabetic knowledge, phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence, and beginning reading vocabulary). Moreover, I included some approaches to teaching reading in the Philippines such as the Four-pronged approach, content-based reading, and reading in the mother tongue, knowing well that the Department of Education, through DepEd Order 74 s 2009, has institutionalized Mother tongue multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in Kindergarten through Grade 3.

Considering the difficulty that many of the students may encounter in this methods course, I thought it would be best for them to observe classes and reflect on what they observe in relation to the class discussions. However, when arrangements were made for my students to observe reading classes in the early grades, I was informed that they could only observe 2-3 sessions because of the number of students in Field Education courses who were also observing the classes at the university's laboratory school. So, I made arrangements with a local foster home and a child-care center to allow the Developmental Reading 2 students to tutor children in their centers who may be at risk of failing in the reading classes. I modified the syllabus to incorporate the objectives and activities in my first attempt at formalizing the integration of service-learning in the Developmental Reading 2 class.

Although the initial reflection of the students indicated a development in their appreciation of teaching as a profession and deepened their commitment to literacy education, I was bothered by the journal entries that described the difficulty and risks involved in going to the foster home after school hours to meet the children for the reading tutorials. So, in the following year I decided to modify the service-learning component of the course. The students were allowed to tutor their sibling, relative, or neighbor whom they believe may be at risk of failing their reading class based on

information from their latest school report card. The students were required to show evidence that the child needed the tutorial based on their school performance and that the family could not afford to hire a reading tutor. The students were also required to 1) render at least 10 tutorial sessions; 2) compile a portfolio of their lesson guide and materials used as well as photos of some of the sessions; 3) submit a journal reflection after each of the tutorial sessions; and 4) write an evaluation of the activity at the end of the semester. The tutorials were conducted in September, after the University conducts its mid-term examination. By then, the class would have already discussed and demonstrated in class the strategies for teaching beginning reading skills. The objectives and activities in this service-learning component of the course was indicated in the course syllabus.

Service-Learning as a Form of Inquiry

Service-Learning is a mutually beneficial teaching and learning strategy where students engage in purposeful and meaningful service to individuals and communities while critically reflecting on their practice, thereby deepening their understanding of the certain issues and processes embedded in the curriculum. According to Le Grange (2007), service learning is not only pedagogy; it is also "a philosophy and a form of inquiry that integrates classroom instruction with community service activities." Thus, service-learning activities are planned and enacted based on clearly-defined learning objectives. It "addresses lessons from the service through regularly scheduled, organized critical reflection through a variety of modes such as structured writing" (Carrington & Iyer, 2011, p.1). Critical reflection is, therefore, an integral component of any service-learning activity. In fact, reflection is considered one of the four Rs in service-learning, namely respect, reciprocity, relevance, and reflection (Butin, 2003, pp. 1676-1677).

Berger-Kaye (2004) described four types of service-learning activities: direct, indirect, research-based, and advocacy service-learning. In Direct Service-Learning, the students engage in "person-to-person service projects in which the students' service directly impacts individuals who receive the service." An example of this would be reading tutorials for the purpose of assisting the children who are failing the subject. As tutors, the students constantly reflect on specific techniques and strategies that work best for particular groups of children. In Indirect service-learning, the students

investigate broad issues and engage in such projects such as community development, which not only impacts the individual but the larger community or the environment. An example of this would be the establishment of a children's library where students not only organize and mobilize the community and the local government unit to allocate space and build the structure, but also organize, train, and empower mothers to engage in periodic story-telling and story reading sessions in the mother tongue, Filipino, and English. Research-based Service learning involves "gathering and presenting information on areas of interest and need-projects." For example, the Direct service-learning where pre-service education students facilitate tutorial sessions with students at risk of failing their reading classes may also have a research-based service learning component. The students could investigate the phenomenon on reading anxiety, and conduct interviews or focus group discussions with the children as well their parents and teachers. Home visits and class observations may also be conducted for the students to further explore the social construction or the social conditions that relate to reading anxiety. This may contribute to local constructions of the phenomenon of reading anxiety and inform decisions on how to address this concern in the children's local contexts. The *Developmental* Reading 2 class was engaged in Direct Service-Learning since the main purpose of tutoring the child was to help him/her develop reading skills necessary to improve his/her grade in the reading class. Thus, it is the individual beneficiary, not the community, who is impacted by the service.

