



Reflective Practice as a Strategy for Teacher Professional Development: Exploring the Experiences of English Language Teachers of Kailali District of Nepal

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Abstract

The reflective process in teaching and learning is of major importance to constantly improve teaching methods and to gain a better understanding of teaching and learning practices. Furthermore, reflective teaching involving critical self-evaluation is increasingly recognized as critical to adapting and improving pedagogical practices in a variety of teaching and learning contexts. While reflective practice is now acknowledged as an important tool for improving teacher professional development, its effective implementation and impact in Nepal has not been explored sufficiently. This qualitative phenomenological study, employing semi-structured interviews as data collection tool, explores the experience and perceptions of four secondary-level English language teachers of Kailali district on reflective practices as a strategy for their professional development. The study reveals that teachers perceive reflective practice as an important means of enhancing professional development and classroom teaching. It further reveals that simple, flexible, and context-sensitive reflective frameworks and models are appropriate for secondary-level English language teaching and learning. However, limited time, workload, inadequate institutional support, lack of systematic training, limited awareness, and resource constraints hinder its regular application. The study also reveals that reflective practice contributes to continuous professional improvement by enhancing teachers' confidence, creativity, classroom management, and responsiveness to learners' needs. The study suggests integrating reflective practice into teacher education and providing institutional support, collaboration, training, and accessible reflective tools for sustainable professional development.

Keywords: Teacher Perceptions, Reflective Practice, English Language Teaching, Nepal, Professional Development, Qualitative Study, Secondary Education.

INTRODUCTION

Reflective practice is now a central feature of contemporary teacher education and a key part of pre-service teacher training and post-service professional development (PD) (Farrell, 2018). Reflective teaching draws on Dewey (1933), who suggested that teachers should move from impulsive, habitual decision-making to a process of deliberate, structured self-examination. Dewey noted that teachers who forgo reflection risk making decisions based on tradition or authority rather than informed pedagogical judgment. Rather, he called for a mindful learning approach, one that is open-minded, responsible, and committed to professional development. Reflective practice is significant in second language education, especially in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), as a way to improve teacher effectiveness (Farrell, 2018). Critical reflection allows teachers to move away from instinctive or routine teaching toward more analytical, intentional practice, as Richards (1990) notes. This change is especially significant in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) and TESOL, where teachers must navigate a variety of socio-cultural

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and political factors (Freeman, 2016). By understanding their beliefs, values, and classroom practice, teachers can better accommodate learners' needs.

Reflective practice is an important means for English teachers to innovate and improve their teaching methods. Research indicates that EFL teachers use a variety of reflective approaches to develop a critical, self-evaluative attitude (Farrell, 2018). They regularly evaluate their teaching and learning, identifying effective strategies and opportunities for improvement. This continual reflection builds confidence and helps them gradually close the gap between theory and classroom implementation (Thagen & Vasalos, 2005). Likewise, Reflective teaching is not merely reflection on previous experience; it is an active, evidence-based approach. Effective reflection requires systematically collecting classroom data, analyzing teaching practices, and using that analysis to improve instructional approaches (Richards, 1994). Shulman (1987) adds that reflection that leads to meaning must be revisited, relived, and reinterpreted by teachers, made more meaningful through their experiences and emotions, and through important moments and accomplishments. The introspection process contributes to self-awareness, a key element of professional agency (Helyer, 2015), because it helps educators understand how they shape their own learning and their students' learning outcomes. Teachers must be aware of this practice because they can only make sense of what they are conscious of while working in their contexts (Freeman, 1989). Therefore, reflective practice focuses on analyzing current experiences rather than simply learning new skills, which can support reflective growth.

Reflective educators think about and systematically analyze teaching to improve teaching. This entails critically reflecting on key elements of their pedagogical work, such as learning goals, learning materials, classroom activities, and learning outcomes. This conscious thought process enables teachers to evaluate their effectiveness in delivering instruction and make informed decisions to improve and maximize student learning experiences (Farrell, 2015). Schön's (1983) theory suggests that many situations in practice are complicated and ambiguous and may first need superficial exploration before further analysis. This reflective process is ongoing and continually reshapes understanding, yet because each setting is uncertain and unique, there is always room for further restructuring.

