



Empowering Teachers through Core Reflection: A Case in Korea

Judy Yin

Korea National University of Education

This study explored the reflection process of secondary in-service English teachers during a graduate course. In particular, the study aimed to examine the type of reflection the teachers are engaged in as they strive toward experiencing core reflection. In addition, the restricting and contributing factors during the process of reflection were also looked into. A total of 17 in-service secondary English teachers participated in this study. The data were collected from class observations, group discussions, reflective presentations, and interviews. The results of the study showed that they struggled at first due to many restricting factors such as lack of training to conduct structured reflections and ongoing administrative concerns. As they progressed and focused on a particular question that triggered further reflection, they were able to collaboratively reflect on a shared theme. This enabled them to confront their long-term difficulties and finally move forward. The implication of the study points out the importance of proper training to conduct effective reflection on a regular basis and the efforts to provide programs that focus on helping teachers to redefine imported theories and methods so that they can appropriately apply them in their classrooms.

Keywords: reflection, reflective practice, core reflection, empowerment, teacher training

Introduction

The goal of professional development is to provide empowerment which can be “the force that releases powers of self-secure” as teachers become more confident by means of cognitive, motivational, and other changes (Rehm, 1989, p. 116). By means of empowerment, the teachers are able to “know how to handle difficult situations, challenging relations and how to make change happen” (Eriksen et al., 2015, p. 76). What, then, can teacher educators do to enable such an empowerment? In the field of professional development for teachers, a great number of studies have shown positive effects of reflection on professional development (Alger, 2006; Amobi, 2003; Cirocki, Tennekoon, & Calvo, 2014; Cruickshank, 1985; Garza & Smith, 2015; Husu, Toom, & Patrikainen, 2008; LaBoskey, 1994; Lee, 2008; Mok, 1994; Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991; Swain, 1998, Thompson & Pascal, 2012). These studies claim that reflecting on technical problems of teaching allows the teachers to become aware of the obstacles and gain a better perspective of themselves as a teacher. While such studies discuss the benefits of reflection, other studies have voiced their concerns regarding the limited level of reflection teachers tend to engage in due to various obstacles (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005; Yassaei, 2002). Furthermore, there are those that caution unstructured reflection as it can be detrimental to one’s professional development (Wallace, 1998). As noted by Bean and Stevens (2002), there is a need to “fully explore just what form reflection can and should take, what role it assumes in a teacher’s beliefs and practices, and how teacher educators can best facilitate its uses” (p. 215).

It is imperative, then, to explore the actual process of reflection of teachers in order to properly guide

them to conduct properly structured reflection. Furthermore, the restricting factors that hinder reflection as well as contributing factors that aid successful reflection need to be identified. For the purpose of the study, the following research questions are asked: (1) What process do the in-service teachers go through during the reflection-driven discussions? (2) What factors made it difficult for reflection? What factors guided reflection?

Literature Review

Reflection and Reflective Practice

According to Dewey (1997), a general notion of reflective thought is “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the future conclusion to which it tends” (p. 6). As teachers, this concept is particularly essential since we need to “reflect-on-action”, as noted by Schön (1983) in order to think “back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome” (p. 26). Reflective teaching, then, requires such a deliberate attempt to become aware of the factors involved in teaching as well as one’s own identity and beliefs. Such a reflection which Korthagen (2001) refers to as “particularistic and situational”, calls for a deeper level of reflection (p. 13). As defined by Larivee (2000), when one is involved in critical reflection, one “critically challenges self-imposed limitations and idealizations” by “bringing commonly-held beliefs into question” (p. 295). This complex reflection process is believed to more cyclical than linear, as shown in Figure 1.

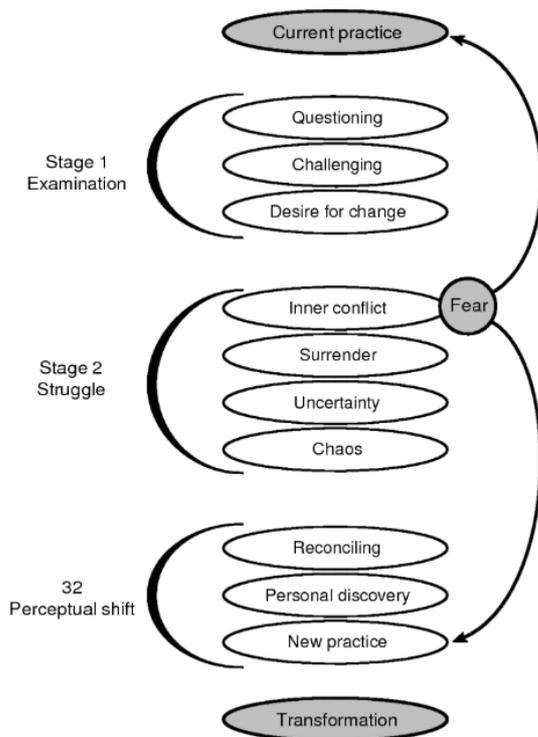


Figure 1. Stages in the critical reflection process (Larivee, 2000, p. 305)

According to this framework, the teacher begins the reflection process by questioning whether the action taken produced the intended goal. As the teacher goes through stage 2, the teacher struggles through negative factors such as inner conflict and chaos as the teacher is forced to let go of the status quo

in order to change and move on. When the teacher experiences a perceptual shift, the teacher engages in a new pattern of thinking and searches for a more appropriate way of teaching. Qing (2009) notes that critical reflection is essential to promote reflective practice: “Reflective teaching asks EFL teachers to stop, to slow down in order to notice, analyze, and inquire on what they are doing. It tells them to relate theory and practice, to evaluate both old and new teaching experience, and to make interpretations on the situations encountered” (p. 36).