On the part of the Developmental Reading 2 students, the service-learning component of the course was also aimed at self-improvement. They would be able to practice strategies and techniques in teaching reading in the early grades and reflect on their teaching-learning experiences. At another layer, through the students' evaluation of the course and the service-learning engagement in particular, I am able to reflect on my practice as a teacher educator. Thus, the service-learning engagement primarily benefited the individuals concerned.

This investigation attempted to explore the extent to which students are able to reflect on their teaching practice as reading tutors. Moreover, it aimed to determine possibilities of improving such practice so that it can better serve future Developmental Reading 2 classes. Finally, it aimed to provide a space where a teacher educator who was herself initiated into service-learning as a course component, is able to reflect on her practice as a facilitator of learning.

Reflection as Lived Experience

Reflection is a phenomenon, "a lived experience with temporal qualities". It is "a theory of professional practice" and an intellectual construct that involves "a complex array of cognitively and philosophically distinct methods and attitudes" (Schon, 1983, in Roskos, Vulelich, & Risko, 2011, p. 596). Reflection may be viewed as a way of thinking about educational matters that involves the ability to make rational choices and to assume responsibility for those choice (Galvez-Martin & Bowman, 1998).

Reflection is also a process. In 1933, John Dewey, in light of his "learning by doing" tenet, proposed that learning necessitated student engagement in reflection. This process consisted of several mental steps namely confusion, anticipation, analysis, elaboration, decision making, and action; and certain qualities of character such as open-mindedness, whole- heartedness, and responsibility (Roskos, Vulelich, & Risko, 2001). For Shulman (1987), the process involves reviewing, reconstructing, re-enacting, and critically analyzing one's own and the class's performance (Shulman, 1987), so that one sees not only what was done and why it was done but also what else could be done (Valverde, 1982 as cited in Martin & Bowman, 1998).

Schon (1987) introduced the term, reflection-on-action which occurs when one recalls an action or practice to "uncover" how his/her action brings about particular outcomes. In this process, the practitioner not only thinks back but also engages in a re-shaping of his/her actions to achieve an educational goal (Ayaji, 2011, p. 172). Such reflective practice allows the beginning teacher to think about the relationship between theory and practice, which is always a complex and interactive (Wenger, 2005, p.48). In this study, such educational end is the effective teaching of reading using pre-determined methods discussed in the Developmental Reading 2 class.

In an attempt to see the link between theoretical knowledge and teaching practice, Van Manen (1977) introduced the three "interrelated and intertwined hierarchical levels of reflection" namely technical, the practical, and the critical. The technical level of reflection focuses on one's technical application of knowledge to achieve certain ends. For Hatton and Smith (1995), this refers to the effective means of achieving specific educational ends. In the context of this investigation, this happens when the student teacher recalls the process, input, and output of the reading tutorial session.

The second level, the practical, is higher in that the teacher not only recalls his/her actions to determine their contribution to the education goal but also re-examines, analyses, and interprets their actions and purposes. In the third level, the critical, the teacher examines and "critiques the social conditions of teaching by relating literacy instruction to the broader socio-political context of instruction" (Ayaji, 2011, p.173). In other words, in the technical level, the teacher asks **what** has been achieved and what actions contributed to the realization or failure in meeting the educational goal. In the second level, the teacher asks **why** his/her actions contribute to the achievement or failure to achieve the goal and **what could have been done** (Van Manen, 1991), while in the third level the teacher asks **how come?**