Likewise, Gibbs (1988) believes that teachers can be more independent and professional if they have the skills to evaluate themselves. In short, reflective practice not only enhances professional skills but also links theory and classroom practice. Reflective practice is a well-known approach that can be an effective tool for teachers' learning, but its use has not been extensively studied or explored in the context of ELT in Nepal. Current TPD programs may be constrained by various issues, including different training models, institutional support, and cultural barriers, which could hinder reflective engagement. Furthermore, it is important to analyze how contextual factors such as multilingual classrooms in Nepal, limited resources, and traditional teaching norms influence the use and impact of reflective practice. Without understanding these dynamics, TPD programs may struggle to sustain appropriate strategies in a contextually appropriate way. Thus, in the context of English language teaching and learning in the secondary level schools of Kailali district of Nepal, the present study aims to explore:

1. Teachers' perceptions of the role of reflective practice in professional development.
2. Frameworks and models of reflective practice suitable to the context of English language teaching and learning.
3. The challenges teachers perceive in using reflective practice as a strategy for teaching and learning in the classroom.
4. The contribution of reflective practice to the continuous improvement and sustainability of teacher professional development.

To achieve this aim, this study deals with the following research questions:

1. How do teachers perceive the role of reflective practice in their professional development?
2. Which reflective practice frameworks and models do teachers find appropriate for English language teaching and learning?
3. What difficulties do teachers perceive in applying reflective practice as a teaching and learning strategy?
4. How does reflective practice contribute to the continuous improvement and sustainability of teacher professional development?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reflective practice and professional development have emerged as prominent conceptual frameworks in contemporary TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) discourse (Farrell, 2015). It enables educators to systematically examine their instructional approaches, professional experiences, and pedagogical decisions through both independent and collaborative processes. While reflection has long been an implicit part of teaching, it has only emerged as a formal theoretical concept in TESOL in recent decades (Farrell, 2018). Recent empirical research has further deepened the understanding of reflective practice among English language teachers, prompting increased efforts to encourage educators to adopt systematic reflection in their professional development (Cirocki & Farrell, 2017).

Reflective teaching is a cyclical process of self-evaluation that allows teachers to collect and review data from the classroom environment and adjust their teaching practice. Gibbs (1988) states that highly effective teachers continually reflect and learn from every experience through purposeful reflection. They analyze their practice and adjust their approach for the next session, which supports ongoing professional development. Reflective practice underpins teacher intuition and continually helps teachers improve their teaching methods. It is long-term in value: learning new teaching skills is like one meal that fills the stomach, whereas reflective practice is like a net that provides nourishment for years to come (Gibbs 1988).

Teachers' systematic reflection on their daily classroom experience is the foundation of professional development (Ur, 1999). She emphasizes the importance of educators reflecting on their practice and classroom interactions to develop their profession further. Schön (1993) proposed reflective teaching as a continuous cycle of reflection and action in which the teacher reflects on and analyzes how theories are implemented in practice. This process is a systematic form of self-evaluation that supports personal and professional identity formation. On this basis, Gibbs (1988) developed a reflective framework that focuses on emotional awareness and critical evaluation of experiences for professional development. His model guides practitioners through stages of analyzing reactions, evaluating outcomes, and formulating action plans.

