Effect of a Reflective E-portfolio Design Workshop on Saudi EFL Teachers’ Reflection Awareness: An Exploratory Case Study

By

Hind Hamad Al-Jamal

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Advisor:

Dr. Mohamed El-Okda

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SAUDI EFL TEACHERS’ REFLECTION AWARENESS

This non-thesis paper entitled:

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Written by
Hind Hamad Al-Jamal

has been approved by the Department of English Languages and Literature

Dr. Mohamed El-Okda
Dr. Rafeeq Ahmad
Dr. Azmi Adel

1433- 2012

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Abstract

Reflection is an essential type of thought that enables teachers to deliberate on their experiences assisted by various types of reflection-enhancing tasks created in reflective teaching e-portfolios. The present study aimed at investigating Saudi EFL teachers’ reflection awareness as a thought process and designing reflective e-portfolios, and the effect of a blended professional development workshop on their reflection awareness. This study met the research aims by investigating a case study on five Saudi EFL in-service teachers using semi-structured interviews before and after the workshop. This research produced a number of key findings: Saudi EFL teachers’ perception of reflection was mainly the teacher’s need to change her practice and consider alternative routes in and on action. Subsequent to the workshop, they regarded reflection as an important path to assess their own practice and development, professionally aided by the teachers’ e-portfolio as an influential tool. They also became more aware of the need to consider the consequences of their teaching practices and to work together as a community of practice. There were several implications: to create a community of practice, establish professional development programs on reflection awareness and embrace reflective teaching e-portfolios.

Keywords: Reflection; Reflection awareness; Reflective teaching e-portfolio
التدبر هو نوع جوهري من أنواع التفكير، فهو يمكن المعلمات من إمكان النظر في الخبرة المكتسبة والمدعومة من مختلف أنواع المهام الوسعة والمؤثرة، والتي تخلقها وثائق التدريس الإلكترونية الخاصة بالتدبر. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحري والبحث في مدى وعي معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية سعوديات الجنسية بمسألة التدبر كعملية فكرية، وتصميم وثيقة التدريس الإلكترونية الخاصة بالتدبر، ودور ورشة العمل التدريبية المهنية التخصصية على الوعي بفكر التدبر. حققت هذه الدراسة مستهدفات البحث من خلال التحري عبر دراسة الحالة على عينة البحث والمكونة من خمسة معلمات لغة إنجليزية سعوديات الجنسية من غير الناطقين بها، وهم من العاملات فعلية في مجال التدريس، وتم ذلك باستخدام المقابلات شبه الهيكلية قبل وبعد ورشة العمل. خرج هذا البحث بعد من النتائج الجوهرية وهي: أن إدراك المعلمات السعوديات لأثر التدبر كان في حدود حاجة المعلمة لتغيير ممارستها والنظر في مسارات أفعالها أثناء وبعد الحصة الدراسية، ونتج عن ورشة العمل اعتبار المعلمات مسألة التدبر كمسار هام لتقييم ممارستها وتطوير مهيرنها باستخدام وثيقة التدريس الإلكترونية والاحترافية كأداة فعالة ومؤثرة في دعم وتقديم عملية التدبر. بالإضافة إلى أنهن أصبحن أكثر وعياً للحاجة إلى النظر في نتائج ممارسات التدريس والعمل معاً كجماعات الخبرة. خرج هذا البحث بمجموعة من التوصيات من أبرزها: إنشاء جماعات الخبرة، وبناء برامج تدريبية مهنية خاصة بتمية الوعي بالتدبر، وتبني وثيقة التدريس الإلكترونية الخاصة بالتدبر لرصد وتوثيق أثر التدبر في عملية التدريس.
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Chapter One
Introduction

Foreign language teaching in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has received considerable efforts. Workshops and seminars focus on bridging the gap between theory and practice to ensure quality performance. Teaching as a profession involves a considerable amount of challenges and decision-making. Therefore, EFL teachers need to be aware of their roles as self-regulated learners in order to examine their practice and document their quest for self-development and articulation through the use of modern technology invested in the current course management systems at hand. There needs to be an attempt to demystify the common misconceptions associated with reflection to enable teachers to grow professionally.

Teachers practice daily instruction and preparation. Thus, engaging teachers in a systematic and critical examination of their practice can assist them in their profession and support their choices. This process of awareness of their practice can help them to direct impulsive and intuitive actions. However, teachers seldom have the opportunity to explore their own practice due to their job requirements or because they are unaware of the process to develop their own teaching and achieve their pedagogical objectives. The opportunity to engage in online professional development programs can be a vehicle to learning within their busy schedules. It supports their educational process and self-learning endeavors. Furthermore, their shared goals as a community of practice can aid teachers in improving their classroom practice.

Zygouris-Coe and Swan (2010, p. 116) state, “This model of learning helps eliminate teacher isolation, one of the factors associated with attrition.” In order to be knowledgeable about teaching, teaching e-portfolios constructed in accessible course management systems are valuable instruments to support teachers’ quest to explore
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their methods, the reasons behind their choices, and the results of their actions; it also enhances collaboration with their colleagues.

The need to demystify the common misconceptions associated with reflection amongst teachers is a prerequisite to enabling teachers to grow professionally by integrating both pedagogy and technology. There are several misconceptions associated with reflective teaching. Teachers regard reflective teaching as a new method that helps them to change their actions in class. It is merely a recall of events to assist them in assessing their performance and highlighting their weaknesses and strengths. Moreover, reflective teaching is an attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

The current research explores Saudi EFL teachers’ awareness of reflective practice and the use of reflective teaching e-portfolios.

1.1 Context of the problem

Teacher educators in general and EFL teacher educators in particular believe that teachers learn how to teach, i.e., grow professionally, through reflection. Reflection is a special type of thought that is associated with professional action. It is a process that involves teachers’ attempt to deroutinize teaching by detecting alternative routes available at each moment of class time, trying out alternative routes, considering the consequences of their actions and uncovering the tacit beliefs underlying their habitual actions. It can be for action while planning for teaching, in action while teaching in class, and on action to uncover tacit beliefs and the consequences of their actions. From my own experience as a supervisor of English, there are many misconceptions associated with reflection and teaching e-portfolios.
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That is why Saudi EFL teachers’ awareness of reflection and reflective e-portfolios need to be increased using professional development workshops.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The present study aims at investigating Saudi EFL teachers’ awareness of reflection as a thought process and designing reflective e-portfolios, and the effect of a blended professional development workshop on their reflection awareness.

1.3 Research questions

The present study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are Saudi EFL teachers’ conceptualization of reflection and reflective teaching e-portfolios?

2. How can a blended workshop for raising EFL teachers’ awareness of reflection and reflective e-portfolios be designed?

3. What is the effect of the blended professional development workshop on participants’ awareness of e-portfolios and reflection in language teaching?

1.4 Significance of the study

The current study may help teachers and educators to create a learning environment in which both students and instructors can engage in active and beneficial learning experiences. This may lead to a better understanding of the learning-teaching context.

1.5 Limitations of the study

There were three limitations to the study. First, although semi-structured interviews gave insight into aspects of the research topic, there was access only to what participants chose to expose. Secondly, there was no exploration of the effect of the blended professional development workshop on their actual performance in their
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teaching context. Finally, the sample consisted of female participants due to difficulty of reaching male teachers.