Moreover, in investigating how critical reflection may be developed and sustained in teacher education, Smyth (1989) proposed four forms of action that may be used when pre-service teachers engage in reflection: describing (what do I do?), informing (what does it mean?), confronting (how did I come to be like this?), and reconstructing (how might I do things differently?). "Such opportunities to engage in reflective thinking help pre-service teachers link theory to practice, allowing them to try to balance learning styles and teaching styles with content, and thus challenge their own practices and assumptions as they strive for improvement" (Galvez-Martin & Bowman, 1998).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: REFLECTION IN LITERACY/READING TEACHER EDUCATION

Research on the role of reflection in teacher education started in the late 1970's. According to Ajayi (2001), such research were pioneered by Smyth (1989), Schon (1987), and Van Manen (1977). Current research on the subject focused on the levels of reflection that pre-service teachers engage in and how professors in teacher education institutions may provide the necessary scaffolding to raise the teachers' level of reflection so that the process could better inform their practice.

In their work, *Reflection and learning to teach reading: A critical review of literacy and general teacher education studies*, Roskos *et al*. (2001) conducted a comparative analysis of 54 reflection studies (18 literacy; 36 general teacher education) to clarify the concept of reflection as studied in the literacy field and for informing future research. An inductive paradigmatic analysis

produced descriptive observations that highlight similarities and differences between the two data sets and five interpretive patterns that characterize researchers' conceptualizations and problem solving.

Based on their findings, they proposed that a systematic investigation on the process of reflection among pre-service literacy teachers be conducted. Such studies must 1) focus on gathering evidence of reflection development in those learning to teach so that a developmental continuum that describes typical phases of cognitive and dispositional growth in relation to teaching work may be generated; 2) be conducted to identify and articulate proven strategies, sensitive to contextual factors, and responsive to students' individual approach to reflection must be conducted; 3) investigate how researchers in the literacy field design and validate instructional protocols that more deliberately scaffold reflective thinking to more critical levels since eliciting reflection is not enough to improve pre-service teachers' reflective abilities as future professionals; 4) employ various methods in their research designs to include not only baseline description but also more rigorous observational methods in order to establish and refine educational interventions that ultimately improve the teacher educators' practice; and 5) be longitudinal so that "a sense of historical continuity in reflection research work" may be achieved and so that "studies build on one another in ways that bring traditional wisdom and past gains forward into new research efforts."

L'Allier (2005) examined how a literacy educator used the reflections of 85 pre-service teachers to reflect on her own practice. Data sources included reflective responses regarding effective literacy practices and reflections written after the implementation of read-aloud and reading comprehension lessons. Responses regarding best practices indicated that pre-service teachers selected practices that were demonstrated in class and for which they were given guided practice, suggesting that instructors should carefully select those practices they highlight in class sessions. Identifying common themes regarding what went well and what might be changed in the implemented lessons provided support for continuing certain practices, such as requiring specific directions for tasks to be written within the lesson plans, and for revising other practices, such as providing more guidance as pre-service teachers select the books and strategies they plan to use for their lessons.

Gibson (2010) investigated the role of using reflective reading journey to inform teaching and learning among elementary and middle school

education students who were taking a course on children's literature and the role of literature in the classroom. Using the reflective essays on their reading journey, she investigated how pre-service teachers' perceptions of their own reading development and patterns have impacted on their future teaching practices. Based on her findings, Gibson concluded that reflection compels the pre-service teacher to more closely examine their experiences and see the important role they play in the teaching-learning process.