Jasper (2003) expanded the conceptualization by linking reflective practice to lifelong learning. She argued that reflective practice is a key means of developing independent, competent, self-regulated teachers because it allows them to engage in ongoing professional growth and foster self-learning. The scholar also argues that regular reflection leads to higher-quality teaching, personal and professional growth, and a stronger connection between the classroom and the content itself. The professional development (PD) process has been found to significantly affect teacher variables such as teacher characteristics and pedagogical skills and, subsequently, student learning outcomes (Sancar, Atal, & Deryakulu, 2021). Existing literature has largely focused on the relationship between good PD and better student outcomes (de Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2018; Derri et al., 2015; Girvan et al., 2016; Higgins & Parsons, 2009; Prenger et al., 2017). Second-generation conceptualizations of PD explicitly link effective PD processes to positive student outcomes (Desimone, 2009; Desimone et al., 2002; Timperley et al., 2007). Pennington (1992) set the groundwork for reflective practice as a basis for language teacher development. She suggested

that a reflective orientation can enhance pedagogical practices and learning outcomes, and develop motivated, self-confident educators and learners. For [Pennington \(1992\)](#), reflection is deliberate thinking about teaching experiences. She hypothesized that reflection is both a critical input that triggers development and a critical output produced by that development, forming a cyclical relationship.

Various philosophies and learning theories have influenced reflective practice since Dewey's [\(1933\)](#) inception. Constructivism is a theoretical underpinning that focuses on constructing new knowledge, and learning is an active, meaning-making process in which learners reflect critically on their previous knowledge and experiences. Reflective practice also has a humanistic aspect, focusing on individual development and personal growth by challenging restrictive beliefs and values that could impede progress. [Schön \(1983\)](#) distinguishes between two kinds of reflection that are key for teacher learning: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action occurs during teaching when teachers resolve unexpected difficulties adaptively and adjust instantly, combining professional knowledge with real-time problem-solving. However, reflection-on-action occurs after instruction, when teachers evaluate what went well or not so well and identify knowledge, learning, and adjustments for future instruction. Moreover, scholars added reflection-for-action, forward-looking planning, based on previous reflections, to Schön's two forms. Together, these types allow teachers to connect theory with practice, supporting ongoing improvement and development through adaptive and retrospective analysis.

Similarly, [Schön \(1987\)](#) highlights that reflective teachers can rethink their pedagogical convictions and practices to improve learning through innovation. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to reflect on their teaching knowledge as part of continuous professional development (CPD), especially in online teacher professional development (OTPD), which enables teachers to develop their reflective thinking skills (RTS) ([Hennessy et al., 2022](#)). This process includes thinking about ethical, social, and political aspects, as well as emotional reactions and sociocultural backgrounds of students ([Le et al., 2023](#)). [Russell \(2005\)](#) argued that reflection is meaningful only when it is specifically taught and learned to develop the necessary awareness and critical thinking skills. Research shows that reflective practice has a positive effect on the quality of language instruction as well as personal and professional development for teachers ([Crandall & Christison, 2016](#); [Farrell, 2013](#)).

Today, reflective practice in education is a key factor in teacher development, ranging from training for novice teachers to continuing professional development for experienced teachers ([Farrell, 2018](#)). Reflection is essential to teacher development because it allows teachers to critically analyze and evaluate classroom events, as [Zwozdiak-Myers \(2012\)](#) argues. This process will ultimately benefit both instructional quality and the effectiveness of student learning opportunities.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences, perceptions, and reflections of English language teachers regarding the role of reflective practice in their professional development. Phenomenology is appropriate for investigating how individuals experience and make meaning of a particular phenomenon from their own perspectives ([Creswell & Poth, 2018](#); [Moustakas, 1994](#)). Since this study focused on teachers' experiences, perceptions, practices, and challenges related to reflective practice, the phenomenological design enabled an in-depth exploration of the meanings teachers attached to their professional experiences.

The study purposively selected four in-service English language teachers from four secondary-level schools in Kailali District, Nepal. Participants were selected based on their current

involvement in secondary-level English language teaching, teaching experience, direct experience or awareness of reflective practice, and willingness to share their experiences. A small sample was appropriate because phenomenological research emphasizes the depth and richness of participants' lived experiences rather than sample size (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The small number also enabled the researcher to conduct detailed interviews and closely examine each participant's account. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, participants were identified as T1, T2, T3, and T4.

