

## “Thriving through Reflecting”: Current Perspective on Teacher Professional Development Research in Asia Context

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### Abstract

Reflective practice has long gained more spotlight from researchers in the education realm, particularly for promoting teachers' professional development (TPD). Generally speaking, the reflective practice provides abundant merit for teachers, namely, evaluating teachers' teaching quality, enhancing teachers' professional skills, and guiding teachers in their professional development. This study aims to present how reflective practice assists English teacher professional development in the Asian context. To discover how reflective practice promotes teacher professional development, the researchers analyzed several research journal articles using a document analysis method. The current contributions of the reflective practice present the significance of reflective practice. It involves why and how English teachers should employ the reflective practice in their daily teaching processes. This study provides future research direction as well, specifically on how to equip teachers to become reflective practitioners in their teaching practices, how to provide a supportive environment for reflective practitioners, and how to enhance the implementation of reflective practice through online platforms.

**Keywords:** *reflection, reflective practice, reflective practitioner, collaborative reflective practice*

### INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional development has received wider attention from researchers. It is believed that teacher professional development is advantageous in preparing teachers to cope with demanding requirements (Lingam, Lingam, & Raghuwaiya, 2014; Agustin, 2019). Through professional development, teachers can prepare themselves to encounter challenges in the classroom as well as become more knowledgeable in finding an alternative for a solution towards the challenges. Teachers, who are aware of the importance of professional development, are willing to change since they perceive teaching as a part of their life-long learning (Agustin, 2019).

Various methods can be utilized to support teacher professional development, namely, a short training course, workshop, and conference (Barahona, 2018). Due to the heavy workload, only a few teachers are willing to participate in the professional development program. The easiest and most practical way that teachers can do to promote their professional development is by doing reflection (Agustin, 2019). Reflection can be done at any time, particularly after the teaching and learning process.

Reflection or reflective practice has been popular in the last decade (Farrell, 2015). The concept of reflection was proposed by Dewey in 1933. He introduced the difference between thinking and reflecting. According to him, reflection is complex as it involves not only particular beliefs but also the antecedents (Dewey, 1933). In doing reflection, people engage in various activities which lead to a certain goal or outcome. Although reflective practice can be utilized in any kind of profession, Schön (1987) recommends integrating reflection in the educational field to assist teachers in meeting the teaching demands (p. 11).

Higher teacher education programs started integrating reflection in their courses to improve the quality of pre-service teachers since the 1980s (Collin, Karsenti, & Komis, 2013). More specifically, the reflective practice is integrated into micro-teaching and teaching practicum at higher education programs to promote pre-service teachers for continuous professional development (Widodo, 2018). Integrating reflective practice in teacher training and education program is seen as a key competency of students' teacher professional development (Collin et al., 2013; Barton & Ryan, 2015; Korkko, Kyrö-Ammala, & Turunen, 2016). Reflective practice enables pre-service teachers to assess their teaching performance, particularly in classroom management and pedagogical skills. Furthermore, reflective practice benefits pre-service teachers in understanding their strengths and limitation as well as what needs to be improved or what is worth to be continued. Regarding the classroom's problem, reflective practice can facilitate pre-service teachers to find more strategic solutions.

In line with the prior concept, reflective practice is worthwhile for in-service teachers as well. The reflective practice facilitates in-service teachers to enhance their professional teaching performance (Belvis, Pineda, Armengol, & Moreno, 2013; Gutierrez, 2015). Reflective practice allows in-service teachers to ensure the quality of their teaching performance as the response to changing educational system (Belvis et al., 2013), and at the same time, this practice could enhance professional skills such as self-awareness, learning from experience, life-long learning, personal and professional growth (Smith & Trede, 2013; Gutierrez, 2015). Reflective practice for in-service teachers promotes them to reflect on their pedagogical beliefs and evaluate their teaching performance to meet teaching demands. In this context, reflective practice is part of in-service teacher's on-going professional development as teachers engage in learning while practicing and exploring their teaching experiences (Gutierrez, 2015). Reflective practice devotes space for teachers to develop themselves along with the concept of a zone of proximal development by Vygotsky that emphasizes in (1) the importance of collaboration with capable colleagues, (2) advantageous interplay between theoretical aspects and real everyday experiences, and (3) meeting the goal of change in a collaborative process (Kuusisaari, 2014). Besides, reflective practice will lead both pre-service and in-service teachers to become autonomous learners.

