Bending Back to the Professional Activities: Unveiling the Role of Reflective Practice in Teachers' Professional Development

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Abstract

Reflection and reflective practices are important to develop professionalism. The importance of those practices has been highly emphasised in teaching, learning, and teachers' professional development. With this backdrop, the study aims to investigate the English teachers' reflective practices and examine their role in their professional development. I used narrative inquiry as a research design where the sample was selected using purposive sampling. An in-depth interview was used as a research tool to collect information and the interviews were conducted using interview guidelines. The collected data was recorded, transcribed, coded, categorised, and thematically analyzed. The study found that the English language teachers used action research, case studies, diary writing, reflective journals, and students' feedback as reflective practices. Moreover, the study has uncovered that reflective practices are important for teachers to have self-analysis, find strengths and weaknesses of the learners and self, plan, act, and further plan the lesson, empower the learners, solve critical incidents, to have the active engagement of learners in teaching-learning activities, and to grow as a professional person. The study implies that every teacher should have a reflection on their practices for the betterment of teaching, learning, and growing professionally.

Keywords: Narrative inquiry, reflection, reflective practices, TPD

Introduction

Teaching is a profession in which troublesome situations may often arise. Teachers are professionals whose task is to teach, guide, instruct, train, and assess the learners. Becoming a professional teacher is not as easy as we think rather dealing with critical situations and treating diverse learners in the same environment is a complex job as Richards and Lockhart (2007, p. 29) conceptualised teaching as 'a complex process'. It comprises a range of areas which can be achieved by professional development activities. For example, the TPACK model (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) consists of three interconnected areas; technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge. Thus, a teacher should master the content, pedagogy, and technology, and continue engaging themselves in learning for their career advancement and professional development. Houde (2018) states that

professional development refers to those actions which are practised analysing new ways, adjusting, and improving professional lives. Moreover, Rauteda (2023) states that professional development is a continuous process throughout one's life where one has to master new skills, widen knowledge, and innovate insights in pedagogy, practice, and understanding of one's own needs. It is an individual process, but there are several tools and techniques in the form of models (Pugsley, 2016), which a teacher can apply for professional competencies such as reflective journal, diary, peer assessment, self-assessment, and audio or video recording (Dheressa, 2022).

Reflection and reflective practices are two key terms used in the teaching profession that denote the process of evaluating, analyzing, and assessing the professional practices 'in action', and 'on action' (Schon, 1983) to improve teaching performance, enhance students' learning, and to search the remedial practices (Akabiri, 2007). It has been adopted across many professions such as science, law, medicine, nursing, and education (Farrell, 2022). Zwozdiak–Myers (2012) states, "Reflective practice is central to a teachers' development because it helps teachers analyze and evaluate what is happening in their classes, so they can improve the quality of their learning and provide better learning opportunities to the students (P. 3)".

Teaching and learning in the classroom are becoming more difficult, demanding, sophisticated, and problematic (Offorma & Obiefuna, 2017), and teachers are facing problems with technology, pedagogy, and the dispositions of the learners. To cope with these issues, teachers need to reflect upon their theory and practice as the post-method pedagogy asks for 'practising theories' and 'theorizing the practices' (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Language teachers reshape their knowledge of teaching and learning throughout their careers (Farrell, 2019) for which teachers observe, analyse, conceptualize, and experiment with the issue to come to a solution. Reflective practice is widely considered to be an important activity for professional development. Hence, Mann and Welsh (2015) agree that "teacher development depends on the commitment and the capacity to examine one's professional practice and to use professional judgment for reflecting and acting upon". The reflective practices are helpful for both the students and the teachers which improves pupils' learning and the quality of teaching (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2012). Thus, reflective practices are important for teacher development which help teachers to learn 'to learn'.