Reflection in Teacher Education

A number of studies emphasize the importance of reflection in teacher training (Alger, 2006; Amobi, 2003; Bean & Stevens, 2002; Pollard et al., 2008). In order to help teachers gain competence for reflection that can allow them to learn from their experiences (Calderhead, 1989; Schön, 1987), it is essential for teacher educators to provide careful mentoring and supervision (Bates, Ramirez, & Drits, 2009). In the reflective teaching model (Figure 2) suggested by Wallace (1991), the process of professional development is divided into two stages: Stage 1, consisting of the pre-training period, in which the trainee starts the training process with their own conceptual schemata created through professional reading materials and undergraduate studies. During Stage 2, the quality of reflection depends on the interaction between the trainee’s received knowledge (facts, data, and theories about the profession) and experiential knowledge.

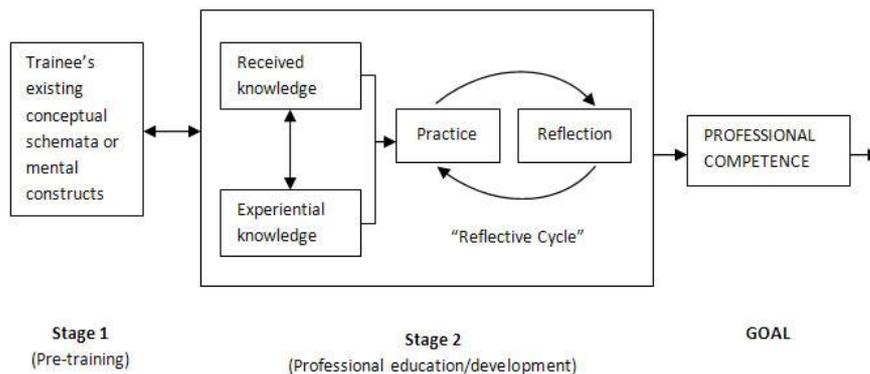


Figure 2. The reflective teaching model (Wallace, 1991, p. 15).

The key, then, is to search for ways to go beyond superficial awareness and conduct they type of reflection that can reach deeper and enable professional competence. Gebhard (2005) suggests that such an awareness can be achieved by means of exploration since “when we try new things, we can compare them with what we usually do, and based on this comparison we can see our teaching differently, including our beliefs about teaching and learning” (p. 3). As shown in Figure 3, the teacher progresses from the outer layer of awareness (assumptions about exploration) to the inner most layer (awareness of self) by means of exploration.

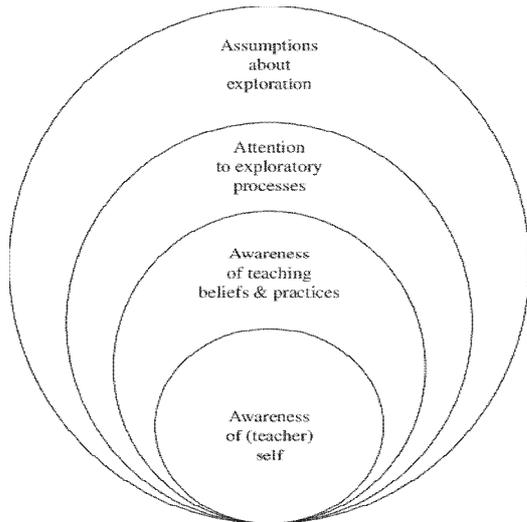


Figure 3. Awareness through exploration (Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999, p. 18).

The type of deep reflection that can enhance professional development are often referred to as critical reflection, which is a process of recalling, considering, and evaluating experience and it involves “conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making, and as a source for planning and action” (Richards, 1990, p. 5). The onion model (Korthagen, 2004) illustrates the levels of reflection moving from the outer layer to the inner layer, as in Figure 4.

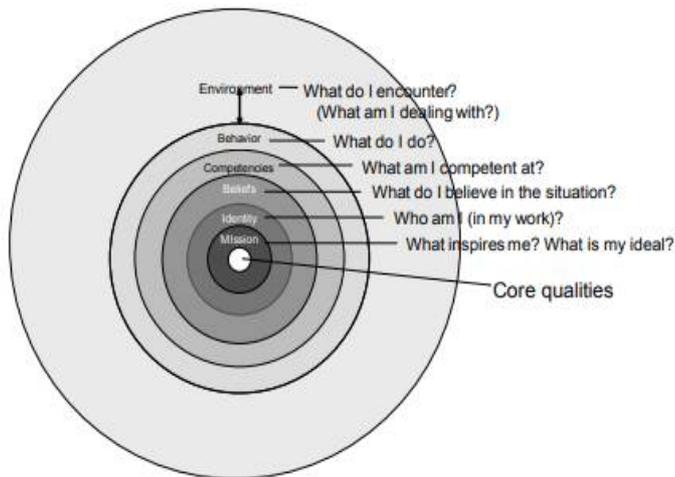


Figure 4. The onion model (Korthagen, 2004).