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews using an interview guide aligned with the research questions. The interviews explored teachers' understanding and experiences of reflective practice, its contribution to professional development, and the opportunities and challenges associated with its use. The interviews were conducted between 17 and 28 January 2026 at their schools, and each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Interviews were conducted in Nepali, based on participants' preferences and comfort. With participants' informed consent, the researcher audio-recorded the interviews and supplemented them with brief field notes. The researcher manually transcribed and translated the recordings into English while preserving their original meanings.

The researcher analyzed the data thematically using a phenomenological approach. The researcher first familiarized himself with the data by repeatedly reading transcripts and listening to the audio recordings. In the first coding cycle, the researcher assigned initial descriptive codes to meaningful segments. In the second cycle, the researcher compared similar and related codes, refined them, merged them, and organized them into broader categories. The researcher then examined the categories across participants to identify recurring patterns and significant meanings. The researcher developed candidate themes, reviewed them against the transcripts, and refined them to ensure they accurately represented participants' experiences and addressed the research questions. Coding and interpretation were conducted manually. The team checked emerging interpretations against the original transcripts and recordings to minimize misinterpretation.

The researcher maintained trustworthiness through member checking, triangulation, peer debriefing, and reflexivity. Participants had the opportunity to verify the accuracy of their accounts and the interpretations derived from their interviews. The researcher compared the accounts of all four participants to identify convergence and divergence. The researcher used peer discussions to review coding and emerging themes. The researcher also maintained reflexive notes documenting decisions related to data collection, coding, categorization, and theme development.

The researcher followed ethical principles throughout the research. The researcher obtained ethical approval from participants and relevant school head teachers. Participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, and informed consent was obtained before participation and audio recording. They were informed of their right to decline any question or withdraw from the study without penalty. The researchers maintained confidentiality by using participant codes and removing identifying information.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the key research findings. The findings are categorized into four themes that emerged from the interview data: teachers' perceptions of reflective practice, frameworks and models adapted by teachers, perceived challenges in applying reflective practice models in teaching, and the contribution of reflective practices to professional development.

Teachers' Perceptions on Reflective Practice

When discussing reflective practice, respondents reflected that it is essential for every educator to improve their teaching practice. The participant, T1, responded as:

"Reflective practice means thinking about my teaching after class: what worked, what didn't, and how I can do better next time. I want my students to understand better and enjoy learning English. So, I sit quietly and think about what activities went well and what problems occurred." T1

The participant indicates that reflective practice is conceptualized as a post-instructional evaluative process in which the educator introspectively analyzes instructional efficacy. This involves a deliberate cognitive review of pedagogical activities to assess their success, identify emergent problems, and formulate strategies for future improvement. The primary objectives underpinning this practice are to enhance student comprehension and engagement in English language learning. In this context, T2 says:

"Reflective practice, for me, is reflecting on my teaching and classroom management, as well as learning from my students to see what aspect of my teaching can be improved. Students' feedback and their progress motivate me. I go to a colleague with questions when I feel confused and ask for ideas about the day's class." T2

Reflective practice is a multi-step process of analyzing teaching style, classroom management, and students' learning to explore how to improve teaching practice. It is driven by intrinsic motivation, students' feedback, and their apparent academic progress, all of which indicate student learning. In addition, the practice includes a social element: a space for reflection and uncertainty, where teachers share reflections with colleagues, seek external viewpoints, and propose concrete improvements. To further explain this idea, T3 reflects:

"It is an exercise of introspection when I check myself as a teacher, particularly when pupils appear to be confused. I feel that continuous improvement is necessary to be a good teacher. So, I evaluate students' involvement and homework completion to assess my teaching. Likewise, reflective practice involves reflecting on how I taught the lesson and how students responded, which helps me enhance my teaching in the future. In large classrooms, it forces me to think about the problems and challenges. Sometimes I record good/bad times in my personal diary for future reference." T3