The reflective practices become more important in language teaching as the profession has moved into the 'post-method condition' (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) where language teachers do not use the prescribed teaching methods rather, they develop their theories based on the context in which they teach. Since the beginning of the 20th century, reflective practice has become the most researched and discussed field in the educational literature (Gheith & Aljaberi, 2018) as Dewey (1933) discussed generating knowledge from reflection. As reflective practice focuses on professional development, capacity building, deeper understanding of philosophy, principles, and theories (Farrell, 2019), it is significant to examine how teachers reflect on their practice, beliefs, and theories, and how they act upon them along with how reflective practice plays the role to make a professional teacher. Moreover, teachers are taken as facilitators, problem solvers, decision-makers, observers, and researchers in the teaching and learning process (Orgovanyi – Gajdos, 2016). To fulfil those roles, reflective practice is highly needed to achieve professionalism (Amrulah, 2023). Many research studies have been conducted in the field of reflection and reflective practices for teachers' professional development, however, only a few studies have been carried out in diverse situations like language teaching classes. Thus, it is crucial to carry out this study since language classes have students from different linguistic, social, cultural, and educational backgrounds. Hence, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

i. How do English teachers reflect on their professional practices?
ii. What are the roles of reflective practices in English teachers' professional development?

Literature Review

I have reviewed various literature related to the English language teachers' reflections on their professional development and the roles of reflective practices in their professional development. which have been discussed under three themes: reflective practices, the significance of reflective practices and various reflective models used for teachers' professional development.

Reflective Practices

The emergence of reflective practices can be traced back to different ancient and current religions, but the current use of the term 'reflection' is derived from the Latin word 'reflectere' which means to 'bend back' (Valli, 1997). However, reflection and reflective practices attracted attention in formal educational settings since the 1980s (Farrell, 2016), through the work of John Dewey; a philosopher, psychologist, and education reformer (Freeman, 2016; Houde, 2018). Dewey defined:

> Reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a consequence—consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each turns the lens back on its predecessors. The successive portion of the reflective thought grows out of one another and supports one another; they do not come and go medley (1910, p. 2-3).

Dewey's concept of reflective practice is regarded as a 'reflective inquiry' (Dewey, 1933) where he suggests 'practitioners can slow down the interval between thought and action' (as cited in Farrell, 2022). Dewey (1910, p. 6) stated that reflective practice refers to 'the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it'.

Later Dewey was followed by Schon who wrote two books; 'The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action (Schon, 1983) and 'Educating the Reflective Practitioner (Schon, 1987). Those literatures played a pivotal role in the development of reflective practices in different professions. Schon (1983, p. 56) defines reflective practice as "a dialogue of thinking and doing through which a person becomes more skilful". Moreover, Schon's (1991) model of 'reflection in action' and 'reflection on action' provides an additional element by making the distinction between reflection during the event and reflection after the event. Schon (1984) describes teaching as an outcome of teachers' thinking process, conceptualization, and beliefs about teaching events taking place in the classroom. Schon (1983) further states that for reflective teaching, continuity and thoughtful consideration in implementing the lesson learned from one's experiences is a must. Moreover, he talks about the practitioners in his work of 1983; practitioners become more aware of what they do as they perform by observing their actions or by reflecting on actions. Here, he gives more emphasis on reflecting during action.

Significance of Reflective Practice

Reflection or reflective practice in the context of education refers to the intentional and purposeful process where educators engage in metacognitive thinking and actions to enhance and refine their professional practices. Researchers have given various reasons and benefits of reflective practice. Gore and Zeichner (1991) stated four versions of teacher reflective practice with different focuses; *an academic version* which focuses on teachers' skill in presenting the content in a way as to

maximize its accessibility for the students, *a social efficacy version,* which focuses on the evidence-based practice, *a developmental version,* primarily focuses on the appropriating teaching strategies, and interest of the students based on the research findings; and *the social reconstructionist version*, focuses on the political and the social issues of schooling and classroom instructions. It implies that reflective practice supports teachers in different ways connecting personal experiences with social and political consequences and provides research-based and evident practices as a solution to the problem.

