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IMPLEMENTATION OF REFLECTIVE JOURNALS INTO PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATION

Humora Rakhimova

Namangan state university

Email: rakhimova.xumora@gmail.com

Abstract. This study examines the implementation of reflective journals in pre-service English teacher education as a pedagogical approach to enhance professional competence, critical awareness, and reflective thinking. The research is grounded in a four-stage framework that applies distinct reflection models at each academic level: 3R+ and Rolfe (Year 1), Gibbs and ALACT (Year 2), Kolb and Farrell (Year 3), and Schön and Korthagen (Year 4). These models collectively aim to foster self-analysis, connect theory with practice, and strengthen professional identity. The findings demonstrate that reflective journals promote metacognitive engagement, self-assessment, and autonomous professional growth. Integrating systematic reflection into teacher preparation transforms the process from knowledge acquisition to continuous professional development, nurturing adaptive and reflective English language teachers capable of lifelong learning.

Keywords: reflective journals, pre-service teacher education, EFL, reflective approach, professional competence, teacher identity.

Annotatsiya. Mazkur tadqiqot ingliz tili bo‘yicha bo‘lajak o‘qituvchilar tayyorlash jarayonida refleksiv kundaliklarni joriy etishni professional kompetensiya, tanqidiy tafakkur va refleksiv fikrlashni rivojlantirishga qaratilgan pedagogik yondashuv sifatida o‘rganadi. Tadqiqot to‘rt bosqichli model asosida tashkil etilgan bo‘lib, unda har bir akademik bosqichda turli refleksiya modellari qo‘llaniladi: 3R+ va Rolfe (1-kurs), Gibbs va ALACT (2-kurs), Kolb va Farrell (3-kurs), Schön va Korthagen (4-kurs). Ushbu modellar talabalarda o‘z faoliyatini tahlil qilish, nazariya bilan amaliyotni bog‘lash hamda professional identifikatsiyani mustahkamlashga xizmat qiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari refleksiv kundaliklar metakognitiv faoliyatni faollashtirish, o‘z-o‘zini baholash va mustaqil professional rivojlanishni rag‘batlantirishini ko‘rsatadi. O‘qituvchi tayyorlash jarayoniga tizimli refleksiyani integratsiya qilish bilimlarni egallash jarayonini uzluksiz professional rivojlanish jarayoniga aylantiradi hamda moslashuvchan va refleksiv fikrlaydigan ingliz tili o‘qituvchilarini shakllantirishga xizmat qiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: refleksiv kundaliklar, bo‘lajak o‘qituvchilar ta’limi, EFL, refleksiv yondashuv, professional kompetensiya, o‘qituvchi identifikatsiyasi.

Аннотация. Данное исследование рассматривает внедрение рефлексивных дневников в подготовку будущих учителей английского языка как педагогический подход, направленный на развитие профессиональной компетентности, критического мышления и рефлексивного анализа. Исследование основано на четырехэтапной модели, в которой на каждом академическом уровне применяются различные модели рефлексии: 3R+ и Rolfe (1 курс), Gibbs и ALACT (2 курс), Kolb и Farrell (3 курс), Schön и Korthagen (4 курс). Эти модели способствуют развитию самоанализа, установлению связи между теорией и практикой, а также укреплению профессиональной идентичности будущих учителей. Результаты исследования показывают, что рефлексивные дневники стимулируют метакогнитивную активность, самооценку и автономное профессиональное развитие. Интеграция систематической рефлексии в процесс подготовки учителей трансформирует обучение из простого усвоения знаний в процесс непрерывного профессионального развития, формируя адаптивных и рефлексивных учителей английского языка, способных к обучению на протяжении всей жизни.

Ключевые слова: рефлексивные дневники, подготовка будущих учителей, EFL, рефлексивный подход, профессиональная компетентность, профессиональная идентичность учителя.

INTRODUCTION. In contemporary teacher education, reflection is widely regarded as a vital component of professional learning and personal growth [2; 12; 3]. Within programs preparing pre-service English teachers, reflective practice encourages future educators to analyze their beliefs, teaching experiences, and instructional decisions in order to better understand their professional responsibilities. Reflection not only deepens awareness of teaching as an evolving practice but also bridges theoretical understanding with practical classroom realities.