1.6 Method and Procedure

The following steps were taken to answer the research questions:

1. The researcher selected five EFL teachers based on their willingness to participate in the study of their own free will.

2. The researcher designed and conducted a face-to-face workshop on using Moodle.

3. A semi-structured interview to elicit participants’ awareness of reflection and reflective e-portfolios was designed, and its validity was established by submitting it to a jury of experts.

4. A semi-structured interview with each participant was held to identify indicators of her awareness of reflection and reflective e-portfolio.

5. The researcher worked out the principles that should underlie the professional development workshop to raise the teachers’ awareness of reflection and reflective e-portfolios.

6. The researcher designed the workshop and conducted it online with occasional face-to-face meetings, for 2 weeks.

7. The researcher conducted another online semi-structured interview to elicit and examine Saudi EFL teachers’ awareness of reflection in e-portfolios after attending the workshop.

8. Data were analyzed qualitatively.
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1.7 Definition of term

Reflection is a type of thought that is usually associated with professional action, and entails that the professional concerned will deroutinize his/her practices by constantly exploring them and problematizing the unproblematic (i.e., attempting to uncover their underlying tacit beliefs, detect alternative practices, and consider their consequences).

Reflection awareness as used by the present researcher is a mental construct that refers to the teacher’s consciousness of:

1. the misunderstandings often associated with the concept of reflection;
2. the importance of reflection as the main means of professional development and learning teaching in teaching;
3. the importance of working in a community of practice to grow professionally;
4. the component processes involved in reflection as a thought process;
5. the presence of alternative routes at every moment of class time;
6. the need to deroutinize the practices that have become routine in her teaching (problematizing the unproblematic);
7. the need to uncover the beliefs and assumptions underlying routinized teaching practices;
8. the importance of considering the consequences of her teaching practices;
9. the different types of reflection enhancing task types;
10. how to design an e-portfoliio and its advantages over traditional (pen-and-paper) ones; and
11. the obstacles to practicing reflection regularly (El-Okda, 2008).
Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to the current study and provides the framework for this paper. It sheds light on both theoretical and empirical considerations presented in four main topics: (a) reflection, (b) professional development programs, (d) community of practice, and (e) studies on reflective e-portfolios.

2.1 Reflection

As mentioned earlier, reflective practice is a special type of thought that influences teachers’ practice. It is the way teachers question their beliefs and actions while teaching. Teachers neglect ample opportunities to subject their own beliefs of teaching and learning to a critical analysis when teaching is repetitive and routinized (Farrell, 1999). Teachers’ awareness of the reasons that underlie their acts in the classroom contributes to their professional growth and evolution. Hence, reflective teaching is based on teachers’ theory-in-action, and teaching expertise as a process rather than a product (El-Okda, 2008). The teachers’ theory-in-action consists of their tacit beliefs working as filters. Any comment or new idea needs to be inspected before crossing these filters. Farrell (2008, p.1) stated that “reflective practice occurs when teachers consciously take on the role of reflective practitioner, subject their own beliefs about teaching and learning to critical analysis, take full responsibility for their actions in the classroom, and continue to improve their teaching practice.” It enables teachers to gain a better understanding of their practices and routines (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

The need to examine habitual action arises from the necessity of uncovering
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teachers’ tacit beliefs. Teachers tend to exercise certain learned activities unconsciously and automatically (Kember et al., 2000). Therefore, it is necessary to aid teachers in the process of reflection to ensure professional growth as an ongoing process. It is not merely a learned skill but a type of thought. This process is initiated by creating situations that enable teachers to realize the inconsistency between their practices and the ideal view of the current situation (Burns, 2010b). El-Dib (2007) examined the experience of Student teachers performing action research as a method of reflective thinking. Her findings support the view that reflective thinking does not develop with experience defined only in terms of the number of years in teaching. Expert teachers do not gain expertise in time. This view grants teachers the prospect of being responsible for their learning as agents and not as recipients of knowledge (Burns, 2007).

The importance of reflection stems from the need to investigate teachers’ current practices. It aims at highlighting the teachers’ present practices and assisting them in identifying the practical reasons underlying their habitual practices (Farrell, 2007). It can be for action as a pre-teaching activity, in action while teaching and on action to consider the consequences of an action and consider alternative routes (El-Okda, 2008). This type of thought engages teachers in a process of critical analysis (Farrell, 1998) and is necessary for knowledge transfer (Mackey, 2009). Teachers’ awareness of the process to uncover their beliefs and examine them with careful consideration can benefit both teachers and students within the process of learning and teaching. Therefore, changing the underlying tacit beliefs of current routinized practices is a pre-requisite to changing those practices.

Reflection can be performed individually or collaboratively depending on the
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available circumstances. Teachers can examine their practices from a video, an audio, or a written text. Cuper and Gong (2010) conducted a study to examine the effect of videotaping to help pre-service teachers reflect on their teaching practices. Their findings suggest improvement in the areas of questioning, providing directions and classroom management. Furthermore, they reported that the participants displayed an ability to perform in-depth reflection as a habitual practice. Burton (2009) presented the effect of expressive writing on teachers’ professional growth in the way it captures the essence of their experience allowing them to have a flexible resource for teaching that is based on inquiry. One advantage of online professional development is that it enhances the participants’ reflection by having them write responses (Lombard, 2010). The ability to express thoughts systematically and vividly affects the way we think. It enables further investigation and a timely skill of learning. This aids teachers in finding their personal theories that underpin their teaching practices (Burns, 2010a).

2.2 Professional development programs
Teachers’ professional development is an essential base to ensure deeper understanding of teaching and a more proactive, assured practitioner. Villegas-Reimers (2003, p. 12) regarded professional development as “a long-term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in the profession.” This ongoing process aids teachers in constructing sound knowledge and refined skills. Deepening their knowledge of the subject and their students’ thinking is regarded as a key to improved classroom teaching (Borko, 2004). Consequently, teachers need to engage in the process of self-directed learning to learn about their profession from their own experience. Farrell (2007, pp. 175–176) asserted that “teachers, not methods or expert opinions, make a
difference as they explore the nature of their own decision-making and classroom practice.” He explains that this bottom-up strategy can be reached by collecting information about their practice, whether individually or collaboratively, to reach the status of a good teacher. Collaboration among teachers enhances their individual learning and assists in the accomplishment of the institution’s goals (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

The implementation of professional development programs has significantly been adopted throughout the world. Richards and Farrell (2005, p. 4) pointed out that different strategies such as “documenting different kinds of teaching practices; reflective analysis of teaching practices, examining beliefs, values, and principles; conversation with peers on core issues; and collaborating with peers on classroom projects” contribute to teachers’ development. There are different models of teacher professional development. These models are divided into two sections: organizational partnership and individual models (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Organizational partnership models include professional-development schools, other university-school partnerships, other inter-institutional collaboration, schools’ networks, teachers’ networks, and distance education. These models are implemented on a wider scale between teachers, schools administrations, and university faculty within a country or among a variety of countries. As for individual models, they include traditional and clinical supervision, students’ performance assessment, workshops, seminars, courses, case-based study, self-directed development, cooperative or collegial development, teachers’ participation in new roles, skills-development models, reflective model, project-based models, portfolio, action research, use of teachers’ narratives, generational or cascade models, and mentoring models. These models vary according to the context in which they are implemented and the need they intend to serve.
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Online professional development allows for further opportunities for teachers’ engagement. Mackey (2009) examined the experience of teachers participating in qualification-bearing online professional development courses while engaged in their everyday practice. His findings suggest that teachers had wider opportunities to engage in reflection and critical discernment of their own understanding as well as transform their own practices. The use of technology facilitates the learning process and provides learners with critical skills needed throughout their lives (Lombard & Porto, 2010). Web 2.0 tools demonstrate useful tools to engage learners as well as provide them with opportunities to expand their knowledge.

