Student Teachers' Development of Reflective Practice concerning Teaching Philosophy and Peer Observations

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Abstract
This study examined the effect of utilizing e-portfolio reflection-enhancing tasks in a practicum course on developing student teachers' level of reflection. It sought to answer how engaging EFL student teachers in writing a teaching philosophy and peer observation affect their understanding of and appreciation for reflective practice and its influence on developing their reflection level and teaching performance. A mixed-methods study design was implemented where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected within this study. Eight female Saudi student teachers enrolled in a teacher education program at a public university in Saudi Arabia participated in this study while completing an 11-week teaching practicum course at a public secondary school in Riyadh. Each participant was tasked with completing a teaching philosophy and six peer observations with other participants within the study. Each task was analyzed for its reflection level based on a rubric developed by El- Okda (2009). Data were also collected through a semi-structured interview with each of the participants. This study demonstrated that while the participants struggled throughout the practicum to develop a cogent teaching philosophy, their level of reflection for the peer observation tasks improved throughout the teaching practice. Their enthusiasm for these tasks and the process of reflection itself was very positive. The results of this study will help teacher educators to create an informative account of reflection in teaching practice programs in ways that encourage reflective practice among student teachers. Future research could continue to explore more reflective tasks that encourage reflection among student teachers.

Keywords: peer observations, reflection, reflection-enhancing tasks, reflective teaching, teaching philosophy

Introduction

Theories of teacher learning and studies of teaching expertise are two main sources for providing information about how teachers learn how to teach and grow professionally. In both theories, teachers' learning is considered a life-long process. Teachers are expected to act as active consumers of received academic research and theories. They are required to be responsible for their own professional growth. According to the transformative learning theory that was originally proposed by Mezirow (1991, 1997), teachers' practice in class is determined by a set of tacit beliefs and values about what constitute effective foreign language teaching and learning. Such beliefs and values are shaped by a teacher's previous experience both as a learner and as a teacher. Those tacit beliefs act as a filter for received theory and prevent teachers/student teachers from discovering alternative routes that are available during class time. To grow professionally, teachers should be engaged in some kind of reflection that allows them to uncover and transform such assumptions and perspectives. Self-evaluation of one's beliefs, values, and experiences is essential for change. Mezirow (1997) states that "becoming critically reflective of one's own assumptions is the key to transforming one's taken-for-granted frames of reference, an indispensable dimension of learning for adapting to change" (p. 9). This means that being aware of such beliefs and how we behave in class can bridge the gap between what we actually do and what we think we do. Such awareness is a necessary starting point in reflection.

Reflective practice is generally defined as looking back to one's teaching and its consequences in an attempt to understand why one behaves in a particular way. This systematic exploration of instruction is vital in providing teachers the opportunity to learn more about their teaching and uncover hidden beliefs (Brooksfield, 1995; Farrell & Kennedy, 2019; Loughran, 2002; Shulman & Colbert, 1987). Student teachers need guidance in the development of their reflective skills to become reflective practitioners and life-long learners. Even though research has recognized the significance of reflective practice in teacher preparation and teacher education programs, it is still not given its due care in the Saudi Arabian educational context.

As an educational regulation at some colleges in Saudi Arabia, EFL student teachers must complete a practicum course during the last semester of their undergraduate program. The underlying assumption is that EFL student teachers attend selected public schools to apply the received theory and the pedagogical practices they have studied in their methods courses. From the researcher's own experience, discussions with colleagues and faculty members who supervise teaching practice, and informal chats with a few student teachers, this is not always the case. There is still a gap between theory and practice. To bridge the gap between theory and practice, teachers should examine their teaching behaviors through reflective practice and teaching exploration.

Another problem is that student teachers in the researcher's context are rarely exposed to authentic experiences. Typically, they are asked to follow the information provided and complete the templates needed to pass the teaching practice course. This expectation encourages them to develop behavior patterns that work in certain situations and repeat them until they become automatic. Such a practice prevents student teachers from trying out innovative ideas and taking risks to better understand the teaching profession. Student teachers should be encouraged to become active initiators and shoulder the responsibility for their growth during their training period.