The fact that reflective practice has fruitful significance both for pre-service and in-service teachers evokes the researchers to evaluate current contributions of reflective practice in the Asian context. Thus, a research question is formulated: How does reflective

practice assists pre-service and in-service English teachers in their professional development? This study was undertaken to pursue the following four purposes: (1) to elaborate the advantages of reflective practice, (2) to highlight the needs of reflective practice in teaching higher education, (3) to promote collaborative reflective practice, and (4) to discover the integration of technology in reflective practice. To answer the research question, a document analysis is employed in this study. The results of this research hopefully can provide broader insight of reflective practice and help teachers engage in implementing reflective practice to their daily teaching activities.

### **The Concept of Reflective Practice**

Reflective practice is often seen as an evaluation activity towards what teachers have performed in class. Reflective practice is integrated into teacher training and education program to provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to do self-assessment. By doing reflection, both pre-service and in-service teachers will have a better understanding of self-knowledge. Farrell (2015) elaborates that reflective practice is defined as a set of cognitive processes in which teachers engage in evaluating their teaching practice as well as sharing the problems with other people or knowledgeable ones in order to find solution towards the problems.

According to Beauchamp (2006), there are three aspects of reflective practice. The first aspect is processes where the activity of examining, thinking, understanding, evaluating, developing, and transforming are constructed. The second aspect is objects; by which the teachers' practice, social knowledge, experience, and theories are purposively engaged. The last aspect is rationale. Reflective practice is done to achieve a particular goal or rationale. For instance, thinking about further actions or decisions, changing thinking or knowledge, improving actions, improving students learning, and altering self or society.

Farrell (2015) proposes a framework which contains five different stages of reflection. The first stage is philosophy. Philosophy is seen as a benchmark of teachers' reflective practice. It explores reflecting activity on teacher-as-person. Therefore, teachers should have a better understanding of self-knowledge or identity as what teachers do (both inside and outside classroom) which is heavily influenced by teachers' basic philosophies. The second stage is principle. This stage encompasses reflection on teachers' assumptions, beliefs, and conceptions. Assumptions refer to what we think is true. Beliefs mean the general proposition that is accepted to be true by someone who holds it. Conceptions are the consolidation of both assumptions and beliefs that can mediate an individual's response towards a particular situation. Those three parts of the second stage cannot be separated since they are the bases that drive teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

The third stage is theory. In the third stage of reflection, teachers examine different choices of theory implemented to the teaching practice. Reflection in this stage includes the activity of making plan and deciding different activities that teachers might use. To do this reflection, teachers need specific information about the classroom and students' needs. The three aspects aforementioned are the hidden aspects of teaching. The next stage is practice. Practice enables teachers to reflect on visible behaviors. Teachers can reflect while they are teaching (reflection-in-action), after the lesson is done (reflection-on-action) as well as before teaching (reflection-for-action). Reflection-in-action facilitates teachers to monitor and adjust while they are teaching. Reflection-on-action enables teachers to evaluate the learning process after it has taken place. Reflection-for-

action allows teachers to reflect before teaching. Therefore, teachers can anticipate what might happen in the classroom. The last stage is beyond practice. In the last stage of reflection is beyond practice. It is a stage where teachers become critical practitioners in reflective practice. This stage involves examining the moral value of reflective practice.

The above stages are relatively comprehensive to understand the conceptual framework of reflective practice for teacher education compared to other reflective practice proponents, such as Schön (1987).