Workshops are one model of teacher professional development that require thorough planning. They provide opportunities for teachers to demonstrate newly gained knowledge. Richards and Farrell (2005, p. 23) stated, “A workshop is an intensive, short-term learning activity that is designed to provide an opportunity to acquire specific knowledge and skills.” Nevertheless, it is necessary to acknowledge certain issues to ensure the effectiveness of the program. Professional development programs have certain characteristics and principles in that they are:

1. Based on the assumption that teachers are seen as active learners who work on constructing their own knowledge;

2. Regarded as a long-term process in which teachers can evolve over time, not in a one-time incident;

3. A process that is associated with school reform and culture building;

4. Regarding teachers as reflective practitioners who develop their expertise by building new knowledge in association with their prior knowledge (Villegas-Reimers, 2003);

5. Supporting site-based initiatives as they improve practice when it is related to
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the school, teacher, and district;

6. Providing ample time and follow-up (Corcoran, 1995);
7. Ensuring the instructor’s presence by creating an open environment;
8. Offering positive responses and feedback in a timely and insightful manner;
9. Creating a non-direct opportunity to exchange ideas (Lombard, 2010);
10. Useful to ensure effective use of technology though the instructors’ model in designing and delivering instruction (An & Wilder, 2010).

2.3 Community of practice

The ability to engage teachers in online professional development fostered the creation of professional learning communities. The emergence of strong professional learning communities results in instructional improvement and enhances teacher learning (Borko, 2004). Zygouris-Coe and Swan (2010, p. 116) describe a professional learning community as “a collegial group of school administrators and faculty who are unified in their commitment to student learning.” Teachers’ learning develops when they realize that they have shared goals and responsibilities to accomplish their sought goals (Lombard & Porto, 2010).

The realization that teachers spend their career isolated from other teachers deprives them from opportunities of interaction and shared insights. Zygouris-Coe and Swan (2010) examined the experience of teachers who engaged in an online professional development community. Teachers were encouraged to interact, share ideas and reflect on their beliefs and learning. The researchers explained that administrative or attitudinal barriers deprive teachers of getting the full benefit from online professional development. Their findings suggest that online learning experiences led to a positive effect on teachers’ classroom instruction and knowledge of reading.
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The opportunity to engage teachers in discussions can improve their teaching and enhance their knowledge for an extended period. Seldom do teachers critically examine their practices; therefore, there is a need to create opportunities that lead teachers to explore collectively different possibilities to improve their teaching (Borko, 2004). A Web 2.0 model can enhance communication and information sharing (Lombard & Porto, 2010). Whether synchronous or asynchronous, these models involve collaboration to keep the experience ongoing. Chen, Chen, and Tsai (2009) investigated the number of online synchronous discussions in an online professional program. The aim was to explore the percentage and frequency of their interaction and the social cues and cognitive and metacognitive skills presented. The researchers reported that participants engaged in conversations as they worked collaboratively in assigned tasks and shared ideas while reflecting upon their teaching. Their findings revealed that online professional development provided a setting for teachers to share values and knowledge. Teachers with better computer skills were found to have a better chance to master professional development program. Moreover, careful planning of the program stimulated knowledge interaction. Finally, disagreement messages can be posted to elicit more responses.

2.4 Previous studies on reflection in e-portfolios

The use of portfolios to aid teachers in their process of learning contributes to their self-appraisal and enables them to review their work conveniently, which supports them in setting their goals (Richard & Farrell, 2005). Nowadays, e-portfolios are considered vital tools for learning as part of the technological advancement. Coleman, Dickerson, and Kubasko (2010, p. 206) stated that an “electronic portfolio system needs to be viewed as a productive, helpful, useful and
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purposeful tool that is aligned with the goals of the organization.” The importance of e-portfolios lies in the learners’ attempt to develop their own work, gaining pedagogical and technical knowledge. Furthermore, teachers need to experience new educational techniques as part of their professional development in order to transfer it to their practices with students (Biesinger & Crippen, 2010).

Several studies were conducted to examine the relation between e-portfolios and reflection. Kocoglu (2008) investigated the perception of EFL student teachers about e-portfolios as a learning tool. The findings show that collaboration among the participants supported their ongoing professional development; nevertheless, there was no evidence that developing e-portfolios enhanced the participants’ reflection. Pelliccione and Raison (2009) examined education students’ reflections while learning with the use of a structured, reflective tool. Their findings suggest that the use of a framework to guide students in their reflection had an apparent effect on their reflective abilities. The researchers show their strong support of the value of e-portfolios in self-reflection.

E-portfolios support reflective thinking in the way they enable its users to have full ownership of constructing their work. Genc and Tinmaz (2010) conducted a study on pre-service teachers before and after their use of e-portfolios to reflect on their progress. The researchers reported that pre-service teachers reshaped their shared view on e-portfolio from content-to-context to context-to-content. Teachers were the developers of their e-portfolios and both process and product were considered as the outcomes. In addition, they suggested that the use of e-portfolios affected both the pedagogical and technical skills of teachers. Cheng and Chau (2012) investigated the effect of goal orientation on the reflective ability of electronic portfolio users. After analyzing 54 showcases the researchers found that participants demonstrated a high
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level of reflection when they combined mastery and performance goals. E-portfolios were regarded as a valuable tool to foster reflection competence, emphasizing both the learning process and the performance of users.

To conclude, the present study aims to investigate the impact of reflective e-portfolios on the teachers’ reflection awareness as a vital tool to aid them in their professional growth. Several studies took place on the use of reflective e-portfolios and their effect on teachers’ performance and skills; nevertheless, there was no apparent focus on reflection awareness of in-service teachers with an emphasis on the reflective teaching e-portfolio as an instrument of vital importance rather than a heavy burden in the Saudi context. This study aimed at investigating EFL Saudi teachers’ awareness of reflection and designing a reflective e-portfolio, and the effect of a blended online professional development workshop on their reflection awareness. The methodology and procedures used to answer the research questions will be described in the following chapter.
Chapter Three
Method and procedure

3.0 Introduction

Based on the literature reviewed and the topic investigated in the previous chapter, the researcher chose the study’s design and method. The research design and methods used helped to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the experience. This chapter dealt with the rationale behind the choices of the method and the approach to the study.

3.1 Specifying and justifying method

The study was exploratory in nature. Thus, qualitative research was the approach used in this study because it allows the researcher to obtain descriptive information on the existing variables related to the phenomenon under investigation. As Dornyel (2007, p. 40) explained, “Qualitative research aims to broaden the repertoire of possible interpretations of human experience. Thus, the rich data obtained about the participants’ experience can widen the scope of our understanding and can add data-driven depth to the analysis of a phenomenon.” Moreover, the case study methodology provided an appropriate framework to investigate the teachers’ perception of the topic and the effect of the treatment on it. Its benefit, as Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007, p. 253) emphasize, is that, “case studies penetrate situations that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis.”