Similarly, Robins et al. (2003) postulated reflective practice as a tool that allows teachers, student teachers, and teaching assistants to understand themselves, their philosophies, and the dynamics of their classrooms more quickly. Regarding the significance of the reflective practice, Brubacher (1994) presents that reflective practice is beneficial for practitioners [teachers] to be free from impulsive routine, helps to act intentionally and purposefully, and helps the teacher to act in an organized way (as cited in Day, 2005). Moreover, reflective practices develop skills like decision-making, self-awareness, critical thinking, analyzing, evaluating, and finding the possible solution to the problem. In this regard, Dewey (1933) extended the idea that only the teachers who reflect on their professional practices can get out of the routine of the authority. He further insisted on systematic and conscious reflection to develop self-awareness, development, and growth via combining teaching experiences with reflective practices.

Hong and Choi (2015) added that reflection is a method to inquire about problems in professional practices by citing Meierdirk (2016), and Pope et al. (2018); write that reflective practice is a skill that increases self-awareness, improves decision-making, and enhances practical problem-solving capacity to professionals. Moreover, Amrullah (2023) argues that reflective teaching is an essential foundation to enhance teachers' professional development as it helps teachers to critically reflect and evaluate their pedagogical practices. It enables us to question ourselves; what we know, what we do not know, what is our beliefs and attitudes on something, and how the solution we practise to attain the goal. Thus, reflective practice is important to tackle the problems raised in daily action, to enhance teaching and learning, and to develop professionalism by adopting the 'systematic' and 'rigorous' (Dewey, 1933) inquiry known as 'reflective inquiry' (Dewey, 1933).

Reflective Models

The discussed literature shows that reflective practice has been studied globally. Scholars developed different models of reflective practices at different times. Dewey (1933) prescribed a model of reflective practice where he proposed five different phases of reflection. According to Dewey's model, 'a practitioner passes five different phases in reflection; suggestion, intellectualization, guiding idea, reasoning, and hypothesis testing.' In the first phase, the practitioners face the problem and think about the possible solution. In this phase, the practitioner shows an emotional reaction. Intellectualization is termed a process of converting emotional reactions into intellectual reactions. Hence, the practitioner thinks in multiple ways for the solution seriously. In the third phase, the practitioner searches different sources and gathers a lot of information about the problem to come up with a working hypothesis. In the phase of reasoning, one attempts to explore the tentative solutions based on the information gathered. In the last phase, the practitioner takes the solution into action and tests the hypothesis whether it works or not. This is how it goes on and on.

Schon (1987) presented two different models; 'reflection in action' and 'reflection on action'. In the former model, he describes that the professionals should consciously think about what they are doing while they are doing it whereas the second one involves reflecting on experience, situation, and event after it has occurred. Schon (1991) presents four phases of the reflection 'in action' model: (i) Framing (ii) Naming (iii) Moving, and (iv) Reflecting.

Farrell (2015) developed a framework for reflecting on practice that consists of five different phases which are in a cyclic form. According to Farrell, teachers reflect on different levels; philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice. The first stage; reflecting on philosophy involves teachers looking at themselves in the form of 'teacher as a person' (Farrell, 2022). In this stage, teachers reflect on their past experiences, background, and previous lives. It helps them to know who they are as a teacher. In the second stage; reflecting on principles, according to Farrell, includes reflection on the teachers' beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning. In the third stage; reflecting on theory, teachers' choices of the theory are examined and practised. Here, the teacher thinks about how their theories can be translated into the classroom. In the fourth stage; reflecting on practice, teachers closely examine the connection between their philosophy, principle, and theory. In the fifth stage; beyond practice, teachers explore the moral, political, emotional, ethical, and social issues that impact teachers' practice both inside and outside the classroom.

The literature reviewed above revealed that Reflective Practices (RP) have been adopted by professionals in several areas for their professional development. Moreover, RP has become a dominant approach in the area of professionalism in general, and in the field of teaching. To be specific, reflection is very important for English language teachers as they have a more diverse context of teaching and learning. Although there are several research studies conducted in the field of reflective practices, very few studies explored the English language teachers' reflective practices and their role in their professional development. The study is significant for teachers as it suggests strategies of reflection and its importance in professional development. Moreover, the ways teachers reflect 'in', 'on', and 'for' action are crucial to be explored for the betterment of learning and to develop professionalism. Thus, I got motivated to conduct this study to explore how teachers reflect on their professional practices, and how reflective practice helps them to develop professionalism.