## **METHOD**

This research employed a qualitative research method, specifically a document analysis method. Document analysis is used to examine the content of written materials and find the specific characteristics of written materials. Research journal articles were selected as written materials that would be analyzed. To select the research journal articles, the researchers had determined two criteria. First, the research journal articles must be the current contribution to the Asian context. Although the reflective practice has been proposed in 1933, it receives more spotlights in this last decade, particularly in Asia. Second, the research journal articles must involve English pre-service or in-service teachers as the participants. This research aimed to analyze the use of the reflective practice in facilitating teachers' professional development. Therefore, this criterion was created by the researchers. In analyzing the data, the researchers organized it through open coding. Open coding allows a researcher to classify data into the same themes. The categories found in this research were: 1) the advantages of reflective practice, 2) reflective practice in teacher higher education, 3) collaborative reflective practice, and 4) technology in reflective practice. The data were presented in the table and interpreted narratively.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study aims to examine recent research on the use of reflective practice to promote teacher professional development. In this subchapter, the findings are elaborated into four sections. The findings are presented in the table, followed by elaboration of each finding.

### ***Reflective Practice as a Powerful Means in Assisting Teachers' Professional Development***

In the teaching and learning process, teachers have to be aware of their pedagogical practice as well as the possible problems that might arise. Reflective practice is believed to have abundant benefits, particularly in assisting teachers' professional growth. In this subchapter, it will be provided the elaboration of the utilization of reflective practice and challenges encountered by teachers.

Reflective practice empowers teachers to improve their awareness of their surroundings. Reflective practice can be done in written (e.g. writing journal) or spoken (e.g. dialogic reflective practice). Agustin (2019) conducted a study on the utilization of reflective practice in Indonesia context. Her enterprise was to discover the use of reflective practice for pre-service teachers. She used reflective journal as a tool to support pre-service teachers in their reflective practice. She discovered that the use of reflective practice provided beneficial impacts for pre-service teachers. Through reflective practice, pre-service teachers could recall their teaching practice as well as compare their past and present teaching experience. She emphasized that using reflective journal could help pre-

service teachers record their teaching performance. Therefore, pre-service teachers could always learn from their experience. She also unearthed that pre-service teachers had a positive attitude towards reflective journal as seen from their willingness in completing reflective journal after teaching practice.

Table 1. :  
*The use of reflective practice*

Finding	Authors
The advantages of reflective practice	Chi (2013); Daniel, Auhl, & Hastings (2013); Astika (2014); Auhl & Daniel (2014); East (2014); Jones & Ryan (2014); Kuswandono (2014); Noormohammadi (2014); Ragawanti (2015); Susoy (2015); Allas, Leijen, & Toom (2016); Nurfaidah, Lengkanawati, & Sukyadi (2017); Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman (2017); Wijaya & Kuswandono (2018); Rozimela & Tiarina (2018); Agustin (2019); Arslan (2019); Madin & Swanto (2019).

This study yields insight into the educational context that highlights the value of reflective practice in navigating pre-service teachers to become self-directed, specifically in flourishing and maintaining their professional development. Besides, lecturers' feedback and participation were needed to lead pre-service teachers in their development. Guided questions could be provided to assist pre-service teachers in doing their reflective practice. However, pre-service teachers should have free space as well to write freely in expressing their thought.

In the case of providing positive impacts to pre-service teachers, it is notable to identify lecturers or university mentors concerning the use of reflective practice. Kuswandono (2014) examined the challenges in integrating reflective practice based on the lecturers' perspective. The study was conducted in Indonesia in which sharing feelings or experience was not prevalent (Kuswandono, 2014). He reported that the culture of openness influenced how pre-service teachers in carried out reflection and provided constructive feedback to peers. In his findings, lecturers perceived that peers, as observers, tended to provide general feedback instead of clear and detailed feedback which commented on strengths and limitations. This research contributes enlightenment into the educational field that the use of reflective practice in Indonesia context is still influenced by culture. Indonesian is not accustomed to share their personal feeling and give feedback frankly. It is paramount to provide a pleasant environment where pre-service teachers do not feel pressured in sharing their experience as well as providing genuine feedback to peers. Therefore, pre-service teachers could develop their self-knowledge which leads them in their professional development.