In this model, Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) point out that the reflection limited to the outer levels of the onion is an “ordinary reflection” whereas core reflection refers to the inner levels (p. 64). Meijer et al. (2009) summarize the Core Reflection approach with the following key principles:

1. Promoting awareness of ideals and core qualities in the person that are related to the situation reflected on
2. Identifying internal obstacles to acting out these ideals and core qualities
3. Promoting awareness of the cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects embedded in ideals, core qualities, and obstacles
4. Promoting a state of awareness in which the person is fully aware (cognitively and emotionally) of the discrepancy or friction between 1 and 2, and the self-created nature of the

internal obstacles

5. Trust in the process that takes place from within the person
6. Support of acting out one's inner potential within the situation under reflection
7. Promoting autonomy in using Core Reflection

Accordingly, one of the main concerns of the Core Reflection approach is to allow a person to become aware of internal obstacles that limit the enactment of their core qualities (Korthagen, 2014). Rather than fighting with limiting patterns, the person learns to be become aware of them, understand their negative effects, and find ways to deal with such obstacles to make a change for the better (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). The ALACT model, as shown in Figure 5, illustrates the core reflection cycle which the teacher educators can focus on to promote constructive deep reflection.

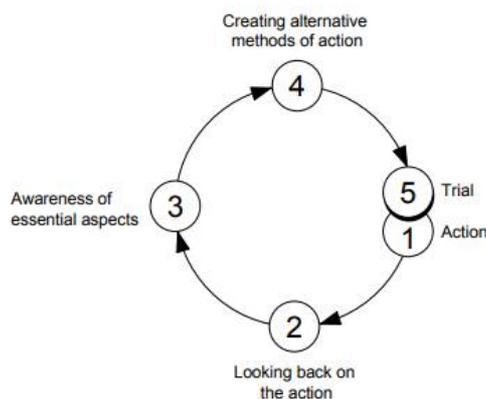


Figure 5. The ALACT model describing a structured process of reflection (Korthagen and Vasalos, 2005, p. 49).

While the necessity and positive effects of core reflection are being reported, there are still concerns regarding the gap between what is expected and what is actually being done since the teachers seem to have difficulties in conducting such a deep level of reflection. For example, the teachers in Yassaei's (2012) study were shown to be using unstructured reflection without documenting their thoughts due to the workload in school. Some argue that this lack of depth and success in reflection is due to inexperience in teaching (Dinkelman, 2000; Francis, 1995; Harrington, Quinn-Leering, & Hodson, 1996), there are those who claim that not knowing how to reflect is a major obstacle, for both novice and experienced teachers. When the teachers are not scaffolded properly, they were observed to only focused on the surface-level reflection (Poom-Valickis & Mathews, 2013; Sööt & Viskus 2015). Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) state that the "pressure of work often encourages a focus on obtaining a 'quick fix'- a rapid solution for a practical problem- rather than shedding light on the underlying issues (p. 48). Conway and Clark (2003) argue that only focusing on the immediate problems is problematic because it hinders self-regulated learning among teachers. Furthermore, Schön (1987) claims that when professional development become stagnate and teachers develop standard solutions to their problems, their strategies cease to develop. Similarly, Wallace (1998) points out that unguided and unstructured reflection can "lead to an intensification of unpleasant emotions without suggesting any way forward" (p. 14) Klein (2008) points out that the focus of professional development should move away from technical competencies such as classroom management and instruction and move toward the inner life of teachers by promoting holistic reflection lest teachers become incapable of being "responsive, imaginative, or integrated practitioners" (p. 118).

In sum, there is a need for structured reflection to encourage the development of *growth competence*, which is "the ability to continue to develop professionally on the basis of internally directed learning (Korthagen et al., 2001, p. 47) As noted by Loughran (2002), a conceptualization of reflective practice is a way to integrate the theory and the practice of reflection in meaningful ways. Husu, Toom and

Patrikainen (2008) and Leijen et al. (2009) claim that reflection is a challenging activity and reflection activities need to be guided.

Methods

Participants and Settings

A total of 17 in-service teachers (2 male and 15 female) enrolled in the intensive graduate program participated in this study. All of the participants were secondary teachers from various districts in Korea. Their ages ranged from 29 to 54. The course, which is offered during the summer and winter breaks, focused on various teaching methods in EFL classroom and required the teachers to reinterpret ESL theories and practices according to the Korean EFL context. Detailed information of the participants are provided in Table 1. All of the participants in this study were given pseudonyms.

TABLE 1
Participant Profile

	Middle School	High School	Total
Female	8	7	15
Male	1	1	2
Total	9	8	17

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected from multiple sources such as class observation field notes, the teachers' in-class discussions and presentations regarding their group reflection task, and interviews to enhance validity of the study. The teacher-group discussions (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Danielowich, 2012; James, 1996) was used as the method to carry out reflection-driven tasks. During the in-class discussions, the participants were asked to reflect on a particular method they had used during a class, which they felt uncomfortable about. As shown in Francis (1997) and Korthagen and Kessels (1999), teachers need to be guided through their reflection process with key questions. Accordingly, the questions outlined by Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) were used as a guideline to help them address their issues more systematically. The nine questions were: 1) What was the context?, 2) What did you want?, 3) What did you do?, 4) What were you thinking?, 5) How did you feel?, 6) What did the students want?, 7) What did the students do?, 8) What were the students thinking?, and 9) How did the students feel?

All of the participants were interviewed twice (during and after the semester) using the semi-structured interview protocol. The interviews were conducted in Korean and the transcripts were translated in English by the researcher. The data analysis method used in this study is qualitative in nature as it identifies themes, develop concepts and propositions. (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Critical comments in the discussion sessions, presentations and interview transcripts were identified and analyzed in accordance with emerging themes (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). Using the constant-comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1994), the data coding was "elaborated and modified as the incoming data are played against them" (p. 273). As such, the data were initially analyzed through open coding for potential themes, which were continuously compared and checked with further data for themes, subthemes, and their properties eventually leading to the final emerging themes (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Saldaña, 2013).