Studies of expertise as a process and teacher learning theories have yielded enough evidence to support the idea that teachers and student teachers learn how to teach through reflection. A significant amount of research has been conducted on the importance of reflection; still, there is limited research addressing how reflection can be implemented in a teaching practice course. Time spent at school during the practicum might be too short for practicing reflection. Therefore, the practicum should incorporate an e-learning component specially designed in such a way to provide ample opportunities for reflection.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:
1. How does engaging EFL student teachers in e-portfolio-based reflection-enhancing tasks affect their reflection level as it pertains to teaching philosophy?
2. How does engaging EFL student teachers in e-portfolio-based reflection-enhancing tasks affect their reflection level as it pertains to peer observations?
3. How does engaging in e-portfolio reflection-enhancing tasks affect EFL student teachers' understanding of and appreciation for reflective practice and its influence on their teaching performance?

Thus, the present study aims at understanding the benefits of using e-portfolios during the practicum to enable student teachers to practice reflection. This study intends to contribute to the research about student teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences, with reflection enhancing tasks in teaching practice courses. It is hoped that the results of this study will help teacher educators to create an informative account of reflection in teaching practice programs in ways that encourage reflective practice among student teachers.

Literature Review
Reflection Defined
Historically, reflective teaching is traced back to the 1930s when Dewey (1933) defined reflective thinking as an "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 118). Unfortunately, this spark of reflection was not given its due attention until the beginning of the 1980s with the significant contributions of Schon (1983) and (1987). He described reflection as the knowledge gained from experience and conceptualized teachers as reflective practitioners. Since then, reflection has received noticeable attention in teacher education and is considered a key component in teachers' professional development (Clarke & Otaky, 2006; Farrell & Kennedy, 2019; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Reflection "... simply means thinking about something," but for some, "it is a well-defined and crafted practice that carries a very specific meaning and associated action" (Loughran, 2002, p. 33). This means that a well-defined reflective practice involves deep thinking, leading to improvement and professional development. Farrell (2015) defined the reflective practice as "a cognitive process accompanied by a set of attitudes in which teachers systematically collect data about their practice, and while engaging in a dialogue with others use the data to make informed decisions about their practice" (p. 123). According to El-Okda (2009), reflection is associated with

professional action involving deroutinization of professional performance, problematizing routinized practices, and uncovering their tacit beliefs and assumptions. In other words, Moghaddam, Davoudi, Adel, & Amirian (2020) indicated that "adopting reflective practice requires teachers to collect data and think over their actions to enhance their teaching practices" (p.279). Most of the definitions of reflection found in the literature agree upon common elements: reflection is a process (Bean & Stevens, 2002; Farrell, 2015; Nagle, 2008; Norsworthy, 2009), it can be taught (Jay & Johnson, 2002; Nagle, 2008; Russell, 2005; Weber, 2013), it involves making decisions (Larrivee, 2008; Rosen, 2008), and it can positively impact professional growth (Corrigan & Loughran, 2008; Farrell, 2015; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Developing as a Reflective Practitioner

Becoming a reflective practitioner is not an easy task (Nagle, 2008). It is a process that should be developed and taught through explicit instruction (Bean & Stevens, 2002; Cattaneo & Motta, 2020; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Kaywork, 2013; Nagle, 2008; Roessger, 2015; Russell, 2005; Weber, 2013). Therefore, student teachers should be encouraged to start forming the habit of making reflections by performing generic reflection-enhancing tasks. Kagan (1992) argued that it is unlikely for teachers to become reflective practitioners unless guided to reflect on their experience. Kagan reviewed several empirical research studies on learning-to-teach and concluded that preservice and novice teachers need to be trained to reflect on their beliefs, behaviors, and image as teachers. Furthermore, Bourner (2003) stated that "developing students' capacity for reflective learning is part of developing their capacity to learn how to learn" (p. 267). Student teachers need guidance in the development of their reflective skills to become reflective practitioners and life-long learners. According to Norsworthy (2009), reflection is a process that "preservice teachers need to experience" (p. 107) so that they can begin to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Brooksfield, 1995; Farrell, 2015; Farrell & Kennedy, 2019; Thompson & Thompson, 2008; Ulmer & Timothy, 2001).