The online professional development program enabled the creation of an environment that serves the learning community and fosters self-regulated learning in a flexible and supportive manner. It enabled teachers to grow professionally by integrating both pedagogy and technology. It kept learning experiences organized and
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enabled the participants to move toward specific goals. Furthermore, the timeframe intended for the workshop served participants in experiencing both synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication in a rather ample time.

3.2 Population and sample

The participants in the study were five Saudi EFL in-service teachers who worked for the Ministry of Education. Table (1) presented their experience and background.

Table 1

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<td>Descriptor</td>
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3.3 Procedure

The study started by assigning the participants based on their willingness to participate. The researcher obtained their approval through the use of a consent form. Then pre-workshop interviews took place face to face to address the first question of the study. Afterward, the researcher worked out the principles that should underlie the professional development workshop to raise the teachers’ awareness of reflection and reflective e-portfolios. The workshop lasted for 2 weeks with three face-to-face
meetings. The first assigned meeting focused on the participants’ technical training to deal with Moodle and attempt to design a wiki-based e-portfolio. The other two concentrated on eliciting difficulties encountered by the participants. Then the post-workshop took place online in two parts: individual interviews and one focus group discussion. Figure (1) illustrates the research design.

The researcher’s role during the study was a designer of tasks, a facilitator of reflection, and a model of reflection and e-portfolio design. She practiced what she preached. She developed her own e-portfolio, kept her own diaries, and made them available for participants’ appraisal. The researcher maintained teacher presence through the program to ensure a sustained communication among the participants.

3.4 Instrument

The primary method of data collection was a semi-structured interview (Appendix A) before and after the online professional development workshop. Griffie (2012, p. 159) defined interviews “as a person-to-person structured conversation for the purpose of finding and/or creating meaningful data which has to be collected, analyzed, and validated.” Thus, the semi-structured interviews provided a possible opportunity for participants to convey their own thoughts and feelings within a meaningful context. It enabled the researcher to measure the variables pre- and post-
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treatment. The pre-workshop interviews had five main focuses: (1) the teacher’s own background of reflective teaching, (2) the teacher’s understanding of the processes involved in reflection, (3) the teacher’s awareness of her practice and teacher development, (4) the teacher’s estimation of the consequences of her choices, and (5) the teacher’s attitude toward the teaching portfolio and reflection-enhancing task types. The post workshop interview included a question that dealt with the teachers’ awareness of the effect of the professional development program and was the question assigned for the focus group discussion.

3.5 Data collection and analysis

The researcher interviewed each teacher prior to the workshop at her school in a room away from all distractions. Then the researcher fully transcribed the recorded pre-workshop interviews. The researcher conducted the post-workshop interviews online. It consisted of five individual interviews and one focus group discussion that lent breadth and richness to the data. Dornyel (2007, p. 144) stated, “This within-group interaction can yield high-quality data as it can create a synergistic environment that results in a deep and insightful discussion.” Both pre- and post-workshop interviews used English as a medium. In addition, there was no attempt to edit the language of the teachers.

Conceptualization of reflection and the design of reflective e-portfolios were explored within a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory provided insights into the factors influencing teachers’ perception of reflection and reflective e-portfolios. Dornyel (2007, p. 260) explained that the aim is to present an “abstract explanation of a process about a substantive topic grounded in the data.” It enabled inductive analysis of data and emphasized theory as well as comparison (Dey, 2007). Initially, through data-driven coding, categories reflecting teachers’ awareness were identified,
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and the relationship between categories was explored using the constant comparative method. During analysis, cases were compared individually and across all participants. The use of the constant comparison method enabled, as Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007, p. 493) explained, “comparing incidents and data that are applicable to each category; integrating these categories and their properties; bounding the theory; setting out the theory.” This enabled the researcher to examine the participants’ view of the given professional development program. First, the data were broken into segments and assigned conceptual categories as open coding. The data were closely and systematically examined without excluding any part. The concepts were coded according to their meaning and relevance to the study. Coding required data to be broken into lines, paragraphs, or sections (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Second, interrelationships between these categories were found as the axel coding. Finally, the relationships were explained based on a higher-level abstraction as the selective coding up until the stage of theoretical development. The three phases were recursively experienced until the saturation phase was reached. Figure (2) illustrates the process of analysis.

Figure (2): Illustration of the analysis process moving from text to category

During analysis, memos were recorded on the interviews, the participants’ ideas, and concepts. Document summary sheets were made on the apparent
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inconsistencies and differences. Visual display was created to illustrate ideas. Figure (3) illustrates a sample of the visual representation of part of the focus group discussion on the obstacles to practice reflection regularly.

Figure (3): Illustration of visual display to part of the focus group discussion on the obstacles to practice reflection regularly

The use of computer-aided qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) further assisted the researcher in organizing and sorting data. Dornyel (2007, p. 263) asserted that “highlighting extracts in electronic texts is a simple and basic word processing task and it happens to coincide with a key component of the qualitative coding process.” The use of Qualarus computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software was beneficial to retrieving and displaying large segments throughout the study timeframe. Figure (4) illustrates samples of categorizing segments.
To sum up, this chapter dealt with the methods used in the study, the reasons for choosing them, the selected sample, the procedures followed throughout the study, the instrument used to collect data and the process of collecting and analyzing data. The following chapter presents the analysis of data.
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Chapter Four
Analysis of Data

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of data with respect to the research questions. Examples from teachers’ replies and conversations supported the analysis. The identification of the primary themes followed a grounded theory approach after extensive examination and reading of the interviews. There was no attempt to impose a framework for analysis; rather the aim was to explore the teachers’ conceptualization of reflection and teaching portfolios before and after the blended workshop. The researcher presented the findings in three sections, as each section answers an assigned research question.

Question 1: What are Saudi EFL teachers’ conceptualization of reflection and reflective e-portfolio?

The initial themes drawn from the data of the pre-workshop interviews were considered in relation to the researcher’s conceptualization of reflection awareness.

Perception of reflection and the misconceptions associated with reflection

The teachers’ understanding of the concept of reflection based on their own background resulted in many definitions. The case study’s teachers expressed their new exposure to the topic. One teacher showed her lack of information; nevertheless, her understanding of reflection was clear in the middle of the interview in terms of students’ feedback about their improvement:

_Sometimes I take from the words from the student. One time when we made a scene, for example, a student, she never stood up or said any word. When she came to me. When she made it. She likes acting and she acts, and she said “You know I memorized 100 words for this.” I told her, “You do not memorize_
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it. You read it. You say it. You use it, and you understand the meaning. You use the words." She was very happy. She says every time I say a sentence or I speak in English, I speak in English. This is a good thing. This is a reflection for me. This is a good idea. (Teacher 2)

Reflection was a concept that described the competent teacher who was able to solve practical problems of teaching through using varied activities. This was necessary to use innovative ideas, strategies, and activities:

I have to use different kinds. I have to think about my lesson. Think about my lesson. Think how is it possible to, I do not know, deliver the lesson in an easier way. Also, I have to change some of my activities. I have to look for different activities or new activities: a game, a puzzle. So I have to be skillful in that. (Teacher 1)

The concept presented the teachers’ ability to engage students in a lesson:

Reflective teaching, I think, if I use the reflective teaching method in my classes, I am asking my students to give me their opinion about a lesson or to solve problems, to compare, differentiate between things. (Teacher 4)

Also, it was a way to judge students’ reactions and experiment within a lesson:
As a thought process! Experiment maybe, you are experimenting with something, and we are in a process after many stages. What happens at the very end? (Teacher 3)

Reflection was the flow of information from the teacher to her students then back again to her:

This is the main thing I want from teaching is to give students information, and I ask them to give it to me again in another way. (Teacher 5)
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The teachers’ preparation reflection included the whole teaching context.