Results and Discussions

The Reflection Process

As the participants conducted reflection-inducing tasks guided by the questions in the ALACT model throughout the course, they began to learn how to reflection constructively by going through a series of stages. The stages are outlined in Figure 6.

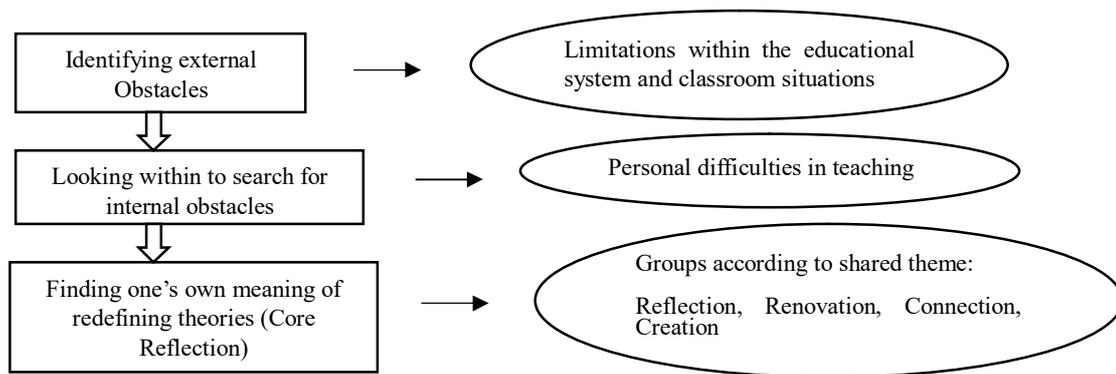


Figure 5. The reflection process.

The stages within the reflection process were identified by the type of reflection shared by the group. For example, the first stage (Identifying external factors) was categorized as a stage since the teachers mainly discussed external factors such as limitations within the educational system and the classroom context as the reasons behind their difficulties:

The main task was to redefine ESL theories within Korean EFL context. The group discussions ended with teachers voicing their frustrations regarding the obstacles that limit their applications of the ESL methodologies. The teachers regard external factors as their main cause of the ineffectiveness of the methods when applied. They complain that they cannot focus an entire class just on speaking because it is not a skill required for the college entrance exam. (Week 3, Field notes)

As they continued this pattern for three weeks, the teachers realized that there are obstacles other than external factors that hinder the application of the ESL methods. However, most of the teachers struggled during this stage as they had difficulties in progressing toward the next stage of reflection:

During the group discussions, some of the teachers commented that they felt as though their reflection sessions were repetitive since they always end up blaming the educational system. When they shared this thought with the rest of the class, one of the teachers said, “I can feel that there must be something that we can do to improve our classrooms. But I’ve never thought about it beyond this reflection because there was nothing I can do to change anything.” At this comment, a teacher said, “Maybe there are problems with our teaching.” (Week 4, Field notes)

Similar to teachers in Ho (2009), the teachers felt as though they had reached the end of their reflection since their reflection seemed to be running in circles. Contrast to the findings in Ho (2009), which analyzed the teachers’ feeling of repetitiveness as a form of restricted reflection, the “repetitiveness” the teachers felt in this study was a trigger which indicated the end of the first stage and the need for a shift in reflection to advance forward. The comment that changed the focus of the problem inward allowed this

shift to take place. As they delved deeper into their beliefs and teaching philosophies, they were forced to face their weaknesses. This confrontation made them feel uncomfortable as they felt that there was no hope for improvement:

I teach at a school where some of the students had studied because their parents were studying in graduate schools. So, I know that some of my students are better in English than me. And there's nothing that can change that. The more I think about that, the more frustrated and insecure become. I don't think I am ready to face that obstacle. (Jihae, Interview #1)

During the process of this inner battle, some felt lost and incompetent after realizing that the practice they had led up until now was not appropriate:

Having reflected on my shortcomings, I realized that I had not been teaching but simply showing them my knowledge of English. I thought I had been using the methods I had learned in college and in many training sessions. If what I thought were right was actually wrong, then where do I go from here? (Sangchul, Interview #1)

As such, during the process of defining their teaching methods, they were pushed to verbalize the details of their method. By means of this verbalization process, they were able to admit their weaknesses as well as the areas they need to work on. The discussion during each reflection session always tended to move toward the notion that ESL methods do not work in the Korean EFL classrooms. After five reflection sessions, their common concern took a more definite shape. The teachers realized that they had difficulties in redefining ESL theories according to the needs of their own classrooms:

Whenever I read the theories and methods in English teaching, they all seemed too fancy and idealistic because they didn't fit my reality. But after the group discussions and reflection, I realized that I've never tried to redefine them according to my own context. I always thought that those methods in the books are too rigid, but now I know that I can actually redefine them considering my classroom context. (Sangchul, Interview #2)

Having settled a common goal for a more focused reflection, the teachers were asked to form a group of those who have similar interests and give a name that summarizes their discussion theme for their group. At the end of the semester, the teachers formed four groups with the following names: Reflection, Connection, Renovation, and Creation.