Galvez-Martin and Bowman (1998) analyzed 42 pre-service teachers' reflection levels during their Master of Education program. Participants completed three types of reflective journal writing (reflections on selected readings, class discussions, and early field and student teaching experiences). The 21 control students received a 30-minute orientation that provided guidelines for writing class journals. For the field journals, control students were told to reflect on any event and explain what had happened, how they handled it, and how it could have been improved. The 21 experimental students received a 3-hour orientation that included detailed discussion on reflective thinking and practice, cognitive processes, the importance of reflection, and reflective theory. They completed four reflective teaching lessons, received guided questions for their reflection in class journals, and were given guidelines for reflection in their field journals that were much more detailed than the guidelines given to the control students. All students handed in their class journals and reading journals weekly for 5 weeks and their field journals at several points in time. Researchers scored all journal entries for levels of reflection. Results indicated that when pre-service teachers engaged in reflective activities, their levels of reflection improved considerably. Moreover, participants who received specific training on reflective thinking were more reflective. The study also showed that even though pre-service teachers could achieve the higher levels of reflection, they still did not reach the highest level.

In examining the effectiveness of using explicit instruction in teaching methods courses to increase the capacity of Alternative Licensed Literacy Teachers (ALLTs) to develop critical reflective practice, Ajayi (2011) found that explicit instruction—videotaped reflections, discussions, modeling, feedback, and scaffolding can provide an effective conceptual framework for teaching critical reflection in literacy teacher education programs. Explicit instruction model provided the ALLTs the skill to describe specific teaching events, focus on meanings, and connect teaching to schools' social and

cultural contexts. The findings in this study suggest that professors can use critical reflection to prepare ALLTs to "challenge educational inequalities by culturally locating literacy teaching in the conditions and cultures of schools in which they are teaching."

In sum, findings on the studies on the use of reflection in reading/literacy teacher education suggest that reflection of one's learning history and reflection on one's teaching experiences has positive impact a teacher's teaching practices. However, for this process to be productive, there is a need to explicitly teach the process of reflection and to provide scaffolding on how to engage in critical reflection.

METHOD

Research Design

This investigation primarily falls into what Grotjahn (1987) classified as exploratory-interpretive study. The method of data collection is non-experimental; the type of data yielded in qualitative; and the analysis is interpretive. It is worth noting, however, that data from the survey and the journal entries were analyzed based on predetermined categories formulated by Van Manen (1977). This includes the three critical levels of reflection on literacy instruction namely the technical, the practical, and the critical. Descriptive statistics is used to quantify some observations, where necessary. Data from students' evaluation of the Developmental Reading course at the end of the semester were analyzed to determine if these were consistent with students' evaluation of the same from the survey that was conducted a year after they took the course. Taking data from different periods in the development of the pre-service teacher education students who were engaged in the study was part of the attempt to triangulate data sources.

Participants

This study employed non-random, convenience sampling. However, only those who took Developmental Reading 2 in the second semester of school year 2012-2013 were invited to participate in the study. Only one of the two classes was included in the study because the University Office of Instruction, which facilitated the semester-end evaluation of classes, selected only one of

the two classes, and the researcher did not want to alter university evaluation procedures. Only nineteen of the 35 journals were analyzed for this study. These comprised those which were not retrieved by the students. Nineteen students participated in the survey.

Instruments

In addition to the analysis of nineteen journal entries, two instruments were used in the study. The first was a researcher-made open-ended questionnaire and relevant portions of the University faculty evaluation.

The open-ended questionnaire sought answers to the questions: 1) What thoughts and realizations came to you as you wrote your reflections on your reading tutorial sessions? and 2) What specific insights about teaching and learning did you learn from the tutorial sessions you had with your tutee? The University faculty evaluation has two parts: the numeric and the qualitative evaluation. To generate students' qualitative comments on student's perception of the course, answers to two questions were analyzed. Since the focus of this study is the course itself, only the following questions were considered: 1) What do you like best about this subject? and 2) what do you like least about this subject?

Procedure

To triangulate the data collection methods, the researcher conducted a survey with nineteen respondents; journal entry examination of the same participants, and a review of the open-ended ended questions of relevant to the research problem that were included in in the University student course evaluation. Only one of the two Developmental Reading 2 classes was evaluated the University Office of Instruction.