*The teacher, the environment of the class, the student, the teaching aids, everything.* (Teacher 2)

The researcher’s own conceptualization of reflection was the base for identifying the participants’ misunderstandings associated with the concept of reflection. Saudi EFL teachers held several misunderstandings about reflection. Three teachers acknowledged that it was a new method:

*Reflective teaching... I think it is a new method.* (Teacher 4)

The fourth teacher had a contrary view of reflection. She described reflection as a habitual action that a teacher performed with unconscious planning or consideration:

*Maybe academically we do not exactly know the forms, symbols and names. But maybe as a teacher we do it as a habit. We do not know exactly if it is a method or not. We are not aware of the method itself.* (Teacher 1)

The main role of the teacher was to present knowledge to students; therefore, one teacher regarded it as a kind of faithful representation of the textbook:

*This is the first idea I thought about it. I have to be very clear. I have to reflect everything from the book as if I am a mirror to the students. That is what I thought at first, but I am not sure.* (Teacher 1)

As the center of attention was students, teachers described reflection in various ways. One teacher regarded it as strategies used in class:

*Reflective teaching I think it means anything that I do or the strategies that I use, and I see the reflection on my students according to their responses, their participation in the class. This is what comes into my mind now.* (Teacher 4)

She also related it to the filter used to compare students’ levels.

*I think I can differentiate between weak students and the level of my students.*
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can differentiate between the good and the mid-level students for the advanced level or the weak students. I use reflective teaching. I can compare the different possibilities of my students. (Teacher 4)

Reflection was an experiment that a teacher observed.

Maybe it is testing and application with girls. (Teacher 3)

Finally, one teacher regarded reflection as information flowing from her to her students.

I do not have a complete idea about it. But as I understand from the word itself, it means that the things that you give others and they give it to you again—something reflecting. Information, I think so. I do not have a complete idea. (Teacher 5)

Perception of teaching portfolio: Showcase

Teachers based their understanding of the teaching portfolio on their own background and the difficulties they met in constructing their own. Teachers agreed that a teaching e-portfolio was mainly a showcase of their work. They either used the traditional pen and paper portfolio or collected documents saved in their computers. They regarded teaching portfolios as a place to gather lessons, worksheets, sources, and certificates as a sort of an archive:

Included everything. My certificates for everything I have achieved in my life, the teaching plan for the classes, the distribution, the marks, the important paper about the subject, my own CV. (Teacher 5)

According to this view, two teachers regarded the teaching portfolio as a manageable task since it required gathering their own work:

Difficulties! It is not difficult, it just everything I do, I put it there for me. OK, it is for my sake. I will benefit from it next year. I tend to exchange it with my
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*friends. So it is not difficult. It is not that difficult. (Teacher 4)*

Teachers presented their experiences with teaching portfolios. One teacher shared the same view about teaching portfolio, but she did not have her own. In her opinion, not all teachers were able to design their own teaching portfolio due to their personality and lack of time:

*But I am not that well organized. I do not have a file to collect my work. No. (Teacher 2)*

Two teachers identified its insufficient representation of their practice:

*Sometimes we made it at the beginning of the term. We left it. OK, so why? Because the things that we wrote in the lesson plan differ from what we have done in the class. (Teacher 5)*

One teacher offered that the presence of an ideal reflective teaching e-portfolio could motivate her.

*If it is prepared for me, I will read it. If it is not, I had to do the things, which are important. (Teacher 1)*

**Self-improvement techniques**

The participants displayed awareness of their changed practice and evolution, whether alone or with other colleagues. The participants described their professional development as a solitary effort. Each participant expressed her gradual shift from a novice, inexperienced teacher. They asserted their control and understanding of their current position. They clarified several changes in their performance that led to a better understanding of the material they had. They all expressed their attempt to change lesson plans as part of their change.

*I do not think the same way. I think that we change. We evolve. (Teacher 1)*

One teacher described her shift from teacher-centered to student-centered
learning by infusing thinking skills:

*Now I think I am a little bit developed, hopefully. My students started to make sentences. They are trying to solve problems, trying to compare. So most of the talk now, my students do it. Not like before.* (Teacher 4)

She believed that her professional growth depended on attending several training courses.

*I am not following the same steps every year. I am not using now the same steps. Thanks to the courses I attended, I think I developed myself and also my teaching tools.* (Teacher 4)

The adoption of new ideas helped to engage students in a lesson as expressed by another teacher.

*I try to change. Every year I explain the lesson differently according to what is new.* (Teacher 3)

Two teachers described the difference in the way they handled a lesson. They realized that students were not ready to absorb all the new information at once.

*Huge. Huge difference. At the beginning, I was very ambitious about teaching. I have a lot of information, lots, lots of information. I want to give it to them in one class. This is my own idea at the beginning, before I became an expert. I know that information should be divided into many classes.* (Teacher 5)

Teachers seldom referred to working in a community of practice. They also seem to undervalue reflection and working in a community of practice. There was a hint of discussing difficulties and sharing ideas with colleagues about the importance of workshops and the need to involve students. There was a single comment on a joint work to research for ideas:

*It was 6 years ago. Me and my friends, we made a research about teaching*
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vocabulary, how to teach vocabulary. (Teacher 4)

Consider consequences

The teachers’ focused attention on the results of their choices on students’ performance or attitude seems partially acknowledged. Saudi EFL teachers who participated in the study showed considerable concern about the consequences of their behaviors. They tried to consider how their actions affected their students and narrated stories that present their attempts to consider these actions.

Teachers described their attempts to control and examine their actions. One teacher explained her choice of an open-ended question as a remedy:

That is why I insist on doing “Who is my student?” because if I cannot make them feel like they are free to use the language they learned. Maybe I can do it at the beginning of the class. So I feel like this is the free time for them. This is the only regret that I have. I feel like when I finish the class, that they have learned something. (Teacher 1)

Three teachers expressed their acknowledgment of their choices by assessing their method.

Sometimes it does not work. I did not like it last year. So I dropped it. No need for it. Sometime it takes time. I do not have time. (Teacher 2)

They referred to students continually to identify the level of difficulty of their offered learning experiences.