From participant T3's perspective, reflective practice is a systematic way to self-assess one's teaching practices, and confusion among students is one of the main reasons students question the course. This practice is based on the philosophy that continuous improvement is vital for effective teaching. Likewise, assessment is carried out by gradually and systematically analyzing students' involvement in learning and the outcomes of their work based on their homework. Likewise, assessment is conducted by gradually and systematically analyzing students' involvement in learning and the outcomes of their work, using homework as an indicator of instructional success. It takes the form of a critical review of lesson delivery and student responses to help guide future pedagogical planning. External challenges, such as those arising from large-class classroom management, also offer opportunities for deeper reflection. According to participant T4, one important methodological aspect of this practice is recording key positive and negative experiences in a personal diary for analysis and reference. He shares:

"I reflect on my practice at the end of each class by asking myself questions such as: How well did I teach the class? What could I do better? I feel responsible for giving quality education in my community school. To improve my teaching and learning activities, I replay the classroom situation in my mind and identify areas to improve." T4

The statement illustrates reflective practice as a systematic after-lesson analysis of the efficacy of the teaching and learning process and the identification of modifications. This approach reflects a strong sense of responsibility to provide quality education within a community school setting. Similarly, the practitioner deliberately simulates classroom interactions in their mind and methodically reflects on and identifies specific classroom behaviors to work on for future use.

Reflective practice in the context of this study can be defined as a systematic, post-instructional process of critical self-evaluation carried out by teachers to improve the effectiveness of their teaching, based on the information above. It is an intentional examination of teaching, learning, student engagement, and instructional practices to decide how to strengthen and improve. Likewise, teachers engage in this practice in different ways, including solitary contemplation, reviewing student papers and feedback, talking with other teachers, and keeping reflective journals. Self-improvement (Pokhrel, 2022) is a desire to learn more and be better, to do their job with professional responsibility and commitment. This iterative cycle is often motivated by classroom challenges and is fundamentally aimed at adapting and refining future teaching practices (Yaacob et al., 2021).

Frameworks and Models

Regarding frameworks and models, some said they know about frameworks but have not used them in the classroom; some said they do not know about frameworks but do reflect on their teaching; and some said they know about the model and have used it in their teaching practice. Participant T1 responded: "I know about Schön's theory of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Schön's approach made me aware that reflection should happen during and after teaching." The participant explains that reflective practice theory informed their understanding of professional practice and that Schön's approach includes reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. This theoretical background highlighted the need for critical reflection throughout and after teaching. Likewise, T2's participation confirmed this: "Yes, I was guided to plan activities, reflect on the outcomes, and increase my options for improvement next time by Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, which includes planning, doing, reflecting, and learning." Using Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle in this response is an example of a pedagogical framework for improvement. This model informed a design cycle of creating instructional activities, reflecting on the results, and using those reflections to inform and improve future iterations. Likewise, participant, T3, was found to respond:

"I don't know of any formal models, but I think about it in terms of my teaching experience. I'm not a model, but I have more experience handling classes through regular reflection. I reflect by discussing with friends. I have new ideas, based on informal peer discussions, for managing large classrooms." T3

The participant was surprised that they were not familiar with formal models for reflective practice but that the informal, experiential approach to reflecting was used as a strategy for professional development. This activity, done through unstructured peer discussions, helped build better classroom management and provided practical ideas for challenges, including large class sizes. Furthermore, one participant had slightly different views. Participant T4 said, "Yes, I have heard about Kolb's model, but I have not used it." This response indicates that the participant knew Kolb's ELT theory but had not formally put it into practice.

The use of formal reflective models varies based on participants' responses. T1 explicitly mentions Schön's theory, reflecting on reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, which influenced him. Similarly, T2 directly uses Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle in their instructional

planning, beginning with planning, then action, reflection, and then improvement. By contrast, two participants, T3 and T4, show limited or no direct application of formal theoretical frameworks. T3's reflective practice is based on experiential knowledge and informal collegial discussion and has developed classroom management strategies without a formal reflective model in place, whereas T4 is aware of Kolb's model but doesn't use it.