Methodology

I employed the narrative inquiry as a research design to conduct this study. For Polkinghorne (1995) narrative is 'a type of discourse composition that draws together diverse elements, happenings, and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed processes' (p. 5). It is defined as a study of lives, experiences, and the stories of inquirers and captures the life experiences of individuals or a small number of individuals (Creswell et al., 2007). Bruner states that "narrative analysis reports personal experience or observations and brings fresh insights to often familiar situations" (as cited in Cohen et al., 2018). I applied this qualitative approach to study as it can 'process and condense a large amount of data, to provide a more complex and complete picture of social life' (Hendry, as cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 694). In this study, I have taken 'reflective practice' as a phenomenon on which I examined the English language teachers' strategies of reflection and its importance in their professional development. I used both primary and secondary sources of data. The empirical research studies, theories, and books were used as secondary sources, and the English language teachers teaching at the colleges of Sunsari district were used as primary sources. Four teachers teaching English at B. Ed., M. Ed., and secondary levels in four different colleges of Itahari, were selected as participants using a purposive sampling strategy. All the informants were male; Sagun, Virat, Surya, and Maxwell. Hence, Sagun, Virat, and Surya had an M. Ed. in English whereas Maxwell had an MPhil in English Language Education. The informants had 10, 7, 23, and 12 years of teaching experience respectively in the related field. The names of the respondents were pseudonymized. Since the study was a narrative inquiry, an in-depth interview was used as a research tool to collect the information. The informants were interviewed individually for detailed information based on the developed interview guidelines. The collected information was documented and recorded in a diary and cell phone respectively. Then it

was transcribed, coded, categorized, and thematically analyzed. I employed a 'reflexive thematic analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2019) approach to analyse the information.

Results and Discussion

As the study aimed to evaluate the role of reflective practice in the professional development of English language teachers along with unveiling the ways they reflect in their philosophy, theories, and practice, I analysed and interpreted the obtained information, and the results have been presented in the following themes.

Teachers' Strategies of Reflection

Reflective strategies are the techniques that one adopts to look back, analyse, examine, and think critically or creatively in one's professional practices which got practised to improve the behaviors, skills, and abilities in one's professional life. English language teachers apply various techniques of reflecting for different purposes such as action research, reflective journal writing, diary writing, audio or video recording, students' feedback, peer supervision, or peer teaching (Dheresa, 2022). Since I interviewed teachers to delve into the strategies they used to reflect on their actions, one of the informants, Sagun; a teacher having 10 years of teaching experience at the bachelor's and master's levels shared:

> For me, reflection is compulsory for each professional_ as I am a teacher of English, I have to deal with students with diverse linguistic social, and educational backgrounds. In such a situation, learning from action is a must. Thus, I always think about my practices by conducting action research.

The excerpt disclosed that teachers reflect on their actions conceiving it as compulsory for professionals and should think over their actions for better learning and teaching. Moreover, the information revealed that the teachers used action research to search, clarify, and resolve practical teaching issues and problems (Richards & Farrell, 2010).

Similarly, another informant Virat shared his experience of conducting case studies for the betterment of his professional life. Virat viewed;

> I have conducted case studies for the students who were found to be blunt rather than so sharp. I investigated their family backgrounds, and societal backgrounds, consulted the parents, and found the causes and solutions....it was so great.

The excerpt showed that teachers practised case studies to solve the problems that arise in teaching and learning. As the informant shared, it is inferred that the case study is "an intensive holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit" (Merriam, 1988). The excerpt further revealed that it is used to search the rooted problems where a certain group or individual is to be studied in-depth to explore the solution to the problem that comes in teaching-learning activities. The idea is supported for instance by Richards and Farrell (2010) stated case analysis is the process of "collecting information over time about a teaching situation and using that information to help better understand the situations and derive principles from it" (p. 126).