Teaching Philosophy

A teaching philosophy is a brief personal statement about what constitutes effective teaching. It offers insight into a teacher's stated beliefs about teaching because such beliefs will be mostly derived from received theory. Basically, it is the "why, what, and how" of one's teaching. The teaching philosophy's value lies in taking time to think and reflect upon one's teaching, clarify beliefs, and reveal inconsistencies. Farrell (2015) pointed out that when teachers are given a chance to articulate their beliefs, they can examine the sources of such beliefs and better understand their meanings. Such understanding leads to change, improvement, and a teacher's professional growth (Farrell & Kennedy, 2019; Kaplan, Meizlish, O'Neal, & Wright, 2008; Kearns & Sullivan, 2010). Furthermore, Farrell indicated that beliefs change over time, and sometimes they are an unreliable guide to the reality of actual classroom practice. Therefore, he suggested that "when beliefs have been stated, teachers should monitor their classroom practice to see if there is evidence of these beliefs in classroom practice" (p. 57).

Research has indicated that writing a teaching philosophy is an essential reflective practice, yet there is a gap in the literature investigating students' and teachers' perceptions towards writing

one. Moreover, to the researcher's knowledge, no research considered ways of implementing it as a reflective task during the practicum course. Ma and Rada (2005) maintained that reflective portfolios allow and encourage student teachers to develop their teaching philosophy. McNair and Galanouli (2002) pointed out that reflective portfolios are essential in bridging the gap between theory and practice. They allow student teachers to make connections between university-based learning and classroom context.

Peer Observations

Observing a teacher's class is a threatening experience. However, this sense of threat is minimized if there is an agreement among two or more teachers to collaborate and observe each other's classes for the sake of learning and improving practice. Peer observation is a form of professional development that offers teachers an opportunity to have a direct experience of another teacher's classroom and a chance to learn from that experience. Cosh (1999) indicated that the purpose of peer observation is, most often, appraisal or judgment of the observed individual, which might have a detrimental effect on that person's confidence and, therefore, not support the learning/teaching environment. Therefore, Cosh recommended that peer observation "should not be a vehicle for the evaluation of others on the basis of our assumptions, but a reassessment of those assumptions on the basis of their teaching" (p. 22). He argued that, in a reflective context, peer observation is carried out to encourage self-reflection and self-awareness about one's teaching. Researchers have reported positive effects of peer observation without evaluating or judging the person being observed (Berenson, 2017; Mueller & Schroeder, 2018; Thomson, Bell, & Hendry 2015).

There has been a significant amount of research conducted on the importance of peer observation in improving the quality of teaching and developing teachers' and student teachers' learning (Bell, 2001; Bennett & Barp, 2008; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004, 2005; Shortland, 2004; Tenenberg, 2014; Torres et al., 2017). Richards and Farrell (2005) stated that peer observation "provides an opportunity for the teacher to see how someone else deals with many of the same problems teachers face on a daily basis" (p. 86), and "can also help narrow the gap between one's imagined view of teaching and what actually occurs in the classroom" (p. 94). Reflective conversations can be defined as "a discussion between peers that allows the other to explicitly articulate, appreciate and extend their understanding of practice" (Nsibande, 2007, p. 4). Cochran-Smith (2003) pointed out that a reflective dialogue makes possible "the *learning* of new knowledge, questions and practices and, at the same time, the *unlearning* of some long-held and often difficult to uproot ideas, beliefs, and practices" (p. 9, emphasis in original). In the same line of thought, Donovan, Meyer, and Fitzgerald (2007) indicated that a "dialogue coupled with reflection and moved to action creates the conditions for transformative learning" (p. 11). Most reflective learning models propose that reflective discourse is an essential component of transformative learning (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Mezirow, 1991; Moon, 2004; Schon, 1983).