The researcher first sought the permission of the dean of the College of Education to conduct the study. She also sought the permission of the professional education teacher whose students took the Developmental Reading 2 classes in the preceding semester to allow the researcher to conduct the survey in his class.

To test if the research questions were clearly stated and that no statement nor questions was leading or ambiguous, two Developmental Reading 2 students who were in the class that was studied were asked to answer the

questionnaire. They were then interviewed to determine items that needed improvement or revisions. They were excluded in the final conduct of the interview.

Nineteen students were present during the survey. The researcher informed them that the survey was meant to improve the teaching of Developmental Reading 2 and that confidentiality of sources will be respected. They were also informed that the survey will be used for research purposes and that their responses will not affect their grades. Then, the researcher read the questions one by one, and asked the students if each question was clear to them.

For the examination of students' reflection on their practice, the researcher read the reflection of fifteen students. Their reflection was based on the question, *What did you learn from the reading tutorial sessions that you facilitated?* Statements were color coded based on the three levels of reflection proposed by Van Manen (1977). Statements indicting level one reflection were underlined with orange highlighter. Level 2 and 3 levels of reflection were underlined with purple and blue highlighters respectively.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Axial coding using predetermined categories were used to analyze the data. Axial coding is a "set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). Moreover, Boeiji (2010), emphasized that in axial coding, the reasoning moves from codes to data, whereas in open coding, the reasoning moved from data to codes." In qualitative research, when predetermined categories are used to organize data, one is engaged in axial coding.

In this study, the predetermined data included the three "interrelated and intertwined hierarchical levels of reflection" proposed by Van Manen (1977). The first level, technical reflection, technical reflection included the recollection of one's actions and how these contributed to the realization of the lesson goals and objectives. In this study, this happened when the reading tutor recalls what transpired during the tutorial session and thinks about what actions and processes contributed to the success or failure of the lesson.

In the second level, practical reflection, the teacher "re-examines, analyses, and interprets" his or her actions and purposes. In this study, this included statements which demonstrate the participants ask not only why

certain actions and processes happen but also what could have been done to address the concern.

Finally, in the third level, critical reflection, the teacher examined and "[critiqued] the social conditions of teaching by relating literacy instruction to the broader socio-political context of instruction" (Ayaji, 2011, p.173). In this study, this included statements where the reading tutors reflect on the impact of the dearth of literacy materials at home to the child's reading development.

Axial coding was employed in the analysis of the reading tutors' level of reflection. Moreover, it facilitates the identification of recurrent themes related to the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data presented in this section include the participants' reflections in the journal entries and the survey conducted as well as the review of a segment of the University course evaluation questionnaire. Recurrent themes are discussed.

The importance of providing focused stimulus for reflection

Each of the nineteen respondents wrote eight to ten journal entries in a span of two months. Of the nineteen participants, thirteen wrote primarily level one reflection, which means that they simply recalled and described what transpired during the tutorial sessions. Even when they described incidents that called for higher level, their tendency was to simply enumerate the steps involved or describe the strategy used. The entry below is typical of these pre-service teachers' reflections:

> *I showed him the book that we will be reading. The title was "Ang Kwento ni Langgam at Tipaklong." The story was in Filipino, so I had to translate it to Bisaya. I wrote the translation on a construction paper.... I asked him what he saw on the cover of the book…. Then, I asked him what he thought would happen to the characters of the story based on the picture on the cover. After reading a few pages, I asked him questions to check if he understood…. I also asked him to predict what will happen next. This exercises his reading comprehension skill and makes him think what the story is about.*

The tutor is describing her attempt at employing the Directed Reading-Thinking Activity DRTA), which was discussed and demonstrated in class. Perhaps, the participants' reflections were limited to describing the teaching-learning procedure because this was the focus of the Developmental Reading class. The course aims to immerse students in the various ways of teaching beginning reading, and most of the time in class was spent on demonstrations of the steps employed in specific teaching methods.