Reflection group

This group began their reflection on a general question, which was "What have I been doing?" During their struggle to answer this question, all of the group members had claimed that they had made every effort to be a responsible teacher. However, despite this sense of "responsibility" and their efforts to carry out this responsibility, they still felt uncomfortable. As they delve into what is making them uncomfortable, they were able to finally admit various aspects they had ignored. Their definition of "responsibility" as a teacher was to maintain their knowledge of theories and methods. Thus, they participated in professional development programs that provided information regarding the latest trends in English teaching. By means of the group discussion, however, they realized that they gained nothing but a superficial confidence about their professionalism.

A lot of my colleagues attend graduate school to obtain their Master's or Doctorate degrees and this made me feel insecure because I felt like I was lacking information regarding current trends. This was the main reason why I also decided to attend graduate school. I thought having a degree would

make me a better teacher. (Hyunsoo, Interview #1)

The teachers in this group all admitted that they felt frustrated when they were asked to verbalize their teaching methods and provide rationales for them. Some even said that they felt as though their professionalism was being threatened. When they tried to untangle this negative feeling, they came to realize that each one of them had their own obstacles to overcome, which they were unwilling to face.

I was too embarrassed to admit that I didn't have control of my students. I don't think they consider me as their teacher but simply someone who gives them answers to the college entrance exam test questions. I felt incompetent because I felt like I was acting "like" a teacher, not actually teaching them. I tried to make myself feel better by focusing on carrying out administrative work successfully so that I would feel competent. After admitting that I was doing administrative work rather than helping students learn, I think I am now able to move on and try to find ways to teach. Now I'm not embarrassed to ask for tips from other teachers. (Suho, Interview #2)

By facing their weaknesses and defining their uncomfortable zones in teaching, the teachers gained a sense of direction in which areas they now need to work on. This group, then, could be said that they had carried out reflections relevant to Phases 2 and 3 in the ALACT Model.

Connection group

As they discussed their teaching methods, they noticed the discrepancy between their teaching philosophy, which is mostly student-centered, and their actual practice that focuses on teacher-centered grammar lessons.

When I first became a teacher, I was very surprised when I found out that the students were learning in the same way I had been taught in school. This was a shock to me because I had focused on new trends that were student-centered while I was studying in college. Now after many years of teaching, I think I've become indifferent to this discrepancy. I also use the Grammar-Translation Method because students are used to it and other teachers are teaching the same way. (Sumin, Interview #2)

Having realized this gap, the group members focused on clearly defining the demands of the Korean EFL context and ways in which the ESL theories and methods need to be reinterpreted.

I don't know why it never occurred to me to redefine the theories according to my particular needs. I thought that I wasn't knowledgeable enough to redefine theories created by such renowned scholars. But after our discussions, I realized that I am the only one who knows my students best and it is my responsibility to revise the methods according to their needs. (Sangchul, Interview #2)

Their attempts to connect theory and practice also led to the importance of action research and post-methods pedagogy.

I used to think that doing research was simply for academic reasons, and I was not able to carry out such an immense task. But now I see that identifying the problem and collecting data to work toward a solution should be part of teaching and my effort to enhance professionalism. (Younghee, Interview #2)

I now understand my role in the field of English teaching. It is to provide data from the real classroom and as such data come from other teachers and accumulate, we could find commonalities and form a theory according to practical data. I can relate to this importance of post-methods

pedagogy. (Heewon, Interview #2)

As they experienced reflections equivalent to Phases 2 and 3 in the ALACT Model, they were able to perceive their past events through a more reflective lens and recognize the importance of various type of research methods. This realization allowed these teachers to feel more confident about their profession and become less intimidated to conduct research.

Renovation group

The teachers in this group shared a common concern regarding cooperative learning and process-oriented assessment. In regards to cooperative learning, they were uncertain about the effectiveness of group work in language learning. But as they carried out their discussions, they became aware that they were not able to engineer participation.

The students would discuss in Korean and they would finish the task much earlier than I had initially planned. But now I realize that participation and learning cannot occur without carefully designing the task. I simply made them work in groups, but the task itself was more suitable for individual work. (Heejung, Interview #2)

This lack of understanding also occurred in the concept of process-oriented assessment. As they discussed how they should refine their process-oriented process method, but they noticed that their definitions of “process” differed.

I thought process is related to “consistency”, but the other teachers considered it as assessment that follows different steps. Some even included “participation and attitude” as part of their rubric categories. No wonder we were confused! (Saehee, Interview #2)

By means of their group discussions, the teachers came to a realization that they did not have a clear understanding of the methods they were applying in their classrooms. As a result, their tasks and assessments did not produce the effects they had intended. Identifying this problem (as the type of reflection encouraged in Phases 2 and 3 in the ALACT Model) allowed the teachers to become aware of essential factors that need to be addressed.

Creation group

This was the only group that had advanced to Phase 4 in the cycle of the ALACT Model, which is to actually create an alternative methods of action. This group was formed by teachers who taught students in their 1st year in Middle school. Their common concern was the management of the classes and students during the Free Semester period during which the students are encouraged to search for their careers free from exams. While there are general guidelines as to how the Free Semester should be managed, the details of such management differed from one school to another. This “freedom” intended to provide teachers with the opportunities to search for innovative practices gave teachers the burden to effectively manage programs they were not trained for and had no clear guidelines of. Hence, the teachers in this group were desperately searching for an effective method to apply when they return to school in a few weeks. They first began by analyzing the reasons behind their failures in using the portfolio:

I had the students keep a portfolio of their works during the Free Semester period because I had to have some evidence of the students doing work. This was a new approach and I wasn’t comfortable with it. I wasn’t sure how helpful it was for them in learning English. Looking back, their portfolios were nothing but a folder that collected a series of unrelated worksheets. (Seunghan, Interview #2)

I didn't know what I had to search for to distinguish the quality between good, fair and bad portfolios. I didn't have a valid rubric. (Junghee, Interview #2)

The teachers agreed that they had wanted a "ready-made" method and did not consider revising it for their own purposes. This is similar to the struggle stage mentioned by Larrivee (2000) in the critical reflection process, during which the teachers look for a "quick-fix" to eliminate their uncertainty and inner conflict (p. 305). They also stated that their discomfort was mostly due to the extended class time and the teachers' freedom to design the semester. Having stated their concerns and shortcomings, they were able to collaboratively create a method that can address to such concerns.