Sometimes I refer to my students, like when I give them an activity to do. If they find it OK, they like it. Yes, I can verify. But if they say no, it is difficult; I can change it the next time when I am using such an activity. (Teacher 4)

Teachers considered the consequences of their action in class and after class. They thought of their methods and how students responded in class:
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OK, I always thought, especially when I go home, I always thought about what I gave them. This information that I gave to them, does it suit their needs? Does it make them like the subject more? (Teacher 5)

Another teacher expressed her behavior in class when students did not respond. Like, for example, when I started with the warm-up activity. I am trying to notice every student, if they are ready to participate, the ones who participated or not. Then I move to the introduction, then I move to the context of the lesson. OK, and I am trying to involve as much students as I can. OK, then I see if they do not answer me. Maybe they can participate in another activity. I am trying to change the activities they have. (Teacher 4)

Despite their concerns, consequences were associated with negative emotions. It was a heavy burden rather than an informed experience. Very often, OK, like when I go outside of my class, I blame, kind of blame myself. OK, if the students are lazy or not participating well, then I think of my way. What kind of ways did I use? Maybe it is not enjoyable. OK, then I try to improve it the next time. (Teacher 4)

Teachers seem to consider the consequences of their actions in class. This is a clear indicator of reflection yet they seem unaware of its importance as a component of reflection.

Established habits

Teachers chose certain convenient habits. They repeated such actions with comfort and appreciation because they showed benefits. Teachers described their actions as important decisions that they had to make to overcome certain obstacles while teaching. These actions were not realized as routines/ habits:

Routine! Well, it is not a routine. It is a question that I invented 2 years ago
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with these girls I taught for 2 years. I tried to tell other teachers about this experience. It is a question that I have to ask every single time when I come to the class. It is a routine now when I... you say, routine. (Teacher 1)

Some habits were beneficial, as they ensure focus while others were not asserted. Only one teacher said she consciously avoided habits.

No, I do not have that kind of routine. Sometimes I take my students outside of class. We go to the lab. I ask them to write reports. I am trying to verify the way I am teaching. (Teacher 4)

One teacher described her practice as full of routines. She stated that there was a feeling of dissatisfaction:

I have a lot. I have sometimes. Maybe at the end of the year it became [dissatisfaction]. I used to give three, four, five and six the same as the first. There is nothing else. Nothing new. This is why the reader, for example, at the beginning, I tried to read it for them. I tried to explain every line. Then when it came to the end, I became very ordinary, and read and asked them look at the pictures. Read it at home. Leave them. This is the way I hated. When it came to the end, I stopped achieving new things. Just repeating what we have already studied. (Teacher 5)

The teacher admitted that she routinized her teaching because she lacked the needed awareness to reflect on her practice in order to grow professionally and achieve her goals.

**Reflection enhancing task types**

This category presented the teachers’ acknowledgment of the different reflection enhancing task types. It reflected their personal teaching philosophy, their
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attempts to reflect deeply about critical incidents, their attempts to perform action research, and their appraisal of the textbook’s learning experiences.

The case study participants expressed their own personal theory as merely existing to engage students in an enjoyable activity by simplifying ideas.

*Teaching is fun. Learning is much easier when it is fun and enjoyable. We can learn and play at the same time. I do not want one of the things I am remembered for as being a good teacher, not an excellent teacher, but not a bad teacher, a good teacher. (Teacher 1)*

Moreover, there was the belief that speaking and reading activities were necessary. Nevertheless, the curriculum was an obstacle.

*For now and after these years I have for my idea of philosophy, now I want the students to benefit in their language. I want them to speak. I want them to read with understanding. I know I have a book, a curriculum. I have everything but from my experience. It does not help at all. (Teacher 2)*

Teachers established their belief based on the assumption that students were not well prepared:

*I work with my students’ level, sorry for that. Even if we have words, we have objectives. They have to master it. But they have more than that; they do not even know how to read. OK, let us make very, very easy, simple sentences subject-verb-object, subject-verb. Do not make them long. Do not use connectors. Words that are very difficult. Let us make it very easy, simple. (Teacher 2)*
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One teacher described her philosophy as fixed at the beginning of the term while the other four teachers acknowledged they changed their philosophy with one main goal:

*All the time! But the point is that I have to teach them something that they will remember even if it is not easy for me.* (Teacher 1)

The four teachers acknowledged that they did not attempt to write their philosophy as they exchanged ideas with their colleagues. In particular, one teacher expressed her fear of stating her own philosophy:

*Write it down. Writing! I am afraid to write it. Maybe the supervisor, the school, they do not like it.* (Teacher 2)

Teachers’ realizations of critical incidents were not documented in regular teaching diaries. Two of the three teachers did not use teaching diaries. The other three teachers used diaries for certain purposes. One teacher documented her own personal diaries with some indications of certain school events.

*My own personal diary. But school's go there because it is my life. And I think it is very..., I feel more relaxed. Because it is out. It is written, let it go away. That is why I write about it. It is not built inside. Not just about personal life. It is personal and professional.* (Teacher 1)

The other attempt was to write about things that have already finished. The teacher expressed her attempt to understand the students’ behavior and the strategies she used. She concluded that her choices were not the reason for students’ low achievement:
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But sometimes, you came from one class, which is very good to another class, which is weak. So you are depressed about why they are all students. What is the difference? What makes those very active and very good, and you are very weak? Is it me? I start to blame myself. Is it me? My method, my own way.

Maybe my mood has that influence on them. Then I start to say no. I always have the something. It is not possible that it is my problem. (Teacher 5)

An electronic diary, in the form of blog, was another option. The teacher did not continue to use this diary. She used it for students’ assignments:

I start a specific idea to write my diary, my experience. Everything in this blog, then I changed my objective. (Teacher 2)

The teachers’ first impression about the question on action research was their lack of awareness of its meaning. They started to think about their experiments with new ideas, such as applying a test on students’ learning styles or role-playing or a way to engage lower-level students in group activities.

One time, I gave it with the weak students. I take groups of good student, four good students, and I put one weak student among them. I try to give her as much information as possible—grammar, things. Try to be her teacher. So they start.

One group made it, and the student got better. But one group, no. Maybe she did not fit with them, like them. I do not know why. (Teacher 5)

The teachers planned for the process, but the rationale for the choice was not stated, and their attempts were not analyzed.

Of course not! I do not write. I do not analyze it. But I see the result. (Teacher 2)
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Experienced EFL teachers seem to occasionally focus on investigating their practice informally and without attempting to systematize it into action research for lack of awareness of what reflective writing is.

Two teachers had different responses, as one teacher acknowledged that she did not attempt this task, whereas the other teacher described a joint effort to research the topic of vocabulary instruction. She described the process of gathering information from different Internet sources and applying it to her students. She talked about the benefits she observed in her students:

*Some of them grabbed the meaning quickly, instead of just talking or giving it. So through playing games, different activities, it was easy for them to grab the meaning of the word quickly and they would not forget it easily. (Teacher 4)*

The way teachers analyzed the results was by exchanging ideas and worksheets with no reference to students’ results:

*I give my experience to my friend. She gave me her own point of view, and we discussed it. She gave me the worksheets she has done. I gave her the worksheets I have done. So we exchanged the information. (Teacher 4)*

All the participants of the study reported their attempts to modify learning experiences with reference to the necessity of using the textbooks’ learning experiences. Three teachers regarded modifying experiences as necessary to make the lessons closer to real life.