Peer observation is more successful when the teacher and the observer come together and reflect on their practice together. Having the chance to talk about observed teaching practices is highly valuable. Haigh (2005) noted that conversation among teachers "involves participants in exploration and critique of the reasons and assumptions associated with their positions" (p. 8). It

has been realized that reflection and practical reasoning enhanced by dialogue with colleagues are central to peer observation (Farrell & Kennedy, 2019; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005). Peer observation motivates one to reflect on his/her practice and, more importantly, share reflections with other colleagues.

Method
Research Design

To examine the impact of e-portfolio reflection-enhancing tasks on the development of one's teaching philosophy and the use of peer observations, a mixed-methods study design was implemented. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected within this study. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), "the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" (p. 5). For this study, the quantitative and qualitative data were used to complement each other to provide a comprehensive picture of the participants' use of reflective practice and its impact on their teaching philosophy and growth through peer observations.

Participants

Participant of this study were selected using purposeful random sampling. A purposeful sampling is a technique that is widely used in qualitative research (Patton, 2014). Such sampling involves selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are associated with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This research sample included eight Saudi female student teachers enrolled in a teacher education program at a Saudi public university. The researcher was responsible for supervising these participants in a practicum course in the last semester before graduation. The participants' practice teaching experience existed within an English class at a Saudi public secondary school in Riyadh and lasted 11 weeks.

Procedures

Using Moodle, an open-source learning management source, the researcher created an e-portfolio used by the participants throughout the study. A 1-day workshop was organized to familiarize the participants with the use of the e-portfolio. The e-portfolio site contained all of the participants' information to use the reflection-enhancing tasks associated with developing a teaching philosophy and conducting peer observations.

Each participant was required to write a teaching philosophy and conduct six peer-observations. For the development of the teaching philosophy, the participants were asked to write a teaching philosophy in terms of several justifiable and illustrated principles. Then, provide a rationale for including such principles and examples of teaching behaviors. As an example, one of the principles of teaching the English language can be: Make most of your learning experiences communicative tasks. The rationale for considering such a principle is that, according to Krashen (1982), acquisition-rich classrooms are those in which most learning experiences are communicative tasks in that they trigger a lot of negotiation, which is thought to be the necessary condition for language acquisition. This principle entails attempts by the teacher to modify learning experiences that are not communicative tasks into well-designed communicative tasks.

Concerning the peer observation tasks, pairs of participants were required to collaboratively work together to design a descriptive observation sheet that encouraged practical reasoning and consisted of alternative descriptors of commonly used teaching behaviors as well as those entailed by relevant principles in their teaching philosophies. Each participant was next expected to have a short dialogue with her observed peer before and after observing the class based on a positive, non-judgmental attitude that elicits practical reasoning. Finally, each participant was required to help the observed peer consider the consistency/inconsistency between beliefs embodied in practical reasoning and her teaching philosophy principles.

There seems to be a consensus that the assessment of reflection should be in terms of hierarchical levels (Weber, 2013). A rubric designed by El-Okda (2009) was used to analyze the e-portfolio data according to the following three levels of reflection found in the:

1. Low level: Inadequate description of puzzles of practice, their alternatives, rationale, and their possible consequences.
2. Moderate level: Adequate description of puzzles of practice, their alternatives, rationale, and their possible consequences.
3. High level: In addition to B, attempting to infer tacit beliefs and assumptions embedded in practices and practical reasons and ability to weigh those tacit beliefs against principles of current stage teaching philosophy. This may also include moral implications. (p. 6)

Collected data of the assigned reflection enhancing tasks will be ranked with 0 if low, 1 if it is moderate, and 3 if high. Scores obtained are going to be analyzed based on descriptive statistics using SPSS. Each task was rated on this rubric by the researcher and an education colleague within the university. A kappa value of .79, calculated using Cohen's Kappa, was found between the two raters to measure interrater reliability. This score borders on the low end of a strong level of agreement.