One of the teachers in the group had gone to a workshop where they learned the benefits of Flipped-Learning. She said that it seemed like a good idea, but was worried about the amount of work the teacher had to put in to make it successful. So we talked about how we can allow students to take more responsibility and lessen the teacher's burden. One of the teachers suggested that we can ask the students to video record the contents and then I think the discussion just took momentum and we were able to create our own method. (Gahee, Interview #2)

As shown in the interview excerpt, the group of teachers were able to collaborate successfully as a result of going through the proper process of reflection: identifying problems, finding a specific focus of reflection, and working toward a common goal when creating an alternative method fully aware of their past shortcomings. As a result, they were able to reach core reflection which allowed them to develop professionally.

Restricting Factors

As the process of the participants' reflection has shown, the participants had difficulties in conducting structured reflection. The identified factors are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Restricting Factors

1.	Lack of proper training
2.	False sense of security and professionalism
3.	Overloaded with administrative tasks
4.	Unstable policies

Most of the teachers commented that not having proper training in reflection made it difficult for them to conduct reflection sessions comfortably:

I think every teacher needs to stop for a moment and think about what she has done so far and where she is headed. But I also think that teachers need guidance in reflection because they don't know how to start. (Eunju, Interview #2)

In addition to lack of training, the process of studying for the teacher certificate exam seemed to have influenced their reflection as the content of the written test is theory-oriented;

During my undergraduate years as an English Education major, my focus was to pass the Teacher Certificate Exam, which is a heavily theory-oriented test. Even though I went on the practicum, the reality of the classroom didn't hit me. I thought that once I pass the test and become a teacher, the theories I know would give me the ability to make the appropriate judgments. I was terribly wrong. (Sunny, Interview #2)

As noted by Sunny in her interview, this false sense of security and professionalism made it difficult for teachers to practicalize the theories into classroom practices.

Another obstacle the teachers mentioned was the burden of administrative work. Even though they found which areas they need to work on, they felt hindered by administrative realities to extend their reflections further. Due to the demands of daily administrative routines, they had become mechanical in their performance (Jones, Jenkin, and Lord, 2006):

There are days when I feel uncomfortable with the lesson I had just taught, and I wish I could have the time to myself to reflect as we are doing in this class. But I know too well that I simply don't have the time to reflect and find out what went wrong. There are just so many documents I have to fill out for my students' college entrance records. That's what's waiting for me when I go back and I am not sure how this reflection is going to make me a better teacher and help me through all that work. (Sungmin, Interview #1)

Similar to the results in Farrell (2001)'s study of a Korean teacher, the participants in this study also resisted reflection as a result of busy schedules, the constraints of everyday activities seemed to have played a major role in the teacher's reluctance to reflect. In addition to the overwhelming amount of administrative tasks as they "work at the rapid end of the continuum" (Eraut, 1995, p.18), the teachers also struggled with the constantly changing policies that demanded teachers to teach in ways they were not familiar with:

When I was told to teacher students in their first year in Middle school, I panicked because I was not sure what I had to do during the free semester period. I didn't have enough time to be prepared and everyday was like a test to me. Reflection was a luxury for me. I was simply fighting to survive without making administrative errors. I wouldn't be surprised if I had to start something new again when I got back in fall! I know these are the steps I need to take for proper reflection, but when I have to react to ever changing policies, I'm not sure if I will have the time. (Seunghan, Interview #1)

Contributing factors

Despite such obstacles, the participants were able to reach deeper into their reflections and discover their long-term discomfort and, as a result, finally move forward. The major factors are listed in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Contributing Factors

- | |
|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Guided questions |
| 2. Peer support |
| 3. Discussions and feedback comments |

The guided questions seemed to have allowed the teachers to push forward and stay focused during reflection:

I've been to teacher training workshops where I was told to "reflect on significant incidences" in one minute and talk about it with my partner. I didn't know where to start and I didn't know what the trainer meant by a "significant" incident. But the questions during the class discussions were like stepping stones for someone like me who is a rookie in reflection. Those questions helped me find my insecurities without feeling threatened. (Minjung, Interview #2)

Peer support from other teachers also seemed to have allowed the participants to find common grounds and reflect constructively. Similar to the findings in Kim (2005), the small group discussions allowed

them to realize that they had something in common and that they had something to offer:

I didn't know how to start [the discussion] because I've never thought about it before. But as we opened up, we found out that we all had similar concerns, which was the need to connect our teaching philosophy and classroom activities. Also, by having to share our group discussions with the entire class, I think we were more motivated to find a clear focus. (Sumin, Interview #2)

Lastly, by having to share their group discussions with the rest of the class and receive comments regarding their reflections, the participants were able to gain a different perspective of their reflections:

Your [the professor's] comments about our reflection really helped us interpret them in a more in-depth way because we were busy coming up with our own reflections and piecing them together, but were not able to see the big picture. Your objective comments helped us see how our pieces fit in a bigger picture. (Haesu, Interview #2)