Regarding the abundant benefits of reflective practice, in-service teachers obtain the merit of reflective practice as well. Reflective practice assists in-service teachers to sustain and increase their good practices to meet the demand given to them (Kuusisaari, 2014). The study undertook by Moradkhani, Raygan, and Moein (2017) reveals that reflective practice enhances teacher's self-efficacy. As stated in previous literature, reflective practice is a means to improve teaching performance. Yet, a few studies have been done to discover the tangible evidence of it. Moradkhani, et al. (2017) attempted to investigate the correlation between teachers' reflective practice and their self-efficacy. Their research was conducted in Iran. They found that by getting involved in reflective practice, in-service teachers enhanced their self-efficacy, particularly in completing the teaching task. Reflective practice facilitated in-service teachers to be aware of their

classroom's problems. They discovered that in-service teachers often discussed the challenges or problems with their colleagues to find the solution towards the problems. Unfortunately, most of the in-service teachers did not devote themselves to do reflection regularly. This research provides tangible evidence that reflective practice provides positive impacts on teachers' growth. It is worthwhile to integrate reflective practice in daily bases in order to guide teachers in improving themselves continuously.

### ***The Needs to Implement Reflective Practice in Teacher Higher Education***

Amidst its advantages, the needs of reflective practice in teacher higher education programs mainly highlight the lack of pre-service teachers' abilities. Critiques addressed for pre-service teachers as they have inadequate ability to link teaching theories and practices (e.g. Rahmini & Chabok, 2013; East, 2014; Jones & Ryan, 2014; Kuswandono, 2014; Medwell & Wray, 2014; Allas, Leijen, & Toom, 2016; Horasanli & Ortactepe, 2016; Stenberg & Hilppo, 2016; Nguyen, 2017; Arslan, 2019; Onal, 2019). In fact, teacher higher education programs focus more on educating the theories to pre-service teachers without providing ample opportunities for teaching practice (Nguyen, 2017). As a result, pre-service teachers face difficulties since the real classroom can be different from the theories that they learn. Therefore, pre-service teachers have to be given abundant teaching practice to prepare them in their teaching vocation.

Table 2. :

*The use of reflective practice in teacher higher education*

Finding	Authors
Reflective practice in teacher higher education	Rahmini & Chabok (2013); East (2014); Jones & Ryan (2014); Kuswandono (2014); Medwell & Wray (2014); Oakley, Pegrum, & Johnston (2014); Gutierrez (2015); Allas et al., (2016); Horasanli & Ortactepe (2016); Stenberg, Rajala, & Hilppo (2016); Nguyen (2017); Rozimela & Tiarina (2018); Arslan (2019); Onal (2019).

Reflective practice is believed to aid pre-service teachers' professional growth. It is worth restating here that current studies conducted to propose the use of reflective practice as a means to enhance pre-service teachers' abilities, particularly in bridging the teaching theories and practice (e.g. Ragawati, 2015; Agustin, 2019). East (2014) reported a study comparing the utilization of reflective practice between pre-service and in-service teachers. He believed that reflective practice could mediate pedagogical innovation and theories. He intended to investigate whether reflective practice could support pedagogical innovation both in pre-service and in-service teachers. East found that both pre-service and in-service teachers improved their pedagogical innovation practice through doing reflection. He emphasized that reflective practice led pre-service teachers in evaluating their teaching performance and modifying their beliefs to cope with the actual classroom reality. He discovered that pre-service teachers were able to compare their previous and present learning experiences in order to decide teaching methods or activities following the students' needs and characteristics. This study revealed that pre-service teachers tended to teach based on their beliefs. Pre-service teachers had expectations before coming to the classroom. However, when challenges and problems arose, they would be shocked as the real classroom was different from their expectation. It could not be denied that actual classroom experiences would influence pre-service teachers' beliefs and assumptions. This study shows the significance of implementing reflective practice in

teacher higher education since reflective practice mediates pedagogical theories and practice. It is suggested that teacher higher education programs should provide holistic teaching practice in order to prepare them in the journey of the teaching profession.