Semi-structured interviews with participants at the end of the teaching practice course also supplied data for this study. The questions within the interview protocol, which was created by the researcher and validated by several of her teacher education colleagues, focused on the participants' views on reflective practice, the value of and issues related to the creation of a teaching philosophy, and their perceptions of the peer observation activity. The participants were also interrogated about any perceived changes in their teaching behavior that resulted from the reflection-enhancing tasks within which they were engaged. All interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was considered the best approach for this research because, as indicated by Braun and Clarke (2006), it is beneficial for "identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data sets in (rich) detail. However, it goes further than this and interprets various aspects of the research topic" (p. 79). *NVivo 11* was utilized to organize, manage, and track the data. All themes generated from the data by the researcher were examined by two Ph.D. education graduates who were familiar with the researcher's work and had completed the same doctoral program. A high level of consistency was found among the thematic analysis conducted by these three individuals.

Results
Analysis of Teaching Philosophy

Developing a teaching philosophy was the most challenging task for the participants of this study. The researcher devoted much time explaining what a teaching philosophy is and how to develop one. A teaching philosophy model was uploaded to Moodle, where participants could both see and download it. Such a model was discussed along with the process of analyzing a principle into appropriate teaching behaviors. Still, participants found it extremely difficult to develop a good teaching philosophy.

As table one shows, the teaching philosophy's calculated mean was 1.5, which indicates a low level of reflection. Only one participant reached the highest level of reflection when she successfully wrote three essential principles that she thought were effective in EFL teaching and mentioned many teaching behaviors entailed by the written principles. The principles she wrote helped her to weigh her tacit beliefs. One example of a well-written principle was "good teachers always give effective feedback." Her rationale for this principle was that "research has shown that effective feedback helps learners get better at learning in general." The participant who wrote this principle also added, "As a learner, teachers who provided me with feedback helped me to develop and learn unlike those who just marked my work without providing any positive or negative feedback." She wrote the following as teaching behaviors for that principle:

1. Help students by giving them important information they need.
2. Inform students of their progress during the semester.
3. Inform the students with detailed weekly updates.
4. Provide tips on what they can do in the future.
5. Help students assess their performance.
6. Use different types of feedback to address different needs.

Table 1. *Frequency, percent, and mean reflection level for teaching philosophy task*

Score	Frequency	Percent	Mean
Low	5	62.5	
Moderate	2	25.0	
High	1	12.5	
Total	8	100.0	1.5

Two other participants were able to reach a moderate level of reflection by being able to articulate and justify possible alternative behaviors of some principles of EFL teaching. The remaining five participants were unable to justify the EFL teaching principles they wrote, nor were they able to consider all possible teaching behaviors entailed by each principle.

Because this was the first time the participants had been asked to write a teaching philosophy, it was not easy. They were asked to start writing their teaching philosophy from the first week of the teaching practice. However, they did not post them on Moodle until the end of the third week. They took so much time to write them, and some were just copied from different sources. The researcher asked the participants who copied principles to change them and write ones using their own words. The researcher also asked them to modify their philosophies and add more important principles as they continued to teach. The participants did add more principles, but the researcher noted that they rarely modified it once they wrote a principle. It seems that they needed more time to be able to write a good philosophy of teaching. Participants admitted that writing a teaching philosophy was the most challenging task for them.

Analysis of Peer Observation Sheets

Participants came together and focused on two aspects of teaching, which were classroom interaction and classroom management. They worked collaboratively and wrote the descriptors from the peer observation sheet based on their past experience as language learners and relevant principles from their teaching philosophy. Even though most participants did not write a good teaching philosophy, they did very well writing descriptors for the peer observation sheets. This may have resulted from them working collaboratively, thereby removing the stress of trying to impress their supervisor (the researcher) and write things that were too good to be true. Working collaboratively may have allowed them to think of who they are as teachers and what they should do. It certainly provided them with the chance to discuss why things were the way they were as well as possible alternatives. For example, some of the written descriptors of classroom interaction were the use of positive feedback, the use of negative feedback, the ratio of teacher/student talk, the use of referential questions, the use of display questions, and the use of tasks that encourage students to interact.