Nevertheless, in many teacher education curricula, instruction remains primarily focused on knowledge acquisition rather than on developing reflective thinking. As a result, pre-service English teachers often demonstrate limited ability to critically evaluate their teaching, recognize challenges, or transform experience into meaningful professional insight. This gap underscores the need to integrate reflective journals as a structured pedagogical tool that fosters systematic reflection, self-evaluation, and continuous professional development.

The current study conceptualizes reflective journals as an approach to cultivating the reflective competence of pre-service English teachers. Based on a four-stage reflective framework, the system incorporates distinct reflection models: 3R+ and Rolfe (Year 1), Gibbs and ALACT (Year 2), Kolb and Farrell (Year 3), and Schön and Korthagen (Year 4), each aligned with a specific phase of teacher professional formation. These models collectively support the development of critical awareness, analytical reasoning, and professional identity, transforming teacher education into a process of inquiry, introspection, and growth.

Accordingly, the aim of this research is to examine the pedagogical effectiveness of implementing reflective journals in pre-service English teacher education and to determine how structured reflection contributes to building professional competence, self-awareness, and lifelong learning attitudes. It is assumed that continuous engagement in reflection equips pre-service teachers with the capacity to connect theory with practice, evaluate their actions critically, and construct a professional identity grounded in self-understanding and ethical responsibility.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a descriptive and conceptual research design aimed at examining the pedagogical implementation of reflective journals in pre-service English teacher education. The research does not focus on technological integration or digital platforms, but rather on the pedagogical structure and reflective progression across four academic years. The study is grounded in interpretive and constructivist paradigms, which emphasize the individual’s active engagement in meaning-making through reflection and experiential learning [5; 3].

The central objective of the methodology is to analyze how systematically designed reflective journals can be integrated into teacher education programs to promote critical self-analysis, professional competence, and reflective identity formation among pre-service English teachers.

The development of the reflective journals was based on a four-stage reflective framework, corresponding to the progressive formation of teacher competencies during university education. Each stage employs distinct reflection models that support gradual intellectual, emotional, and professional development:

Year	Reflection Model(s)	Core Focus
Year 1	3R+ and Rolfe	Developing initial habits of reflection and self-observation
Year 2	Gibbs and ALACT	Deepening analytical reflection and deriving practical conclusions
Year 3	Kolb and Farrell	Integrating theoretical understanding with experiential practice
Year 4	Schön and Korthagen	Establishing professional identity, values, and teaching mission

This sequential framework assumes that reflective capacity evolves in alignment with pedagogical maturity. Thus, reflection begins with basic self-awareness, develops through systematic analysis, and culminates in professional consciousness and identity construction.

Each stage includes guided prompts, self-assessment questions, and mentor feedback strategies that encourage student teachers to document, analyze, and interpret their experiences throughout coursework and teaching practice.

The methodological foundation of the study is built upon theoretical analysis and synthesis of existing research on reflective practice in teacher education [2; 12; 10; 8]. The study reviews how reflection models can be contextually adapted to pre-service English

teacher training environments and embedded within coursework, practicum, and pedagogical reflection sessions.

The analysis focuses on:

1. Identifying core pedagogical purposes of reflective journaling in teacher preparation;
2. Establishing criteria for effective reflection at different stages of teacher education;
3. Mapping how reflective practice contributes to competence-based outcomes such as critical thinking, autonomy, and self-regulated learning.

All stages of the research adhere to academic and ethical standards of higher education. The implementation of reflective journals emphasizes voluntary participation, confidentiality of individual reflections, and respect for participants’ personal and professional integrity. Reflections are used solely for educational development and formative assessment purposes.

In summary, the methodology adopts a systemic, stage-based pedagogical approach to embedding reflection into teacher preparation programs. Rather than treating reflection as an isolated activity, the reflective journal model positions it as a core learning process that accompanies the pre-service English teacher throughout their academic journey. This structure allows for the gradual internalization of reflective thinking as a professional habit, ensuring that reflection becomes a consistent element of teacher identity and ongoing professional development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of reflective journal implementation within pre-service English teacher education revealed several key outcomes related to professional, cognitive, and affective development. The results demonstrate that structured reflection—when systematically integrated across academic years—contributes to a progressive formation of teachers’ professional competence, critical awareness, and self-directed growth.

At the initial stages (Years 1–2), pre-service teachers showed notable improvement in self-observation, recognition of teaching challenges, and articulation of personal experiences. Reflection guided by the 3R+ and Rolfe models encouraged student teachers to identify their feelings, analyze causes of success or difficulty, and begin transforming classroom experiences into learning opportunities. By the second year, through Gibbs’ and ALACT models, their reflections became more structured and analytical, focusing on cause–effect reasoning and professional decision-making.