### ***Collaborative Reflective Practice***

Reflective practice is naturally embedded in everyday teaching professional practice. Reflective practice has a tight-knit relationship with the teacher's self-assessment. Teachers continuously do self-assessment which results in promoting their growth and development. Reflective practice becomes a primary component for teachers since reflective practice promotes them to be aware of their teaching performance as well as teaching decisions taken for problems that emerge in the classroom. Teachers as reflective practitioners are expected to be autonomous decision makers who grow and develop themselves as a result of learning from their experiences (Cirocki & Widodo, 2019). Activating the habit of reflective practice leads teachers to become life-long learners. The use of reflective practice for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers has obtained the central focus by some previous researchers (see Lubis, 2017; Nurfaidah, Lengkanawati, & Sukyadi, 2017; Azizah, Nurkamto, & Drajadi, 2018; Rozimela & Tiarina, 2018; Arslan, 2019).

Table 3. :

*Collaborative reflective practice among EFL teachers*

Finding	Authors
Collaborative reflective practice	Lakshmi (2014); Medwell & Wray (2014); Oakley, Pegrum, & Johnston (2014); Gutierrez (2015); Korkko, Kyro-Ammala, & Turunen (2016); Stenberg et al., (2016); Lubis (2017); Nurfaidah et al., (2017); Moradkhani, Raygan, & Moein (2017); Azizah, Nurkamto, & Drajadi (2018); Foong & Nolan (2018); Madin & Swanto (2019); Yoshihara, Kurata, & Yamauchi (2019).

It is prominent to understand that most EFL teachers, specifically novice, have insufficient teaching experiences as well as the ability in doing meaningful reflection. As a result, they encounter challenges in doing reflective practice. Ouellette-Schramm, Molina, and Reimer (2019) stated that one of the reasons which impedes teachers in the integration of reflective practice is because of adult development. They argued that adults had their own beliefs or assumption of teaching which were constructed by their past and environment. Through addressing the constructive-development theory (CDT) of adult development by Kegan's (1982, 1994), they probed how adults engaged in meaningful reflective practice. They expressed that adults are meaning-makers in which adults identified their experiences, developed their assumptions, and sought solutions towards their problems (p. 734). They discovered that although teachers experienced different problems, teachers perceive reflective practice as a means to support them in achieving learning goals through evaluating their performance and deciding the best learning method applied in the classroom. Furthermore, they found that teachers continuously sought critical feedback from colleagues or seniors regarding their pedagogical practice. Based on the results, Ouellette-Schramm, et al. (2019) proposed a community of practice to promote the integration of reflective practice for teachers. A community of practice involves a group of teachers who have the same goals and work collaboratively (Gutierrez, 2015). Collaborative reflective practice enables teachers to be reflective practitioners who are aware of their limitations in pedagogical practice through the lens of colleagues. As

argued by Gutierrez (2015) that collaborative reflective practice provides teachers with various critical perspectives on how they should evaluate classroom activities. Moreover, teachers will be guided by knowledgeable others to discover their limitations as well as strengths (Gutierrez, 2015).

### ***Technology and Reflective Practice***

The integration of technology has been discussed widely in the 21st century since its easiness and practicality to promote teachers in doing reflective practice. Technology provides a powerful space that encourages collaboration among practitioners. Online platforms of technology, such as Google Applications, Desire2Learn, Wiki spaces, or Word Press are commonly used as essential tools to support the utilization of reflective practice (Oakley, Pegrum, & Johnston, 2014).

Table 4. :

#### *The use of technology in reflective practice*

Finding	Authors
Technology in reflective practice	Coffey (2014); Jones & Ryan (2014); Oakley et al., (2014); Susoy (2015); Horsanli & Ortactepe (2016); Onal (2019).