Peer observation was not evaluative in nature. Participants did not evaluate each other in terms of strengths and weaknesses. They used the observation sheet to provide practical reasoning during their dialogue before the observation took place and during feedback meetings. They asked each other to describe what they planned to do in class and why before the class took place. Later, when the class was over, they asked each other to describe what happened in the class and why they behaved the way they did. The researcher guided feedback meetings. The researcher acted as a coach to facilitate collaborative dialogues. The participants reported that feedback meetings were of great benefit to them.

Table two illustrates that the total number of 48 classes were peer observed. Each participant observed six classes for three different colleagues. Participants were asked to write a report for each class based on the written descriptors and their dialogue before and after the observed class. Unfortunately, they did not write much. However, because the researcher coached feedback meetings, such meetings were recorded and transcribed. Participants reached a high level of reflection in such meetings. It appeared to the researcher that the participants preferred oral reflections over written reflections.

Arab World English Journal   555
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327

Table 2. *Frequency, percent, and mean reflection level for peer observation task*

Score	Frequency	Percent	Mean
Low	7	14.6	
Moderate	32	66.7	
High	9	18.8	
Total	48	100.0	2.04

Table two also shows that the mean of the collaborative peer observation was 2.04. This means that the participants could collaboratively design a reasonable observation sheet that captured many alternative descriptors with real justification. It can be seen that high levels of reflection were identified more often than low ones. Nine reports showed evidence of a high level of reflection, while only seven reports out of 48 were considered low.

Analyzing the transcripts of the feedback meetings showed that how student teachers were taught strongly affects how they teach. Even though a few of the participants criticized some of their previous teachers for traditionally doing things, they ended up teaching in the same way. They were not aware of this flaw until they attended peer observation feedback meetings. Many of their tacit beliefs were revealed in those meetings. Some of those tacit beliefs included using translation to explain difficult words and structures, the importance of encouraging most students to read aloud, and the importance of drilling in teaching grammatical rules. These beliefs were not stated until the participants were involved in before-and-after peer observation dialogues. Such dialogues were based on practical reasoning. The participants not only conducted themselves well and benefited greatly from peer observation, but they also enjoyed working together. They reported positive feelings and many benefits from participating in the peer observation tasks.

Understanding of and Appreciation for Reflective Practice

The participants were asked what they thought reflection means and what it involves before and after their involvement in reflection-enhancing tasks. They all stated that they had never heard of the term reflective practice until the researcher had introduced it to them. In the beginning, some of the participants thought it was a new teaching method and some thought it only involved knowing the strength and weakness in one's teaching. However, such misunderstanding was overcome. Almost all participants were able to define reflection after several meetings with their supervisor (the researcher) when she explained what reflection is and how to develop it.

According to all of the participants, being involved in reflection-enhancing tasks allowed them to experience reflection and provided interesting reflection definitions. One participant defined reflection as "looking back at what you have done in class and thinking about what you liked and disliked." Another mentioned that reflection is thinking about one's teaching and trying

to change it to become better. Other participants provided similar definitions, such as "figuring out new different ways of teaching to develop my teaching," "thinking about what is good for you and trying many things until you know what is best for you," and "understanding who we are as teachers." One of the participants mentioned that reflection is all about "self-questioning and self-analysis." She indicated that reflection is asking yourself so many questions and trying to answer those questions to analyze your behavior. Likewise, three other participants said that thinking about their class behaviors allowed them to self-evaluate themselves as teachers. They pointed out that they knew how well they did in class. They knew most of the comments their supervisor would provide after observing their classes before telling them these comments. This was true. After attending each participant's class, the supervisor (the researcher) asked them these questions: What do you think of your class? Did it go as planned? What went wrong? What did you do about it? Almost all participants answered these questions correctly, figuring out what went wrong and what should be done. Sometimes they mentioned things about which the supervisor was not aware. This indicates that when teachers reflect upon their actions, they do not need someone to tell them what to do. They can figure out what is best for their situation by exploring their teaching context.