Meanwhile, six of the participants had journal entries that were primarily level two reflections, where the pre-service teachers went beyond describing the experience and asked why it happened and what could be done to address the concern. Participant 1 wrote:

> *I discovered that my tutee is always distracted by the television program at the time of the tutorial. He was asked to turn it off. He did not. Instead, he promised his mother that he would concentrate on the tutoring. Oftentimes, I would ask him a question and he would act as if he was thinking, but he was actually just watching the TV. I'm planning to make my next tutoring more exciting to get his attention and to stop him from watching the show he loved to watch.*

The other entries of the six participants who engaged in the second level of reflection also focused on the behaviour modification and management concerns. Participant 7 wrote about the importance of establishing rapport and focusing on the child rather than the teaching strategy, and planned on improving such area in future sessions. She concluded that

> *teaching reading through phonics is effective for young children who have difficulty decoding. I don't think that the strategies were not effective. It is that my tutee is afraid of making mistakes. This is something that I need to work on. I need to make her more comfortable with me and more confident of what she can do.*

This was also reiterated by Participant 11, who emphasized that *"closeness with my tutee is important. The strategies worked well because he was comfortable with me." Participant 9 said:*

Even with the mother tongue, my tutee has a hard time reading. However, when her shyness disappeared, and she became more comfortable with me, she started participating fully in the discussion.

That the reading tutors were concerned of their tutees' feedback was shown in comments such as the one articulated below:

I was a time-centered tutor. One day, my tutee told me that he doesn't understand what I was saying because I was talking too fast. I realized that although time was important, what is more important is that the child learned from me. This is something I need to think about every time I teach.

In the aforementioned journal entries the reading tutors went beyond describing what they did in the session, but reflected on what could be done in the upcoming sessions to improve the teaching-learning experience. The participants pondered on their experiences, critiqued the implementation of the methods in relation to their tutees' feedback or responses, contemplated on the possible reasons or causes of these concerns, and planned strategies to address the concern in upcoming sessions. None of the participants, however, engaged in the third level of reflection, where they think about the larger socio-political contexts of instruction. This was probably because the focus of the course is on executing specific techniques and implementing specific reading instruction methods. Also, the class was simply told to write their thoughts on their experiences as reading tutors.

The scenario differed when the participants were asked specific questions in the survey conducted. Since the stimulus questions specifically directed them to think about their realizations that came to mind while they were tutoring the children, more of the second and third level reflection was generated. In fact, a majority of the nineteen participants engaged in second level reflection, and several engaged in third level reflection, where they demonstrated a strong sense of awareness of the socio-economic aspect of literacy instruction and related their experiences and observations to the broader socio-political context of teaching and learning.

Participant 17 discussed the importance of using the mother tongue in teaching beginning reading because the children may have been considered at risk because the teachers were not sensitive to the local contexts of reading and learning to read. In one of her entries, she concluded:

> *I realized that teaching reading is easy when using the first language. Although it is hard to find reading materials such as stories written in the mother tongue, I do it because it is a lot easier for my tutees to read in Bisaya. They are able to give lots of insights and reactions. They are even able to write their own stories. I feel sad for the many children who are forced to read in a language that is not their own. They may have ideas but they cannot express them freely. Children should be taught to read in the mother tongue and to enjoy reading and writing stories that are close to their experiences as Bisaya in a language that is truly theirs. I learn that teaching and learning reading should be fun, and I think that many children are considered at risk because we have not met them where they are.*

Here, the participant discussed the marginalization of children who had difficulty learning to read because of the language of instruction. Also, the teacher lamented the dearth of reading materials written in the mother tongue despite the institutionalization of Mother tongue-based multilingual education. Although the student has not discussed the economics of book writing and publication, she articulated the need for local authors to publish local stories in the local language.