The tangible evidence of the application of technology in reflective practice could be referred to a research conducted by Jones and Ryan. In 2014, Jones and Ryan introduced the integration of online space in teacher higher education. Online space was selected to boost the use of innovative tools in the educational field. According to them, the online space was designed to the engage active participation of pre-service teachers in doing reflection. There were two kinds of online forums integrated into the teaching practice, namely, blogs and discussion. Blogs enabled pre-service teachers to write their experience during teaching practice in unstructured form. The discussion forum provided pre-service teachers with guided questions regarding a certain topic including teaching skills and classroom management. Jones and Ryan (2014) revealed that online platforms had facilitated pre-service teachers to participate eagerly by sharing their pedagogical experiences. They stated that pre-service teachers possessed a positive attitude towards the integration of technology. However, pre-service teachers preferred to choose to do reflection in unstructured form since they could write freely.

A further example of technology usage in reflective practice was proposed by Onal (2019). His study was undertaken to yield a renewable perspective on the use of video-recording in assisting pre-service teachers to do reflective practice, especially in evaluating their teaching practice. Before reflecting on their performance, pre-service teachers would observe their teaching practice through video-recording of them. He found out that video-recording was helpful because pre-service teachers could keep the video and always look back into it anytime they want. He stated that video-recording supported pre-service teachers to be aware of the classroom dynamic. Moreover, pre-service teachers could always find some aspects of their performance which had not been covered by lecturers' or peers' feedback. This study reports that the use of video-recording enhances pre-service pedagogical performance since they receive various feedback resources. In addition, video-recording allows pre-service teachers to focus on their reflection-on-action.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Generally, reflective practice is believed to lead teachers in their journey of developing themselves. However, teachers are not provided with training on how they should develop the reflective skills that enable them to be aware of their surroundings. Indeed, teachers always do reflection without them realizing it. It would be better if teachers understand the concept of reflection (e.g. reflection on-action, reflection in-action, and reflection for action), how to do reflective practice, and how to get used to doing it in order to do a meaningful reflection. Becoming reflective practitioners require persistence in doing the activity. In fact, a few schools that encourage the culture of doing reflection. Current trends of reflective practice solely focus on its advantages for teacher's professional development. From the reviewed studies, there is little evidence on the use of the reflective practice to promote teachers' growth, particularly in continuing professional development (CPD). Teachers need to keep updating their knowledge as well as pedagogical skills continuously. Therefore, it is worth investigating how to equip teachers to become more reflective practitioners, particularly on an ongoing basis. For instance, how reflective practice integrated into teaching as a part of CPD.

The integration of reflective practice in teacher higher education can be faced with challenges, specifically on pre-service teachers' motivation in doing reflective practice. Reflection is merely seen as a requirement to complete a certain task. In fact, reflective practice should be done wholeheartedly. Most of the pre-service teachers have not been aware of the diverse benefits of reflective practice for their professional growth. It is essential to discover an innovative and effective method to acquaint pre-service teachers with reflective practice. Therefore, pre-service teachers could perceive reflective practice as part of teaching practice and integrate it into their pedagogical practice to support their professional development.

Current trends of reflective practice highlight the integration of technology in reflective practice. The use of technology is expected to encourage the effectiveness of implementing reflective practice. The integration of technology shows that reflective practitioners have to engage in the use of online platforms vigorously. Based on the current literature, technology promotes collaborative reflective space among teachers. Future research has to be focused on the tangible evidence of teachers' growth or pedagogical skills that are enhanced because of the implementation of reflective practice through online platforms.

Inevitably, becoming reflective practitioner involves the guidance from some parties, specifically knowledgeable colleagues. Therefore, a community of practice which provides reflective dialogue is needed by teachers. Truthfully, school culture or environment which encourages collaborative practice often hard to find. The heavy workload and demand become the main reasons that obstruct teachers to do reflective practice regularly. Accordingly, it is significant to examine how to provide a supportive environment for reflective practitioner and how collaborative reflective practice can contribute to the development of effective teaching quality.

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