An analysis of the interviews illustrated that the participants reflected on different aspects of their teaching practice. These aspects included teaching approaches, learning experiences, classroom interaction, class management, and time management. The participants reflected most frequently on classroom learning experiences. Choosing the perfect learning experiences for each lesson was found to be of great importance to all participants. They reflected upon many issues related to their choice of the learning experience, the rationale behind their choice, how to modify exercises to become well-designed tasks, and the effect of the selected/modified tasks on students' learning. Participants also reflected on the various possible ways to teach different skills. They reported that they tried different methods that they had studied to explore what was best for their students. One participant said, "In writing classes, I sometimes let them write individually, sometimes in pairs, and other times in groups. Sometimes, I let them write on paper, and in other times, I let them write on the blackboard or the smartboard." Another participant gave the following example:

Like in reading class, I try my best to make it enjoyable. Sometimes I ask my students to read; other times, I ask them to summarize in groups or ask them to story map the comprehension text (using templates and graphics). At other times, I ask them questions as (Is there … in the text? How many … do you find in the text?) and in some situations, I read a part of the reading text and directly explain it to them.

At the beginning of the teaching practice course, the participants focused mostly on themselves as teachers. They were concerned about managing their classes, introducing a lesson, how to teach something effectively, and how to manage time. They paid great attention to their teaching behaviors in class without much thinking about the consequences of students' behavior. However, at some point during the practicum, the participants began to think of their students. They were much concerned about attracting students' attention and getting them involved in classwork. In the beginning, participants were concerned much about the following questions: What did I say? How did I explain something? What did I do wrong? What are the alternatives available for teaching something? How can I devote my attention to all students? However,

towards the end of the teaching practice course, most participants figured out that focusing on students is as essential as focusing on themselves as teachers. They began questioning: Did my students understand what I said? Is what I explained clear to all the students? Do they find it interesting? How can I make them want to learn? What kinds of activities or topics attract their attention? What do they love to do?

Discussion

This study generated several significant findings that relate well to previous educational research and are discussed below.

Reflection Can Be Taught and Developed

One of the findings from this study was that reflection could be taught, consistent with the literature (Bean & Stevens, 2002; Cattaneo & Motta, 2020; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Nagle, 2008; Roessger, 2015; Russell, 2005). Involving participants in reflection-enhancing tasks and providing them with guidance encouraged them to become reflective practitioners. Even though this study's participants had never heard of the term reflective practice, they could define reflection in a simple way that showed that they understood what reflection is and what it involves. Generally, they viewed reflection as a systematic process of understanding their teaching behaviors and classroom routines and figuring out different possible alternatives to develop their own teaching. Almost all participants reported that reflection involved regular thinking, analyzing, investigating, and evaluating. All participants agreed that reflection could make them grow professionally and become better teachers in the future. Participants' definitions of reflection go in line with the common elements of reflection that are agreed upon in the literature, which are as follows: reflection is a process (Bean & Stevens, 2002; Farrell, 2015; Nagle, 2008; Norsworthy, 2009), it is a skill that needs to be taught (Jay & Johnson, 2002; Nagle, 2008; Russell, 2005), it involves making decisions (Larrivee, 2008; Rosen, 2008), and it can positively impact students teachers' professional growth (Farrell, 2015; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

The findings also imply that reflection can be developed. The participants' level of reflection gradually developed in this study. Analyzing the reflection-enhancing tasks showed that most of the tasks submitted at the beginning of the teaching practice course were marked low. Most of the ones submitted towards the end of the teaching practice course were marked as moderate or high. This showed that with time and practice, the participants of this study developed their level of reflection. Such a finding is consistent with the findings of Weber's (2013) study, which concluded that participants could develop an understanding of reflection and how to employ it effectively if exposed to explicit instruction and modeling.

Reflection Should Be Undertaken Through Various Modes of Communication

The participants indicated that they appreciated reflection through both written and oral forms of communication. This finding supports the results of Kaywork's (2011) study, which concluded that our focus should not be on written reflections only. Some student teachers reflect more when engaged in oral discussions. The analysis of group discussions in Kaywork's study revealed that oral reflections almost always extended written reflections. She concluded that while written reflections allowed student teachers to put their thoughts on paper, oral discussions allowed for a deeper reflection of such thoughts. This finding is consistent with the present study's findings,

which illustrated that participants preferred to reflect orally and reached higher reflection levels in their peer observation feedback meetings. Such meetings allowed participants to expand their descriptions to include more profound reflections. Such result is in line with research that has recognized the importance of reflective dialogues in promoting reflection and professional growth (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Corrigan & Loughran, 2008; Haigh, 2005; Nsibande, 2007).