Regarding the reflective practices used by teachers, the informants Surya and Maxwell shared a common view that they applied action research, reflective journals, teacher diaries, and students' feedback in the form of reflective practice in their classrooms. Maxwell shared:

> I have been writing reflective journals to improve my classroom learning and for publication in my community of sharing. At the end of the class and academic

year, I ask my learners to write a small cheat mentioning their comments and compliments without mentioning their names. I usually collect these comments to plan my teaching further.

Similarly, Surya expressed:

I conduct action research every year to find the strengths and weaknesses of my students and myself. I also use a teaching diary and keep a record every day of all the activities I do. I turn back to the diary when I need to learn from the past.

Both the snippets showed that teachers reflect on their practices in different ways for various purposes. Action research and students' feedback are the activities that the teachers can apply to look back on their professional practices. Therefore, the reflection and reflective strategies are highly useful for teachers to improve self and learning which aligns with Robins et al. (2003) who revealed that reflective practices assist practitioners in understanding both the situation and the self.

Teachers' Reflection 'Before', 'During' and 'After' Lesson

Teachers do reflection in different phases (Dewey, 1933). Teachers must reflect on various aspects of their upcoming lessons to ensure that they are well planned, possible challenges are identified, and solutions to the identified problems are considered (Eby & Herrell, 2004; as cited in Cirocki &Widodo, 2019). Hence, reflecting on planning lessons, developing materials, and preparing for the content to be delivered come under reflection 'before the lesson'. A teacher should be aware of all those things to make good teaching and learning in their classrooms. In one interview, the informant Virat shared:

Before teaching any lesson, I think about what topic am I going to teach, and what is the interest level, age, emotion, and background of my learners. I also think about their prior knowledge of the topic.

The excerpt revealed that teachers reflect on their actions to be taken before they go to the field. The factors that matter in the learning of the learners were considered by the teachers which resulted in successful learning. Similar to Virat another informant Maxwell explained:

My classrooms are very challenging as the students are from indigenous linguistic backgrounds. So, before any class, I always become aware of their subject positions, even if the lexical chunks are used in the classroom. The rest of the things are common to be considered.

Maxwell's responses revealed that teachers practiced reflection before the lesson which helps teachers to get rid of the possible incidents inside the classroom. It is related to Farrell's concept of reflection on 'philosophy' where the teacher reflects on the experience and thinks about the problems and possible solutions. Similarly, Surya expressed, "Before entering the class, I prepare myself on the topic, needs of the learners, classroom management, and the critical incidents…"

The information further revealed that the teacher reflects before the lesson to identify the problem in advance, and to explore the solution which is similar to Dewey's concept of *suggestion* (Dewey, 1933) where the teacher faces the problem and thinks about the possible solutions. It tends to focus on Schon's (1987) model of reflection *in and on* action, but neither of which concerns reflection before classes (Cirocki &Widodo, 2019). Regarding, before lesson reflection, teachers think about the

lesson they plan, the aims, learning outcomes, teaching approaches and methods, materials, activities, and classroom management.

Reflection takes place in the real teaching stage and is regarded as reflection 'during lesson' which is similar to Schon's notion of reflection *in action*. It not only includes the theories in use but also consists of both the positive and negative incidents that come in the teaching-learning process (Cirocki & Widodo, 2019). Moreover, It deals with the analysis of critical incidents. Reviewing the established classroom routines, posing critical questions about one's beliefs, and perceptions, and dealing with the problems in the context are some of the reflective activities to be undertaken at this stage. As I interviewed, Sagun stated:

> I usually follow the critical lens perspective while teaching my learners. I have been practising graphic organization, and always think about whether these organisations are appropriate for my learners' level and content or not. I can practice my agency that I go beyond the prescribed curriculum when the prescribed activities cannot address the dire needs of the learners and learner diversity.