As stated in Korthagen and Vasalos (2005), it is essential for the teacher educators to intervene to promote core reflection so that the teachers can become aware of the tension between their limitations and the ideal situation in a safe and supportive manner. By means of such supervisory guidance, the teachers in this study seemed to have been able to advance their reflections to a deeper level.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the process of teachers' reflection during the reflection-driven training course. This study also focused on the factors that helped them experience the necessary steps in reflection as well as those that hindered in-depth reflection. The results of the study showed that the teachers struggled at the beginning of the process due to lack of proper training in conducting structured reflection. As they gained more and more experienced with guiding questions as well as collaborative reflections, the teachers were able to reach deeper into their beliefs and confront their long-term obstacles, which was to acknowledge that they had not been able to reinterpret imported theories and methods to be applied in their classrooms. Such an obstacle had inflicted frustration, insecurity and a sense of incompetence throughout their teaching practice. Furthermore, the teachers did not have the time to focus on this problem due to constantly changing curriculum and administrative demands. Thus, they had to walk into the classroom with a low self-confidence and frustration toward their lack of professional development. Having faced their concerns and worked collaboratively to advance forward, the teachers were able to experience a perceptual shift necessary for gaining a constructive outlook. Such a change in perspective also allowed the teachers to become aware of the need for classroom-based research to develop theories and methods that are more suitable for their immediate contexts.

Similar to other studies that voiced concerns of teachers lacking reflective skills, this study also showed that teachers felt restricted as a result of not knowing how to start and how to move forward when reflecting on their practices. When this type of frustration is not addressed properly, it is likely that they perceive themselves as incompetent. As noted by Hourani (2013), the reflection which is "multilayered and intertwined limitations and constraints" need to be addressed "through redesigning and restructuring the reflective tasks required for better practice" (p. 28). The results of this study also address the need for teachers' involvement in classroom-based research so that post-methods pedagogy can be further promoted. Similar to the concept of transformational learning, as noted by Mezirow (2000), teachers need to be able to transform their frames of references so that they can act on their own "purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those [that] have uncritically assimilated from others – to gain greater control over [their] lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers" (p. 8). Mehrpour and

Moghadam (2018) point out that teachers need to develop personal practical theorizing techniques to help teachers to bridge theories and practice. As suggested by the results of the study, peer support can be an essential factor in guiding teachers to reflect critically. In this regard, this study suggests the need for peer support group, similar to the collaborative professional and critical discussion circles suggested by Ahmadian and Maftoon (2016) in which teachers can share theoretical and practical issues to bridge the gap between theory and practice. In conclusion, core reflection should become a part of the “epistemology of reflective practice” (Francis, 1997, p. 186) in teacher education in order to yield a constructive way to make transformational learning in professional development possible.

The Author

Judy Yin is professor in the Department of English Education at Korea National University of Education. She has published articles on the effects of reflection on teacher education, collaborative second language writing and process-oriented speaking assessment.

Department of English Education
Korea National University of Education
250 Taeseongtabyeon-ro, Gangnae-myeon,
Heungdeok-gu, Cheongju-si
Chungbuk, 28173, Korea
Tel: +82 432303543
Email: isabella@knue.ac.kr

References

- Ahmadian, M., & Maftoon, P. (2016). Enhancing critical language teacher development through creating reflective opportunities. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 13(2), 90-101.
- Alger, C. (2006). What went well, what didn't go so well: Growth of reflection in pre-service teachers. *Reflective Practice*, 7, 287-301.
- Amobi, F. A. (2003). Finding and speaking their own voices: Using an online survey to elicit pre-service teachers' reflectivity about educational beliefs. *Reflective Practice*, 4, 345-360.
- Bates, A., Ramirez, L., & Dritis, D. (2009). Connecting university supervision and critical reflection: Mentoring and modeling. *The Teacher Educator*, 44, 90-112.
- Bean, T. W., & Stevens, L.P. (2002). Scaffolding reflection for pre-service and in-service teachers. *Reflective Practice*, 3, 205-218.
- Bogden, R., & Biklen, S. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). New York: Pearson Education Group.
- Calderhead, J. (1989). Reflective teaching and teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 5, 43-51.
- Cirocki, A., Tennekoon, S., & Calvo, A. (2014). Research and reflective practice in the ESL classroom: Voices from Sri Lanka. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39, 24-44.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. (1993). *Inside/outside: Teacher research and knowledge*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Conway, P., & Clark, C. (2003). The journey inward and outward: A re-examination of Fuller's concern-based model of teacher development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19(5), 465-482.
- Cruikshank, D. (1985). *Models for the preparation of America's teachers*. Bloomington, Indiana: The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.
- Danielowich, R. (2012). Other teachers' teaching: Understanding the roles of peer group collaboration in teacher reflection and learning. *The Teacher Educator*, 47(2), 101-122.