This study's findings also revealed that collaboration created a supportive and interactive environment that motivated participants to become more reflective. Participants felt more confident while working with peers. They shared responsibilities and supported each other. Through discussion with peers, the participants were able to extract the underlying significance of their own experiences and learn from the experiences of others. According to Freeman and Richards (1996), collaboration can provide student teachers with rich opportunities to recognize and understand their tacit knowledge and give them further exploration to learn about teaching. The collaboration was considered by the participants of this study to be an essential aspect of learning in general and in developing reflection. Therefore, it is suggested to focus on various reflection-enhancing tasks that allow student teachers to be involved in collaborative and individual reflection through both written and oral reflection.

Reflection Can Improve Teaching Practice
All of the participants reported that there was an improvement in their teaching practice. As a result of their reflective practice, they mentioned that being involved in reflection-enhancing tasks encouraged them to question themselves regularly to identify improvement areas. All of the participants saw themselves as better teachers after this experience. This finding complements that of Loughran's (2002) description of reflective practice, in which he stated that "reflective practice is a meaningful way of approaching learning and teaching so that a better understanding of teaching, and teaching about teaching, might develop" (p. 34).

Reflection Can Be an Important Means of Professional Development and Growth
This study revealed that the participants perceived reflection as an essential means of teacher development and professional growth. This finding is in line with Corrigan & Loughran (2008), Farrell (2015) and Richards & Farrell (2005) who argued that reflective practice improved professional behavior and stated that reflection encourages one to look at one's professional behavior and practice to improve and develop it. This development and improvement include different aspects as knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Participants of this study found these reflection-enhancing tasks essential for preparing them to become better teachers and expand their teaching repertoire. Dewey (1933) indicated that reflection provides learners with the opportunity to "do something to prepare a person for later experiences of deeper and more expansive quality" (p. 47). Similarly, Richards and Farrell (2005) indicated that a better understanding of one's teaching practices and routines through reflection leads to professional development for the language teacher.

Conclusion

Since ongoing teacher learning and development is a significant topic in language teaching, the need to develop a teacher's professional skills, such as reflective practice, should begin during teacher training. Student teachers should be encouraged to become active initiators and shoulder the responsibility for their growth during their training period. Realizing the importance of being encouraged to engage in reflective practice, this study focused on the effect of writing a teaching philosophy and peer observation in a practicum on the professional development of female Saudi EFL student teachers. This study's findings suggest that a reflection component with a framework of assessment should be incorporated into teaching methods courses and teaching practice programs. Reflection is considered essential in learning about teaching. The findings also suggest that reflection can be taught and developed, and therefore teaching practice supervisors need to provide explicit instruction on how to become reflective practitioners. For this development to occur in student teachers, teaching practice supervisors should be trained to implement, develop, and assess reflection. Finally, based on this study's results, reflective dialogues are incredibly beneficial in developing reflection. Therefore, it is suggested that reflective dialogues between student teachers themselves and their supervisors should be developed and incorporated into the teaching practice course.

There are several limitations to this study. First, the present study was exploratory and qualitative, and therefore, only a limited number of participants were involved over a limited period. Therefore, there is a need for more longitudinal studies to provide more in-depth insight. Moreover, this research focused on two reflection enhancing tasks. Future research could continue to explore more reflective tasks that encourage reflection among student teachers. On this basis, it can be concluded that this study attempts to enrich our understanding of the importance of reflection with its developmental process. It specifically attempts to change the perception of the practicum and its role as the first step in a life-long process of professional growth rather than just an opportunity for student teachers to apply what they have studied in methods courses. It is hoped that the results of this study will help teacher educators to create an informative account of reflection in teaching practice programs that could lead to professional growth.

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