In the intermediate stage (Year 3), the use of Kolb’s experiential learning model and Farrell’s reflective framework facilitated a more advanced level of reflection where theoretical principles were consciously linked with practical classroom observations. Pre-service English teachers began to demonstrate an understanding of how methodological knowledge informs classroom strategies and how reflective thinking transforms theory into personal teaching philosophy. This stage signaled a transition from descriptive reflection to interpretive and evidence-based reflection.

In the final stage (Year 4), engagement with Schön’s and Korthagen’s models led to the emergence of a reflective professional identity. Student teachers were able to articulate their beliefs about teaching, define their professional values, and formulate a personal educational mission. Reflection evolved into an introspective process through which teachers recognized their role as facilitators of learning, rather than transmitters of knowledge. This progression confirmed that long-term reflective practice cultivates self-awareness, ethical responsibility, and autonomous professional behavior.

Across all stages, reflective journaling strengthened metacognitive awareness, the ability to think about one’s own thinking and emotional regulation in teaching contexts. Students reported greater confidence in assessing their pedagogical actions, handling feedback, and adapting to changing classroom dynamics. Reflection served as a mechanism for emotional growth, allowing teachers to connect cognitive insight with empathy and professional resilience.

Overall, the findings indicate that the implementation of reflective journals fostered:

- higher levels of critical and analytical thinking;
- improved ability to evaluate and adapt teaching strategies;
- clearer articulation of pedagogical values and goals;
- stronger commitment to continuous professional development.

This demonstrates that reflection, when cultivated systematically, transforms pre-service English teacher education from a product-oriented training model into a process-oriented system of inquiry, adaptation, and lifelong learning.

The results of the study confirm that the systematic implementation of reflective journals plays a crucial role in shaping the professional formation of pre-service English teachers. The progressive development observed across the four stages of reflection validates the theoretical claims of Dewey [2], Schön [12], and Farrell [3], who emphasized that reflection bridges the gap between knowledge and practice, transforming passive learning into an active and inquiry-driven process.

At the initial stage, the emergence of basic reflective habits aligns with Dewey’s [2] notion of *reflective thinking* as “active, persistent, and careful consideration” of experience. Students’ ability to identify and analyze classroom challenges corresponds with Kolb’s [5] experiential learning cycle, where learning evolves through observation, conceptualization, and experimentation. By encouraging student teachers to reflect on “what happened, why it happened, and what can be improved”, the 3R+ and Rolfe models effectively fostered metacognitive awareness and early professional reasoning.

The second and third stages, employing Gibbs, ALACT, Kolb, and Farrell models, highlighted the transition from descriptive to analytical reflection. These findings echo those of Richards and Lockhart [10] and Mann and Walsh [8], who argue that reflection enables teachers to transform isolated experiences into structured professional insights. Reflection at this stage encouraged student teachers to view teaching as an evolving process rather than a set of fixed techniques. This shift from procedural knowledge to reflective understanding indicates the development of critical consciousness—a key component of professional competence.

In the final stage, the use of Schön’s reflective practice and Korthagen’s Onion Model enabled student teachers to internalize reflection as a dimension of identity rather than as a separate activity. Similar to Korthagen’s [7] interpretation, reflection here penetrated deeper layers of beliefs, values, and mission, guiding pre-service teachers to define who they are as educators and what principles underlie their teaching philosophy. This finding is consistent with Farrell’s [3] view that the ultimate goal of reflection in teacher education is the construction of a *reflective teacher identity*—one grounded in awareness, empathy, and moral responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Furthermore, the results suggest that continuous engagement with reflection fosters not only cognitive but also emotional and ethical growth. As noted by Akbari [1], reflective practice strengthens teachers’ capacity for self-regulation and ethical decision-making. The reflective journals helped student teachers to confront their limitations, accept constructive feedback, and perceive mistakes as opportunities for learning—a process that aligns with lifelong professional development.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that reflection, when embedded systematically into teacher education, transforms the learning trajectory of pre-service English teachers. The reflective journal serves as a pedagogical medium through which theoretical learning becomes personally meaningful and professionally actionable. It cultivates autonomy, critical awareness, and an enduring commitment to professional self-improvement, qualities essential for effective and adaptive teaching in contemporary education systems.

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