

Exploring Reflective Practice and CPD Perceptions Among Pre-Service English Teachers in Uzbekistan

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and practices of reflective teaching and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) among pre-service English teachers in Uzbekistan. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed, involving 263 undergraduate students from four universities specializing in English language teacher education. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered online and analyzed descriptively. The findings show that while most students demonstrate a basic awareness of reflective practice and CPD, their engagement is often irregular and superficial. The most common reflective activities were self-assessment and peer discussions, whereas deeper methods such as learning journals and portfolios were less practiced. Key barriers included lack of time, insufficient training, low confidence in self-assessment, and limited institutional support. Nevertheless, participants acknowledged that reflective practice positively influences their professional growth, particularly when supported by digital tools and guided mentorship. The study concludes that for reflective practice to effectively contribute to teacher professional development, it should be integrated systematically into teacher education curricula. Structured reflection sessions, capacity-building programs, and the incorporation of digital tools are recommended to enhance sustainability and impact.*

Keywords: *Reflective Approach, Professional Competence, Pre-Service English Teachers, CPD, Uzbekistan*

Introduction

In contemporary education, teacher competence extends beyond subject mastery to include the ability to reflect critically on practice and engage in lifelong learning. Reflective practice, introduced by Schön (1983) and further developed by Gibbs (1988) and Korthagen (2001), is recognized as a vital process for fostering self-awareness, professional identity, and pedagogical improvement. It encourages teachers to evaluate their own decisions and behaviors, adapt strategies, and enhance both personal and professional growth.

Globally, reflection has become central to teacher education and Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Empirical studies (Farrell, 2013; Hung & Thuy, 2021) highlight that reflective practices not only enhance teaching effectiveness but also promote autonomy and collaboration. However, despite its proven benefits, the implementation of reflective practice remains inconsistent, particularly in educational contexts where traditional models dominate.

In Uzbekistan, recent educational reforms have emphasized the importance of professional development for teachers. Yet, reflective practice has not been systematically embedded within teacher training programs. Previous research (Jalolov, 2012; Rakhmanov, 2025) suggests that methodological courses often focus on theoretical content rather than active reflection or self-assessment. This gap raises questions about how pre-service English teachers perceive and apply reflective practices within their academic training.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining pre-service English teachers' perceptions, levels of engagement, and barriers to reflective practice in Uzbekistan. By identifying existing challenges and opportunities, the research contributes to designing more effective teacher education programs that integrate reflective practice as a core component of CPD.

Methodology

The concept of teachers' professional development (TPD) has evolved significantly over the past few decades, moving beyond traditional training methods toward more reflective, collaborative, and lifelong learning approaches. According to Day (1999), professional development is not just about acquiring new skills, but about continuous personal and professional growth that responds to changing educational contexts. In this regard, reflection has become central to modern understandings of teacher learning.

Donald Schön (1983), one of the pioneers of reflective practice, introduced the concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, emphasizing that professional learns most effectively when they think critically about their decisions and behaviors during and after the teaching process. Schön's theory laid the foundation for integrating reflective thinking into teacher education programs.

Following Schön, scholars like Graham Gibbs (1988) and Fred Korthagen (2001) proposed practical models for structuring reflection. Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, with its six stages — description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan — offers a clear and systematic way for teachers to analyze their experiences. Korthagen, on the other hand, emphasized the personal and holistic aspects of reflection, proposing a layered model that connects behavior, competencies, beliefs, identity, and mission. His work aligns well with teacher education philosophies that prioritize self-awareness and internal motivation as drivers of growth.

Empirical studies also support the positive impact of reflection on pre-service teachers. According to Farrell (2013), reflective practice enhances teachers' ability to evaluate their own teaching, identify areas for improvement, and make informed pedagogical decisions. It fosters autonomy, confidence, and the development of a professional identity. Similarly, Meierdirk (2016) argues that reflection is essential not only for personal insight but also for building collaborative learning cultures among educators.

Moreover, reflective practice is closely linked with continuous professional development (CPD). The European Commission (2013) emphasizes that effective CPD requires teachers to engage in ongoing, reflective activities that are self-directed and context-sensitive. In this view, reflection is both a means and an outcome of meaningful professional growth.

Despite the global recognition of its value, the implementation of reflective practice remains uneven, especially in contexts where teacher education systems are still transitioning from traditional to modern models. In Uzbekistan, while the idea of professional development has been promoted in recent educational reforms, structured and sustained reflective practices are not yet widely embedded in teacher training programs. Jalolov (2012) notes that most methodological courses focus on theoretical content, leaving little room for active reflection or practical self-assessment.