*But there are other ways, easier ways, simpler ways. Ways that will come in the test. Ways that they use in real life. That is not the way they use it in real life. (Teacher 1)*
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The other two teachers held two opposing ideas. One teacher saw simplifying information as a kind of modification, whereas the other teacher acknowledged the necessity of challenging students by presenting problem-solving tasks:

*I kind of give them a problem and ask them to solve the problem. I gave them the problem, so I used different techniques...*(Teacher 4)

**Question 2: How can a blended workshop for raising EFL teachers’ awareness of reflection and reflective e-portfolios be designed?**

The researcher prepared an online professional development program on a Moodle course management system (Figure 5). The Moodle homepage for the workshop was divided into three sections, (Figure 6), to:

1. Introducing the workshop
2. A multi-e-portfolio (one for each participant including the researcher) on Moodle
3. Enabling tasks
   a. Sets of tasks aimed at identifying misconceptions and beliefs about 1) reflection and reflective teaching, 2) e-portfolios, and 3) reflection enhancing task types
   b. Sets of tasks aimed at clarifying each of those issues
   c. Further practice of reflection enhancing task types.
The workshop aimed at raising teachers’ awareness of reflection and reflective e-portfolios. The following were the main goals of the workshop:

By the end of this workshop, participants were expected to be able to:

1. Uncover their beliefs about reflective teaching and reflective portfolios
2. Identify their misconceptions of reflective teaching and reflective e-portfolios
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3. Show awareness of what was involved in reflection as a thought process
4. Show awareness of the different types of reflection enhancing task types
5. Become willing to work collaboratively for professional development

To achieve those goals, the following guidelines/principles were taken into consideration in designing the workshop, as illustrated in figure 5:

1. The workshop task types were reflection enhancing task types so that the method of delivering the workshop and its design was consistent with its content. For example, tasks included: belief elicitation; brainstorming; case analysis; forums; keeping diaries; analysis of samples of reflective writing, such as action research reports and writing teaching autobiographies; and planning for collaborative professional development.
2. Content of the workshop covered two main components:
   a. Demystifying reflection and reflective teaching
   b. Design of reflective e-portfolios.
3. Most tasks constituting the workshop involved collaboration to develop the willingness for collaborative work in professional development and end up as a community of practice.
4. The workshop was a blended learning experience in which face-to-face work was used to train participants to use Moodle to create e-portfolios.

Question 3: What is the effect of the blended professional development workshop on participants’ awareness of e-portfolios and reflection in language teaching?

The workshop’s effect was clear in participants’ replies to some answers. The initial themes drawn from the data of the post-workshop interviews were identified.
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Changing perception of reflection

The teachers realized that reflection was a special type of thought that enables a teacher to observe herself and her actions. They acknowledged its formal method of presentation and its importance in developing professionally and implementing changes:

It is a process of self-observation and self-evaluation, professional development which begins in our classroom. This may then lead to changes and improvement in our teaching. (Teacher 1)

They realized the teachers’ responsibility for their choices as a priority in making selective and critical choices. They regarded the teacher as the center of attention. This process led to a high-quality teacher:

I pictured the teacher as being the director of her own film, adding, cutting, and improving, she watches herself and fixes her film. (Teacher 3)

The participants acknowledged that reflection was a way to benefit from their own experiences by stating their beliefs. This involved uncovering their beliefs and being accountable for the consequences of their choices. During this process, they focused on looking for alternative routes.

It is a process. Looking for alternatives to our choices by looking at what you do in the classroom, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about if it works, is there an alternative? (Teacher 2)

They realized that it involved considering their choices in, on and for action:
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It involves thinking before the action and in the action and for the action.

(Teacher 5)

Shift in thinking

Several of the teachers’ answers changed as they started to understand the meaning of habitual routines, considering consequences, finding alternative routes, examining past experiences, and using teaching e-portfolios.

Two of the five teachers acknowledged their routinized behavior, though they did not prior to the workshop. One teacher realized that her behavior had seen limited changes since her beginnings as a teacher. This self-discovery helped the teacher to recognize her actions:

Although I hate routine and I always try to break it in my teaching, but after the workshop I discovered that yes, I’ve made a routine, especially the reading passage and sometimes grammar. (Teacher 2)

Three teachers recognized the process of considering consequences and the aim of focusing on their behavior:

I think about how I teach, why do I use that method, can I change how I deal with each lesson? (Teacher 1)

Four teachers acknowledged their understanding of the necessity to prepare ideas before a lesson. They regarded it as a back-up plan that needed consideration.

Teacher’s awareness of her teaching, her choices techniques. Thinking and choosing the techniques, and she also has a backup. Her thinking must be transformed to action. (Teacher 3)
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They realized that there was a considerable difference between preparing ideas before a lesson and in-class changes. They realized that they did not analyze their attempts previously:

No. After I go and give the lesson to a class, I come up with a new one so the next class will be different. (Teacher 1)

Three teachers revealed their own experiences and how they affected their personal theories. One teacher stated her assumption about the teachers’ guide:

At the beginning of my teaching the only source is the teacher book and sometimes other teachers experience. Now I use my experience to determine what and how to teach. (Teacher 2)

All teachers realized that a teaching portfolio is fully or partially absent from their work, although it was a tool that aided the teachers in their teaching. The teachers who owned teaching portfolios previously described that their portfolios were missing salient aspects of their teaching:

After I got the idea of the right way to prepare a portfolio, I thought my own portfolio was not made in the proper way. Some aspects are missing. (Teacher 5)

Acknowledging the use of reflective enhancing tasks

The teachers understood the use of regular teaching diaries, stating a personal teaching philosophy, attempting action research and modifying experiences.

Two teachers acknowledged the necessity of gathering information about their classroom:
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The first step is to gather information about what happens in the class. After each lesson I would write in a notebook about what happened—diary writing.

(Teacher 1)

Three teachers started to develop their own teaching philosophy. They realized its importance to reaching their aim. It was not fixed and was adjustable.

Yes, lately, thanks to you. Yes, it is good to develop a philosophy, for it is like your plan, your base, your goal, and motive, and you will use all means to reach that plan. (Teacher 3)

Two teachers stated that action research was not clear to them before the workshop.

No. I did not know the way to write it before but now I intend to have one.

(Teacher 5)

Modifying experiences were clear to one of the teachers. She realized that she did not attempt to modify experiences as she was just trying to simplify ideas.

Widening knowledge

It was evident from the participants that the online professional development program had widened their experiences and knowledge about themselves and their practice. They acknowledged the effect of the workshop on their perception of reflection and reflective teaching e-portfolios, both in the individual online interviews and the focus group discussion.

They described the effect of the workshop on their self-awareness as a teacher. They realized that there were multiple consequences to their choices and that they
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were responsible for these choices. They realized that this self-discovery was accomplished by enrolling in the program. One teacher started to see the effect of reflection on her teaching as she started to question her choices and started to look for alternative routes to present her lessons.

Greatly, indeed, I have clear idea of reflection even; it influenced my teaching.

Now I question my choices and try to look for new methods, discover new ways.

It should be related to life or students will lose interest. In fact I realized that it is important for my progress as a teacher. (Teacher 3)

They regarded reflection as the means of teachers’ professional development. They realized that attempts prior to the treatment depended on intuition to reach their goals.

I used to follow my intuition. That is not enough. Now I know there is a method which I should apply to reach what I want to develop myself. (Teacher 2)

The focus group discussion offered teachers an understanding of the steps to follow in order to be reflective. All the participants focused on the role of bringing clarity, as they were able to apply reflection and know how to initiate a successful path to self-observation and evaluation.

