MECHANISMS FOR DEVELOPING THE REFLECTIVE APPROACH OF FUTURE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS DURING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

Khodjayeva Nilufar Salimovna
UzSWLU, teacher at the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology

Abstract. This article investigates the mechanisms of developing professional reflection among prospective English language teachers during pedagogical practice. Theoretical foundations of reflection, including its philosophical, psychological, and pedagogical dimensions, are analyzed to identify effective models and mechanisms for teacher education. The study employs a qualitative approach, combining observation, interviews, and reflective journal analysis. Results reveal that structured self-analysis, peer collaboration, mentor guidance, and digital reflection tools significantly contribute to reflective competence. The findings highlight the necessity of embedding reflection systematically into teacher training curricula to ensure professional growth, self-awareness, and continuous improvement of pedagogical skills.

Keywords: professional reflection, pedagogical practice, reflective teaching, English language teachers, teacher education, self-analysis, mentoring.

In the XXI century, global educational reforms have emphasized the need for teachers who are autonomous, creative, and reflective. Reflection enables teachers to examine their actions, attitudes, and decisions, transforming everyday experiences into valuable professional learning. According to Dewey, reflection is an "active, persistent, and careful consideration" of beliefs and practices in light of their consequences. This concept, further developed by Schön, became the cornerstone of modern professional development.

For prospective English language teachers, professional reflection is particularly crucial because language teaching requires constant adaptation, cultural sensitivity, and methodological flexibility. The ability to reflect helps teachers connect linguistic theory with communicative classroom realities, evaluate their strategies, and improve learning outcomes.

Pedagogical practice provides an ideal context for cultivating reflection, as it bridges theory and practice. During teaching practice, student-teachers face real-life classroom situations that require decision-making, improvisation, and self-assessment. However, without guided mechanisms, reflection may remain superficial or inconsistent. Therefore, this study aims to explore the mechanisms for developing professional reflection and propose a structured model applicable in English teacher education.

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The origins of reflection as a pedagogical concept can be traced to the works of John Dewey, who viewed reflection as a disciplined form of thinking essential for professional learning. Later, Donald Schön (1983) introduced the concepts of reflection-in-action (thinking during the act of teaching) and reflection-on-action (thinking after the act), which have become central to teacher education models worldwide. In the field of psychology, Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasized the social nature of cognition and reflection as a dialogic process occurring through interaction and communication. This theoretical perspective underlies the importance of mentor–student and peer reflection in modern teacher training. Within teacher education, reflection has evolved from a personal cognitive skill to a structured professional competence. Scholars such as Farrell and Richards & Lockhart argue that reflective practice allows teachers to integrate pedagogical theory with classroom reality.

It encourages teachers to become lifelong learners capable of evaluating and improving their teaching autonomously. Different models of reflection have been proposed:

➢ Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle — concrete experience → reflective observation → abstract conceptualization → active experimentation.

➢ Gibbs' Reflective Cycle — description → feelings → evaluation → analysis → conclusion → action plan.

➢ Brookfield's Four Lenses — reflection through one's own experience, students' eyes, colleagues' perceptions, and theoretical literature.

These models provide a framework for prospective teachers to analyze their teaching systematically. Researchers identify several levels of reflection:

1. Technical reflection — focusing on methods and effectiveness of instruction.

2. Practical reflection — analyzing reasons behind teaching decisions.

3. Critical reflection — questioning broader values, beliefs, and educational purposes.

Each level requires specific pedagogical conditions and support systems, especially during practicum periods.

The present research employed a qualitative case study approach to explore how reflection develops during pedagogical practice. Thirty (30) senior students enrolled in the English Language Teaching (ELT) bachelor's program at a pedagogical university in Uzbekistan participated voluntarily. All participants had prior coursework in methodology and linguistics and were completing a six-week teaching practice in secondary schools. Three main data sources were used:

1. Reflective journals — weekly written reflections focusing on lesson planning, student engagement, and classroom management.

2. Semi-structured interviews — conducted with both student-teachers and mentors to explore perceptions of reflection.

3. Classroom observations — supervisors used structured rubrics to assess reflective behaviors (self-evaluation, adaptability, and feedback responsiveness).

Mentors noted significant progress in students' ability to connect teaching outcomes with pedagogical theories. Peer reflection sessions fostered emotional support and a sense of community, aligning with Vygotsky's view of learning as a social process.

Students who used video recordings and online journals demonstrated deeper reflection because they could observe their nonverbal communication and classroom interactions objectively.

The findings confirm that professional reflection is a multidimensional process requiring structural, emotional, and technological support. Reflection not only improves instructional techniques but also transforms teachers' professional identity. Schön's idea of the reflective practitioner suggests that teachers construct knowledge through active engagement with real-life teaching situations. Thus, reflection acts as both a cognitive and emotional mechanism for professional growth. Effective teacher education programs should:

Integrate reflection systematically into all practicum stages.

Train mentors in reflective supervision.

Encourage collaborative and digital forms of reflection.

Reflection journals and digital portfolios should be graded not only for completion but also for depth of analysis.

✓ Despite positive outcomes, the study identified challenges:
✓ Limited time for reflective writing during practicum.
✓ Unequal mentor involvement.
✓ Lack of institutional frameworks for continuous reflection.

Addressing these issues requires policy-level reform and inclusion of reflection-based assessment in teacher training standards.

Conclusion. Professional reflection is not an optional skill but a core component of teacher professionalism. The mechanisms identified—self-analysis, peer collaboration, mentor guidance, and digital tools—are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. When systematically implemented, they help future English teachers develop self-regulation, professional ethics, and lifelong learning attitudes.

Developing reflection among student-teachers enhances their readiness to cope with the complex realities of modern classrooms. Therefore, teacher education institutions should incorporate structured reflection modules, digital reflective portfolios, and mentorship training to ensure the sustainability of reflective practices.

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