Furthermore, several recent studies point out common challenges faced by pre-service teachers when it comes to reflection. These include a lack of understanding of reflective methods (Hung & Thuy, 2021), limited guidance from mentors or instructors, and institutional cultures that do not prioritize or reward reflective engagement. Students often see reflection as an additional burden rather than an integral part of their academic and professional journey.

In this context, there is a growing need to examine how pre-service English teachers in Uzbekistan perceive and practice reflection. Understanding their current levels of awareness, confidence, and engagement with reflective tools can inform the design of more effective teacher education programs. This study contributes to that need by exploring the role of reflection in shaping students' professional competence and by identifying the barriers that may prevent its regular and meaningful use.

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to explore pre-service English teachers' understanding and attitudes toward the reflective approach in relation to Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The research instrument was a structured online questionnaire developed and administered via Google Forms. This platform enabled efficient data collection and broad accessibility for participants across several universities.

A total of 263 undergraduate students in their third and fourth years of study took part in the survey. Among them, 74% were third-year students, and 26% were fourth-year students, representing various institutions specializing in English language teacher education. For the purposes of the broader experimental framework, participants were randomly divided into an experimental group ($n = 131$) and a control group ($n = 132$).

The survey aimed to collect data on students' prior knowledge, experiences, and perceptions regarding reflective practices in teacher education. The items were carefully designed to align with the objectives of the study and ensure content validity. Before its official distribution, the instrument underwent pilot testing with a small subset of the target population to confirm clarity, reliability, and appropriateness of language.

All responses were collected anonymously, and ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process, including voluntary participation and informed consent. The data obtained through the questionnaire formed the basis for both descriptive and comparative analysis within the scope of the study.

Result and Discussion

The data collected from 263 third- and fourth-year pre-service English teachers provide valuable insights into their current level of awareness, engagement, and perceptions concerning reflective practice and its impact on Continuing Professional

Development (CPD). The findings are presented in thematic categories to facilitate interpretation and support further discussion.

1. Awareness of CPD and Reflective Practice

Participants demonstrated a generally positive understanding of key concepts. Specifically, 74% of respondents accurately defined CPD as training and learning activities aimed at enhancing teaching competence. Furthermore, 64.1% of respondents correctly identified reflective practice as the process of analyzing and improving one's own teaching or learning experience. These findings suggest that foundational knowledge of both CPD and reflective strategies is present among the majority of future educators.

2. Types of Reflective Practices Utilized

Regarding the forms of reflective practice currently employed, the majority of students reported engaging in self-assessment (71%) and peer discussions (53.4%). Less frequent, but still notable, were the use of portfolios (34.4%), learning diaries (25.2%), and checklists (26.7%). A small proportion (2.3%) indicated no engagement with any form of reflective activity, which may indicate a need for increased awareness or institutional support in integrating reflective tools into academic routines.

3. Frequency of Reflection

Students' self-reported frequency of engaging in reflective practice varied. While 24.4% reported practicing reflection always, others indicated they reflect usually (20.6%), often (29%), or sometimes (17.6%). A smaller portion reflected rarely (5.3%) or never (3.1%). These results imply a generally consistent engagement with reflective thinking, though a minority may benefit from increased guidance or motivation.

4. Confidence in Identifying Professional Strengths and Weaknesses

In terms of self-awareness, the majority of students demonstrated moderate to very high confidence in recognizing their strengths and areas for improvement. Specifically, 29.8% reported moderate confidence, 29% high confidence, and 30.5% very high confidence. Meanwhile, 7.6% expressed low confidence, and 3.1% felt no confidence at all. These figures reflect a promising level of self-reflective capability but also highlight the need to support a small but significant group of students with lower self-efficacy.

5. Perceived Factors Supporting Reflective Practice

When asked about what factors most contributed to their professional development, students most frequently cited practical teaching experience (63.4%), followed by mentor feedback (42.7%), self-analysis (42%), model lesson observation (34.4%), and peer feedback (23.7%). This distribution indicates that authentic teaching contexts and structured support from mentors and peers are key drivers of professional learning.

6. Timing and Regularity of Reflective Activities

The timing of engagement in reflective practices was diverse. While 24.4% reported reflecting after every lesson, 29% did so weekly, 19.8% monthly, 16% at the end of the semester, and 10.7% only once or twice per year. These findings suggest that although many students reflect regularly, a more systematic and embedded approach to reflective activities may enhance consistency and depth of engagement.