- Dewey, J. (1997). *How we think*. New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Dinkelman, T. (2000). An inquiry into the development of critical reflection in secondary student teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 16*, 195-222.
- Eraut, M. (1995). Schön shock: A case for reframing reflection-in-action. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and practice, 1*, 9-22.
- Eriksen, A., Larsen, A., & Leming, T. (2015). Acting and reflecting: Making connections between theory and practice in teacher education. *Reflective Practice, 16*(1), 73-84.
- Farrell, T. (2001). Tailoring reflection to individual needs: A TESOL case study. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy, 27*(1), 23-38.
- Francis, D. (1995). The reflective journal: A window to preservice teachers' practice knowledge. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 11*(3), 229-241.
- Francis, D. (1997). Critical incident analysis: A strategy for developing reflective practice. *Teachers and Teaching, 3*(2), 169-188.
- Garza, R., & Smith, S. (2015). Pre-service teachers' blog reflections: Illuminating their growth and development. *Cogent, 2*, 1-15.
- Gebhard, J. (2005). Teacher development through exploration: Principles, ways and examples. *TESL-EJ, 9*(2), 1-15.
- Gebhard, J., & Oprandy, R. (1999). *Language teaching awareness: A guide to exploring beliefs and practices*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Harrington, H., Quinn-Leering, K., & Hodson, L. (1996). Written case analysis and critical reflection. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 12*(1), 25-37.
- Ho, B. (2009). Training teachers of English to reflect critically. *The Journal of Asia TEFL, 6*(4), 109-130.
- Hourani, R. (2013). Pre-service teachers' reflection: Perception, preparedness and challenges. *Reflective Practice, 14*(1), 12-30.
- Husu, J., Toom, A., & Patrikainen, S. (2008). Guided reflection as a means to demonstrate and develop student teachers' reflective competencies. *Reflective Practice, 9*(1), 37-51.
- Jams, P. (1996). Learning to reflect: A story of empowerment. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 12*(1), 81-97.
- Jones, J., Jenkin, M., & Lord, S. (2006). *Developing effective teacher performance*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Kim, E. (2005). Reflective teaching through small group teacher meeting in a college English program. *English Teaching, 60*(4), 465-485.
- Klein, S. (2008). Holistic reflection in teacher education: Issues and strategies. *Reflective Practice, 9*(2), 111-121.
- Korthagen, F. (2001). *Linking practice and theory. The pedagogy of realistic teacher education*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Korthagen, F. (2004). In search of the essence of a good teacher: Toward a more holistic approach in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(1), 77-97.
- Korthagen, F. (2014). Promoting core reflection in teacher education: Deepening professional growth. In L. Orland-Barak & C. J. Craig (Eds.), *International teacher education: Promising pedagogies (Part A)* (pp. 73-89). Bingley, UK: Emerald.
- Korthagen, F., & Kessels, J. (1999). Linking theory and practice: Changing the pedagogy of teacher education. *Educational Researcher, 28*(4), 4-17.
- Korthagen, F., Kessels, J., Koster, B., Lagerwerf, B., & Wubbels, T. (2001). *Linking practice and theory: The pedagogy of realistic teacher education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- LaBoskey, V. (1994). *Development of reflective practice: A study of preservice teachers*. New York and London: Teachers College Press.
- Larrivee, B. (2000). Transforming teaching practice: Becoming the critically reflective teacher. *Reflective Practice, 1*, 293-307.
- Lee, I. (2008). Fostering preservice reflection through response journals. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 35*(1), 1-10.

Winter, 117-139.

- Leijen, Ä., Lam, I., Wildschut, L., & Simons, P. (2009). Difficulties teachers report about students' reflection: Lessons learned from dance education. *Teaching in Higher Education, 14*(3), 315-326.
- Loughran, J. (2002). Effective reflective practice. In search of meaning in learning about teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53*(1), 33-43.
- Mehrpour, S., & Moghadam, M. (2018). Exploring the effect of self-reflection through awareness raising on novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers' pedagogical beliefs enactment. *The Journal of Asia TEFL, 15*(3), 630-648.
- Meijer, P., Korthagen, F., & Vasalos, A. (2009). Supporting presence in teacher education: The connection between the personal and professional aspects of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*(2), 297-308.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 3-33). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mok, W. (1994). Reflecting on reflections: A case study of experienced and inexperienced teachers. *System, 22*, 93-111.
- Pollard, A., Anderson, J., Maddock, M., Swaffield, S., Warin, J., & Warwick, P. (2008). *Reflective teaching: Effective and evidence-informed professional practice* (3rd ed.). London: Continuum.
- Poom-Valickis, K., & Mathews, S. (2013). Reflecting others and own practice: An analysis of novice teachers' reflection skills. *Reflective Practice, 14*(3), 420-434.
- Qing, X. (2009). Reflective teaching-an effective path for EFL teacher's professional development. *Canadian Social Science, 5*, 35-40.
- Rehm, M. (1989). Emancipatory vocational education: Pedagogy for the work of individuals and society. *Journal of Education, 171*(3), 109-123.
- Richards, J. (1990). Beyond training: Approaches to teacher education in language teaching. *The Language Teacher, 14*, 3-8.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. London: Temple Smith.
- Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Sööt, A., & Viskus, E. (2015). Reflection on teaching: A way to learn from practice. *Procedia, 191*, 1941-1946.
- Sparks-Langer, G., & Colton, A. (1991). Synthesis of research on teachers' reflective thinking. *Educational Leadership, 48*, 37-44.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology: An overview. In N. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 345-370). Thousand Oaks, C.A.: Sage.
- Swain, S. (1998). Studying teachers' transformations: Reflection as methodology. *The Clearing House, 72*(1), 28-34.
- Taylor, S., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: The search for meanings* (3rd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Thompson, N., & Pascal, J. (2012). Developing critically reflective practice. *Reflective Practice, 13*, 311-325.
- Wallace, M. J. (1991). *Training foreign language teachers: A reflective approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wallace, M. J. (1998). *Action research for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yassaei, S. (2012). Reflective practice among MATESOL graduates in the UAE: Theoretical construct or ongoing benefit? *Reflective Practice, 13*, 255-270.