The snippet disclosed the fact that the teacher reflects during lessons to deal with classroom problems. As the informant shared, he analyzed the classroom and the incidents inside critically. The information further shows that teachers cannot limit themselves to a prescribed curriculum, sometimes they go beyond and develop their approach to problem-solving which is called a post-method practice in language teaching. As Farrell (2015) stated the concept of *reflection on theory* in his framework of reflection where the teachers' choices of method, practice, and theory are examined and practised. Similar to the argument the respondent shared on his use of graphic organization, the method prescribed by the curriculum, and his transformative action beyond. Thus, it can be delved that teachers practice the theories and examine their use during lessons.

By the end of every lesson, reflection is done to plan further which is regarded as a reflection '*after lesson*'. It consists of both the reflection and the analysis. Moreover, it is about reflecting on experience and analysing its effectiveness. The concept of reflection '*after lesson*' is like Schon's notion of *reflection on action* where the reflective practitioners evaluate the actions, and outcomes, and plan for future improvement. In the interview, Maxwell shared:

> At the end of the lesson, I always turn back to my overall presentation, and students' feelings, and I analyse my satisfaction level, and my students' behaviour in my class. I examine the learning achievement to know about the effectiveness of my practices…

The information expressed that the teacher critically analysed his practice and its effectiveness. As Cirocki and Widodo (2019) stated reflection '*after the lesson*' is explaining what happened, rationalising the decision, reflecting on students' learning and engagement, outlining the lesson's strengths and weaknesses from the student's point of view, and what they would change if they were going to teach their lesson again, the informant of this study analysed the behaviour, feelings, and examine the effectiveness of his practice to identify the strengths and weakness of the lesson.

Reflective Practice-Means to Teachers' Professional Development (TPD)

The notion of reflective practice as a means of professional development was highlighted by Donald Schon (1987) who promoted reflection as an important tool for beginning teachers to improve their practice (Habib, 2017). It assists in examining the strengths and weaknesses of one's teaching,

learning, or professional practices. It is viewed as a tool that assists teachers in analyzing the situation, self, the learners, and the socio-political context in professional growth. Carrington et al. (2010) stated that reflective practice helps teachers to 'personalize and individualize' (p. 2) their teaching practice and link teachers' knowledge and understanding with their pedagogy (Carrington et al., 2010). As I asked the teachers, what are the roles of reflective practices for the professional development of teachers, one of the informants, Maxwell shared:

> It is an approach to self-evaluation and assessment of own performance. Moreover, I know myself and my standard in teaching through reflection which helps me to grow professionally.

The information showed that reflection supports teachers to evaluate them and to know the standard of their teaching. It further showed that reflection is a process of questioning oneself about what should be done, what was done, what was to be done, and what can be planned further. The very concept of asking questions can be linked with the notion of reflection *in*, *on,* and *for* action by Donald Schon. If one professional reflects on his/her actions, it helps him/her to be a professional person.

Regarding the role of reflective practice in teaching and learning, one of the respondents, Sagun shared:

> In my initial days of teaching, I found my learners passive and not engaged in the classroom activities. I thought about not having good participation. After the repetition of the same sort of behaviors, I realized, and I promised that I must transform myself, and thought only lecturing the class was irritating without paying proper attention to the will and the desire of the learners. I searched some resources and tried to teach adopting an activity-based approach which helped me to engage my learners in the teaching and learning activity.

The information revealed that reflection is important for learning and learners' engagement in teaching-learning activities. The respondent seemed to be confused in the initial days of his teaching, but later his reflection on not good participation of the learners, made him question himself which led him to use a new approach to teaching and learning in his classroom. His effort resulted in an active engagement of learners in the classroom. From the discussion, it can be said that reflective practices are important for teachers to solve problems regarding learning and engagement. The respondent's connotation is similar to the explanation given by Amrullah (2023) where the researcher argues that reflective practice helps teachers to critically reflect and evaluate their pedagogical practices.

Similarly, Virat explained,

> When the teachers are in their profession what they feel is what the lacking in the class are. Without reflection, a teacher cannot become so mature and responsible. So, it is a process towards maturity and expertise. Moreover, reflection helped me to do my work systematically.