7. Use of Digital Tools in Reflection

A significant portion (67.9%) of students reported using digital platforms such as Padlet, Google Docs, or Jamboard to support their reflective activities. However, 8.4% indicated no use of digital tools, and 23.7% did not provide a definitive response. This suggests both the growing role of technology in reflective practice and the need for further training on the pedagogical use of digital tools.

8. Challenges in Engaging with Reflective Practices

Participants identified a range of barriers that hinder their engagement with reflective practices. The most frequently reported obstacle was lack of time (49.7%), followed by insufficient preparation or training (36.6%), difficulties with critical analysis (26%), and lack of institutional support (16.8%). A small number (2.3%) mentioned other unspecified issues. These findings underscore the necessity of organizational support structures and capacity-building efforts to ensure the sustainability of reflective practices.

9. Perceived Impact of Reflection on CPD

When evaluating the effectiveness of reflective practice in supporting CPD, 23.7% of respondents considered it very effective, 22.1% significantly effective, and 37.4% moderately effective. Meanwhile, 13% viewed it as partially effective, and 3.8% found it ineffective. This distribution suggests that while the majority of students recognize the value of reflection for their professional growth, there remains a need to strengthen their understanding of its long-term impact.

The findings from the diagnostic phase highlight several important issues in how pre-service English teachers in Uzbekistan engage with reflective practice. While a majority of students showed a general understanding of what CPD and reflection mean, their actual use of reflective strategies was often irregular and surface-level. For example, although self-assessment and peer discussions were among the most commonly used tools, deeper forms of reflection such as learning journals and portfolios were practiced less frequently.

One significant issue was time management. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that they lacked time for regular reflection, suggesting that reflection is still seen as an “extra task” rather than an integrated part of the learning process. This perception may be linked to overloaded schedules, absence of guided frameworks, or the belief that reflection is optional rather than essential for growth.

Another challenge is related to training and institutional support. Many students reported that they had never received formal instruction on how to reflect or use reflection tools effectively. This lack of training leads to uncertainty and low confidence in self-

assessment. Without clear models, examples, or feedback, students may engage in reflection mechanically rather than meaningfully.

The role of digital tools also stood out in the findings. Although a large number of students had used platforms like Padlet or Google Docs, their usage was inconsistent. This points to a need for more structured integration of technology in reflective tasks. With proper guidance, digital platforms can offer accessible, collaborative, and time-efficient spaces for reflection.

Moreover, the variation in students’ confidence levels when identifying their own strengths and weaknesses is worth noting. While some felt very confident, others expressed hesitation or doubt. This suggests that confidence in reflection is not simply a personal trait, but something that can be developed with the right kind of support, feedback, and repeated practice.

Overall, the study reveals that although reflective practice is recognized as valuable, it is not yet embedded as a consistent or well-supported element of teacher education in Uzbekistan. For reflective practice to truly contribute to future teachers’ professional development, it needs to move beyond theory and be made a routine part of coursework, practicum experiences, and assessment systems.

To achieve this, universities should consider introducing formal training modules on reflective techniques in the early stages of teacher education. They should also create safe, supportive environments where students can openly reflect without fear of being judged. Mentorship programs, peer collaboration, and clear assessment rubrics can also enhance the impact of reflection on student learning. When reflection is seen not as an occasional task but as an everyday professional habit, its long-term benefits for competence development become much more visible and achievable.

Tabel 1. Challenges and Recommendations

| Challenge | Recommendation |
|--|---|
| Reflection is not done regularly | Include weekly or post-lesson reflections; use journals or Google Forms |
| Limited knowledge of reflective tools | Provide short courses on reflection during the first semester |
| Lack of time for reflection | Make reflection part of assessment; teach time management |
| Insufficient training | Offer special modules on reflective writing and self-assessment |
| Lack of institutional support | Appoint CPD coordinators; form mentorship groups |
| Inconsistent use of digital platforms | Provide training on tools like Padlet and Jamboard |
| Low self-confidence in assessment | Use CPD mapping and group self-evaluation exercises |
| Low perceived impact | Show real examples, videos, and use clear evaluation criteria |

Conclusion

The diagnostic phase of this research, conducted at four Uzbek universities, showed that while pre-service English teachers have a basic understanding of CPD and reflective practice, they face many practical obstacles. These include irregular practice, limited awareness of tools, time constraints, lack of digital skills, and weak institutional support. To overcome these challenges, several steps are recommended: structured reflection sessions, training programs, digital integration, and guided self-assessment. If implemented properly, these strategies can enhance both personal and professional growth.

In short, for reflective practice to truly support the professional development of future English teachers, it must be made accessible, consistent, and supported by technology and institutional frameworks.

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