Perceived Challenges in applying Reflective Practice Models in Teaching

Enhancing teaching and learning activities requires reflective practice. However, teachers encounter various problems when using models in teaching. Participant T1 responded to the question, "What challenges do you face when applying these frameworks or models in your teaching?" He responded: "We face problems due to lack of time after school due to other duties. There is no training available at school to use those frameworks in the classroom." This participant recognized important structural limitations to formalizing reflective practice. The most common limitation cited was very limited time for reflection after instruction because of other work duties. Moreover, T1 identified a lack of institutional support, particularly in the availability of training at school, to support implementation of the established reflective framework in the classroom. In this context, another participant, T4, shares, "In our school, there is no proper training to be effective in utilizing these frameworks; similarly, there is no time because of overloaded duties at school." This reveals the significant constraint identified: a lack of structured time and formal training. The participant identified the main obstacles to classroom implementation as overloaded duties after school and the lack of institutional professional development on how to implement frameworks effectively in education. Likewise, participant T2 answered:

"It is difficult to apply the theoretical models in the classroom in rural areas because there is no support from the institution and limited access to materials and resources. There is no institutional encouragement or supervision for reflective practices due to the classroom setting and limited resources for implementation in our scenario." T2

The statement reveals that, in rural classrooms, theoretical pedagogical models are applied under many different conditions and constraints, such as a lack of institutional support, access to pedagogical materials and resources, and formal encouragement or supervision for reflective teaching. The logistical and resource constraints unique to a rural educational context add to these constraints. Moreover, one participant, 'T3', replied:

"Reflection helps everyone to enhance teaching-learning activity; However, colleagues are resistant; they don't see the value of reflection. Therefore, it's not easy to put into practice. Similarly, social factors sometimes hinder implementation." T3

The participant explains that although reflective practice has tremendous potential to improve teaching and learning, many implementation barriers remain. Some barriers are professional, from colleagues who don't see the value, and limiting social factors.

Participants' responses indicate considerable obstacles to the systematic use of reflective practice in the context studied. Teachers attributed these structural and institutional constraints to an overloaded administrative and teaching burden (T1, T4) and a lack of formal training and institutional support (Farrell, 2018) (T2, T4) on how to use theoretical frameworks in a practical classroom context. The difficulty of accessing resources (Faso, 2018; Dewey, 1933) was extreme in rural areas, where low access to resources and low supervisory encouragement also limited application (T2). Furthermore, socio-cultural issues (Pokhrel, 2022) posed challenges, as some

teachers reported colleagues' lack of interest in reflective practices (Farrell, 2018), and other socio-cultural challenges likely hindered implementation (T3). These combined institutional, logistical, and attitudinal obstacles make the environment difficult for sustained, theory-informed reflection.

Contribution to Professional Development

Reflective practice helps teachers reflect on their own teaching and improve. This also inspires teachers to apply new methodology in the classroom. When it comes to the question of contribution to professional development, T1 said:

"Reflective practice is very significant to the teacher's professional development. It is not just for professional development; it is important for leadership too! I realized my students were having difficulties with grammar drills, so I began using games. It helps me to identify where I'm falling short and discover new ways to teach. It motivates me to adopt other methods." T1

The statement refers to the problems students have in learning grammar, and that this led to the implementation of game-based learning. This reflective practice helped them identify pedagogical gaps and access alternative strategies. It therefore led to a flexible teaching method, prompting the use of alternative methods when the first ones failed. Reflection is not just important for personal growth; it is the essential driver of effective leadership and professional development. Similarly, another participant, T2, responded:

"I made changes to classroom management following the reflection on students' misbehavior. We have students from a variety of groups, and each one is unique. Reflection helps me to be more confident and creative as a class leader. I didn't manage the time during the activities in the classroom, but I also got better at time management after I thought about what times I had gotten delayed in the past." T2

The results show that reflecting on student misbehaviors strongly improved classroom management in a diverse population; this activity also built teacher confidence and creativity in teaching. In addition, critical reflection on previous inefficiencies led to significant improvements in classroom time management. Besides, another participant, T3, answered:

"I observed the students' lack of interest in reading the textbook, and in teaching, I added audio-visual aids. I became more aware of students' needs and adapted my teaching to suit them. When textbooks were unavailable, I looked to local resources through reflection. Likewise, I enhanced my classroom management skills as well." T3

This reflection on student disengagement when reading texts led to the introduction of audio-visual aids in teaching. This practice increased awareness of learner needs and supported responsive pedagogical adjustments. Moreover, it helped to optimize the local resources to overcome material constraints. At the same time, these reflection processes helped to develop better classroom management skills. Similarly, T4 responded:

"After thinking over how to ask questions, I found that to make students more active, I should change my way of questioning. Reflection gives ideas for new teaching methods and activities. I've learned to take any difficult lessons and make them simpler and more practical. I shortened lecture time and increased pair work to boost participation. In my experience, workshops are uncommon, and so is my self-training method reflection. It helped me work with large classes by splitting them into groups. Hence, it enhances my classroom management skills." T4

The statement celebrates the role reflective practice played as a self-directed professional learning instrument, especially in settings where formal workshops were scarce. This process directly influenced changes in pedagogical practice, such as altering how questions are asked, focusing on engaging students, and creating learning structures that turned the complex learning process into a simpler, more practical one. As a result of reflection, I reduced lecture time and replaced it with structured pair work to improve participation. Moreover, it helped me develop strategies for managing large classes.

For teacher professional development, especially in English language teaching in Nepal, reflective practice is crucial. Reflection is not limited to personal growth but is, in fact, a key driver for successful professional development and effective leadership (Le et al., 2019). Participants shared their reflections on how reflective practice contributed to professional learning across four teaching scenarios in which they made significant pedagogical changes. Because students struggled with traditional teaching methods such as grammar training, and because traditional textbooks made it difficult to sustain students' interest, the teaching model shifted to interactive approaches, such as games and visual and auditory channels to support learning. This helped raise students' awareness and create flexibility in teaching methods, making it possible to use local resources and other approaches. In addition, reflection improved classroom management through better time allocation, proactive behavior strategies, and organizing classes into pairs/groups to increase participation. In the end, it was an important tool for professional development, a kind of self-directed learning, building teacher confidence and creativity in diverse classroom settings.

The findings highlight the importance of regularly revising professional development programs to ensure they meet teachers' pedagogical needs while retaining their theoretical relevance. Furthermore, although reflective practice is a major consideration, other factors such as access to resources, institutional support, and curriculum design also play a major role in teacher development (Shokpour, 2024). Reflective practice empowers English teachers to innovate and improve their practice. EFL teachers understand the importance of reflection and use many different techniques to foster a reflective style. They are reflective learners who critically evaluate their teaching to recognize their strengths and areas for improvement. In this way, they take active steps to enhance their self-efficacy by linking theory with classroom practice and reducing the gap between theory and practice in teaching. Moreover, English teachers use various techniques to support students' learning of English. However, time, class size, resource constraints, and emotional factors often obstruct reflective practice. Even so, reflection creates a commitment in the teacher to improve classroom effectiveness. It helps develop a flexible, committed teacher ready to meet the challenges of teaching. ELT training, conference attendance, and the development of a responsible, reflective teaching attitude (Dewey, 1933) can advance teachers' professional development. Reflective practice transforms teaching and learning, and is a process by which teachers continue to develop (Pokhrel, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that reflective practice is an important, context-sensitive strategy for strengthening the professional development of secondary-level English language teachers in Kailali district, Nepal. The study indicates that teachers generally view reflective practice positively, use a range of formal and informal reflective approaches, face several contextual challenges in its application, and recognize its potential to support continuous improvement and sustainable professional development.

First, regarding teachers' perceptions of the role of reflective practice in professional development, the study finds that teachers generally view reflection as a useful way to examine and improve their teaching practices. Although their perceptions and levels of awareness vary, teachers

reported engaging in practical forms of reflection, such as discussing teaching experiences with colleagues, maintaining personal teaching notes, reviewing classroom activities, and considering students' responses and learning difficulties. These practices help teachers identify strengths and weaknesses in their teaching and make necessary adjustments. The findings further indicate that reflective practice contributes to teachers' flexibility in selecting teaching approaches, organizing the classroom, managing time, and responding to student diversity. It also enhances teachers' confidence, creativity, and awareness of their professional responsibilities.