The information revealed that teachers practice reflection to accumulate knowledge to develop expertise. Moreover, for him, reflection is a tool that assists in working systematically for instance Brubacher (1994) stated that reflective practice helps teachers to act in an organized way (as cited in Day, 2005). Until and unless a professional works systematically, it will be very difficult to be a professional person. So, reflection assists one in working systematically, scientifically, or professionally. Thus, it is found that reflection works for *systematic teaching and learning.*

Moreover, for Surya, reflection and reflective practices are important for developing *self-awareness.* In one interview, he shared:

> English language teaching classrooms are diverse in my context. At that time, the possibility of critical incidents is high. So, the reflection always makes me alert to such sorts of incidents. It was 2074 I used to teach in class 6, and there was one student whom I admired. I started calling him 'Phatu' (naughty) with love, one day, that boy cried and asked me why you used such a word to me. I am not a naughty. Then I became alert to addressing children with certain words.

The story of the respondent showed that reflection makes teachers self-aware in teaching, learning, distancing, languaging, and all professional practices for instance Hong and Choi (2015) argue that reflective practice increases the self-awareness capacity of professionals.

Reflection was also found to be empowering the learners, and even the practitioners to go beyond. In the interview, one of the respondents, Sagun shared:

> Reflection helps to empower the learners. It also is helpful in social and emotional learning. Teaching becomes very rigorous and tough having students from diverse backgrounds. Throughout the reflection, I got the portfolio of individual students which helped me to treat the learners based on their needs, abilities, and goals. It further helped me to reflect and analyze society and treat the whole class as a community.

The information uncovered that reflective practices are helpful to empower and to be empowered. It assists teachers in behaving with the learners based on their subject positions such as social, linguistic, or cultural backgrounds, age, abilities or disabilities, aptitude, and intelligence. Gore and Zeichner (1991) stated the *social constructionist version* of reflective practice which focuses on social and political issues of schooling and classroom instruction. Hence, the informant for instance shared that reflection helped him to collect the individual portfolios of the learners and guided him to critically analyze society. The critical analysis of society, social, political, and emotional issues of learning of the learners asked him to treat the whole class as a community.

 The study found that reflective practices are important for teachers to improve their teaching-learning activities, and to develop themselves professionally. The study found that teachers practised action research, journal writing, case studies, diary writing, student feedback, and self-analysis as the strategies of reflection. Moreover, it was found that teachers reflected in different phases of their professional practices such as '*before lesson*', '*during lesson*', and '*after lesson*'... Hence, the study found that reflective practices are significant for successful learning and learner engagement, creating self-awareness, and empowering the learners, and to be empowered professionally. Moreover, it was found to be important to act in an organized, systematic, and scientific way. To identify the strengths and weaknesses of self, reflection is crucial. Thus, the study investigated the fact that reflection and reflective strategies are very important for the overall professional development of teachers.

Conclusion and Implications

The study has investigated English language teachers' reflective techniques, and the role of those practices in learning, teaching, and overall professional development. It attempted to unveil the teachers' use of reflection based on the philosophical ideas of Dewey, and Schon. Further, it revealed that reflection is inevitable to all professionals, and its importance in teaching is incredible as teaching is the most rigorous and challenging job. The voice of the informants [English teachers] revealed that

teachers used reflective practices in different forms such as students' feedback, action research, case studies, reflective journals, and diary writing. Moreover, the study found that teachers reflect *in, on,* and *for* their lesson, learners, emotions, abilities, and sociopolitical context for the betterment of teaching, empowering and developing themselves and the learners. The study found that reflection is important for the learners' engagement, teachers' self-analysis, solving critical incidents, and acting in an organized way. It further shows that the application of reflection or reflective practices makes teachers more critical, creative, self-aware, and professional in their careers. In addition, the study investigated the fact that the use of reflective practices is more important to empower the learners and to be empowered.

The study contributes to the field of academia since it supports teachers, teacher educators, and future researchers in the field. It implies that every professional person has to reflect on the practices to plan, to know, to practice, to observe, and to plan further. I recommend that English language teachers should reflect before, during, and after their practice to be successful professionals and reflective practitioners.

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