Participant 13, who decided to tutor a deaf child in a public school and a regular pupil in a private school concluded that it was not only the disability that disadvantaged the child but also the poverty of resources provided to them and the seeming lack of concern for their interests and age in selecting texts used in special education classes in the public schools. She observed that *"strategies for teaching the deaf child are not similar to those that apply to the regular child. This may be OK, but why is it that the deaf child was treated like pre-school level and given pre-school reading materials even if she was already older? This is not good for the child's emotions. The hearing child I tutored went to a private school, and her books were really appropriate for her age, interests, and reading level."*

Participant 14 realized that children in many schools were struggling to read because of teachers' lack of creativity in teaching. She said that she was surprised that her tutee did not enjoy the word games that she prepared. Apparently, it was the first time for the tutee to see a word puzzle, and he thought it was one of those graded tests. The participant said:

> *I thought that the Bingo games as discussed and demonstrated in our class would be exciting because we had fun when we played the game in class. Well, my tutee found it strange since it was his first time to play Bingo and other word games. Sadly, these fun games and activities that teach word recognition, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary have not been introduced in his class! What I also learned from the experience is that we should not assume that the games we play are also a reflection of our socio-economic condition.*

The question, what thoughts and realizations came to you as you were writing your journals also generated interesting second and third level reflections. Most of the participants contemplated on the path that they are taking as teachers. Some questioned if teaching was really for them; others were inspired to pursue to course. Most realized the impact this experience had on the child that they are tutoring and to them as future professional teachers. One said: Teaching is hard yet inspiring. When I started tutoring, I really hated my tutee because he could not understand and I felt disappointed, but later I realized how worthy this is. I learned how to teach this one child, and this child learned from me. Participant 18 had this realization: Teaching is really my passion, but while writing my reflections, I also realized that I can really be a good teacher. Participant 17 concluded that writing reflections is important because it pushes the thoughts out and makes you confront concerns and issues that you were too busy to attend to during the tutorial session. It provides opportunities to critically think about what transpired, why certain things happened, and how to improve one's teaching. This tutor realized that he "loves teaching despite the difficulties and challenges of becoming and being an effective mentor."

As their instructor, I should have provided specific stimulus questions that would allow them to critically think about their experiences as reading tutors. Moreover, I could have modelled the act of reflection and discussed

the various levels of reflection that they could engage in. This observation lends support to the conclusion in the Galvez-Martin and Bowman (1998) study that although pre-service teachers reflect on their practices, their level of reflection improved considerably when they are trained how to think and reflect critically. Participants who received training on reflective thinking were able to reach higher levels of reflection.

A review of the student evaluation of the course indicated answers that were mostly related to their service-learning experience. Most of the students found the activity "very interesting, enjoyable full of excitement, very useful, and teaches them which strategies work." Students said that the course teaches them to become a better teacher, and the concepts and lessons that really work with kids. These comments indicated students' satisfaction with the service-learning component of the course, which afforded opportunities to apply what they learned in the course while engaging in an enterprise that helped improve the reading ability of their tutees.

REALIZATIONS

Incorporating service-learning in the course syllabus was the highlight of the Developmental Reading courses that I taught, and the source of inspiration for many of the students. Moreover, the reflective journaling component of the service-learning activity is crucial in service-learning because of its potential in enhancing students' thought processes, for improving instruction, for critically considering the various aspects of literacy instruction, and in contemplating on pre-service teachers' identity as literacy instructors and advocates. As transformative intellectuals, teachers must continually engage in critical reflection so that they may be able to modify their practices, knowing that they are responsible in "shaping the purposes and conditions of schooling" (Giroux, 2009, p.3). However, the potential of reflection as a means of improving one's practices is dependent on the preparation and skill of the participants to think critically. There is therefore a need for teachers who incorporate service-learning in their courses to model the act of reflection through such activities as think aloud protocols and to explicitly teach the technical, practical, and critical levels of reflection.

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