Second, concerning the reflective practice frameworks and models appropriate for English language teaching and learning, the study indicates that teachers tend to favor practical, simple, flexible, and context-sensitive approaches rather than highly formal or complicated models. Their existing practices, including self-reflection, teaching journals or notes, peer discussion, feedback from colleagues, peer observation, self-inquiry, and audio-visual observation of their teaching, provide a foundation for systematic reflective practice. The findings suggest that reflective frameworks and models are more useful when they can be easily integrated into teachers' everyday classroom practices and adapted to the local conditions of secondary schools in Kailali.

Third, regarding the difficulties teachers perceive in applying reflective practice as a teaching and learning strategy, the study identifies several individual, institutional, professional, and contextual barriers. Limited time, heavy workload, inadequate institutional support, lack of systematic training, and limited awareness of formal reflective frameworks restrict teachers' regular engagement in reflective practice. These challenges are particularly evident in rural schools, where limited teaching resources, technological facilities, and internet access create additional constraints. Teachers may also face skepticism or limited cooperation from colleagues, while prevailing socio-cultural and institutional practices may continue to emphasize conventional, teacher-centered approaches rather than critical reflection. Consequently, although teachers recognize the value of reflection, these barriers can prevent reflective practice from becoming a regular and systematic component of classroom teaching and professional development.

Fourth, regarding the contribution of reflective practice to the continuous improvement and sustainability of teacher professional development, the study establishes that reflective practice can provide a sustainable mechanism for teachers to learn continuously from their own classroom experiences. Through reflection, teachers can identify problems, reconsider their instructional decisions, experiment with alternative strategies, and assess the outcomes of their actions. This ongoing cycle can improve teaching effectiveness, professional confidence, creativity, classroom management, and responsiveness to learners' diverse needs. However, the sustainability of reflective practice depends not only on teachers' individual commitment but also on supportive professional and institutional environments. Collegial collaboration, peer observation, constructive feedback, professional learning communities, continuous professional development opportunities, and institutional encouragement can help transform reflection from an individual and occasional activity into an embedded professional culture. Finally, reflective practice has considerable potential to strengthen the professional development of secondary-level English language teachers in Kailali district. Still, its effectiveness and sustainability depend on how systematically it is supported and contextualized.

Implications

This study's findings have important implications for educational policy, pedagogical practice, and further research. At the policy level, reflective practice should be recognized as an integral component of teacher professional development and incorporated into pre-service and in-service teacher education programs, school-level professional development policies, and teacher training initiatives. Educational authorities and school leaders should provide teachers with

adequate institutional support, including protected time for reflection, relevant teaching and learning resources, opportunities for professional collaboration, and training in practical, context-sensitive reflective frameworks and models, with particular attention to rural and resource-constrained schools.

At the pedagogical level, teachers should be encouraged to integrate reflective practice into their regular classroom activities through accessible strategies such as reflective journals, self-inquiry, peer discussion, peer observation, feedback, and audio-visual self-observation, enabling them to critically examine their teaching, identify classroom problems, respond to students' diverse needs, and continuously improve their instructional practices. Developing professional learning communities can further promote collaborative reflection, knowledge sharing, and constructive feedback among teachers, making reflection a sustainable part of professional practice.

In terms of further research, similar studies could be conducted across different geographical areas, educational levels, and subject areas to examine the applicability of the findings in diverse contexts; quantitative and mixed-methods studies could investigate the relationship between reflective practice and teacher competence, teaching effectiveness, motivation, and student learning outcomes; and longitudinal or intervention-based studies could examine the sustained effects of specific reflective frameworks, peer-observation programs, professional learning communities, and digital reflective tools. Such research could ultimately contribute to developing a context-sensitive, evidence-based model of reflective practice for English language teachers in Nepal.

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