Now I can apply it: I now how to start. I focus on my beliefs. I think about my actions. (Teacher 2)

They realized that their aim was to improve their practice and that this was a continuous process that never ceased. Reflection was the key to aid teachers inside and outside their classroom. It created an awareness of the different possibilities the teacher can employ. They realized its importance as a basis for their own philosophy:
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I started to think about my beliefs, how to convey my philosophy to students and even to my colleagues. It is reflection in, on and for action. (Teacher 4)

The participants regarded a reflective teaching portfolio as a necessary tool. It was not a secondary showcase, as they stated in the pre-workshop interviews. They acknowledged that a teaching portfolio could offer a systematic way of presenting their teaching through the process of gathering information and analyzing their work:

In fact I realized that it is important for my progress as a teacher. It is a reminder of my goal. It includes a diary to focus on, plus and minus points, and an autobiography to show what influences my teaching. (Teacher 3)

They regarded the teaching portfolio as an essential tool to their development as teachers, and a way to monitor their life experiences:

Now I know it is important if I decide to be a reflective teacher. If I want to benefit from my own experiences I should state them to be able to recall them. (Teacher 2)

Their focus group discussion presented similar thoughts as their individual online interviews, as they all agreed on its significance.

Implementation and obstacles

The participants acknowledged their ability to design their own teaching portfolios. Exposure to samples of the researchers’ reflective teaching e-portfolio encouraged participants to start their own e-portfolio.

They realized that it was essential to their profession, and a way to develop themselves professionally—not as a task that had to be accomplished without thought or consideration.
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The way it is organized, its simplicity, I felt like am reading a nice story. Not an educationally obligatory thing. I mean, not as a kind of homework a lazy student must do. (Teacher 4)

They had a debate on the necessity of writing thoughts in their teaching e-portfolio but concluded with a remark that teachers’ minds were not computers. This was to establish that writing is necessary to enable a teacher to reflect deeply and significantly.

Teachers commented in both individual and group interviews on the different obstacles to practicing reflection regularly. They regarded time as an obstacle that affected their practice. They expressed their need to consider time in writing diaries and action researches, time to concentrate on their findings, and time to study cases. One teacher asserted that action research and case analysis needed further practice. Nevertheless, another teacher disagreed, as the teacher will present different cases:

Some of the types of reflection enhancing tasks need some practice. (Teacher 1)

Another obstacle recognized was the issue of continuity. One teacher described her idea, and another teacher commented on the possibility of attempting to write:

The big step is starting; adding is just easier. (Teacher 4)

The teachers commented on the burdens they had, as 20 and 24 periods seemed a great obstacle. The final hurdle was managing to concentrate throughout the lesson, as the priority was to finish the lesson. While the teachers’ ideas about the problems that may cause drawbacks in their attempt to think about their practice, one teacher identified that she was the one who initiated the problems.
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Before I thought time will hinder me, but now as I will practice reflection I think I can manage my own methods. (Teacher 5)

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter dealt with data analysis in relation to the three main questions of the study which focused on the teachers’ perception of reflection and the different misconceptions associated with it, the proposed professional development program and the effect of the program. The next chapter presents the main findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further studies.
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Chapter Five

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher provides the main findings, concluding remarks on the results of the study, suggestions for in-service EFL teachers’ professional development and recommendations for future research.

5.1 Main findings

The present study intended to investigate EFL teachers’ awareness of reflection as a thought process and designing reflective e-portfolios and the effect of a blended professional development workshop on their reflection awareness.

The participants of the study focused on a single approach to conducting lessons. They encountered difficulties that stem from the students, the curriculum, and the teachers’ chosen method. They acknowledged student and curriculum problems but did not realize the extent of difficulty caused by their own practice. They tried to observe their strategies and asked for students’ feedback as a way to reflect on their practice; this led to self-improvement strategies that were mostly isolated from their colleagues. The examination of their actions identified successful and unsuccessful experiences. Successful attempts resulted in satisfaction, students’ acceptance, and better teacher-student interaction. On the other hand, failure attempts resulted in depression, students’ resistance, and disconnection. Hence, they created a set of established habits. Through the phase of problem solving, teachers relied on their intuition. They demonstrated a lack of awareness of the multiple causes of their choices. They did not base their efforts on research, study, or analysis. Consequently, clear and rational explanations seemed absent. This finding is similar to El-Dib’s
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study (2007) that reflective thinking did not develop with experience and that reflection was a learned skill.

The findings also showed that Saudi EFL teachers’ perception of reflection revolved around their understanding that a teacher needed to change her practice and find alternative routes in and on action. The main goal was to present lessons in the easiest way possible. Their knowledge of reflection was either missing or vague, as there was no clear understanding of the component processes involved in reflection. Moreover, three teachers regarded it as a new method, and the other two regarded it as unconscious. There were minimal references to teachers’ beliefs or the different, multiple causes of their choices. Nevertheless, there was clear evidence of the teachers’ concern with the consequences of their choices. The results suggested that Saudi EFL teachers might be unaware of the multiple reasons for problems, or their beliefs and assumptions that guide their choices. They seemed to lack in-depth reflection, and the use of reflection enhancing task types to foster a better understanding of their own choices.

Teachers regarded a teaching portfolio as a document that collects their work. It was secondary to their profession. Three teachers regarded it as a time-consuming task. The difficulties associated with their experience with designing teaching portfolios showed that there was a difference between what they planned and what they practiced. Therefore, samples of their work provided a benefit as a way to retrieve ideas. The need for an ideal portfolio was raised to provide a guide shared by teachers in one community. It represented the sense of isolation and the assumption that other experiences can provide significant benefits.
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The professional development program had a significant effect on teachers’ perception of reflection and reflective teaching portfolios. They regarded reflection as an important path to assess their own practice and develop professionally, aided by the teachers’ e-portfolio as an influential tool. They acknowledged its benefit as a process and a product of their work and expertise, as they had ample opportunity to uncover their beliefs and clarify their misunderstandings. Moreover, without the guide provided in the workshop, teachers’ comments seemed less productive and more superficial. The findings were similar to previous studies conducted on reflective e-portfolios. In addition, teachers showed awareness of the collaborative work intended in the workshop, and they started to develop an understanding of the ways to exchange ideas to enhance individual learning and serve the collective goals of education.

The results may be due to the lack of attention given to developing reflection. Training programs were mainly set to introduce and discuss teaching methods and strategies. Furthermore, teaching portfolios may be inadequately discussed among teachers, thus creating an obstacle rather than an aid to improving their practice. This may detach the central role of reflective thinking to establish a self-regulated learner based on her own experience.

To conclude, the results of the study indicated that Saudi EFL in-service teachers were not well acquainted with reflective thinking and the design of the reflective teaching e-portfolios prior to the professional development workshop. Their exposure to the various reflection enhancing task types during the workshop, including the researcher’s e-portfolio, provided a rich experience that altered their perspective and widened their knowledge.
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5.2 Conclusions

The findings showed that Saudi EFL teachers are not well acquainted with the concept of reflection and reflective teaching e-portfolios and that the proposed program was effective in developing their reflection awareness. The main findings can be summed as follows:

1. Saudi EFL teachers’ perception of reflection revolved around their understanding that a teacher needs to change her practice, find alternative routes in and on action and assess their performance.

2. Saudi EFL teachers might be unaware of the multiple reasons for problems.

3. Saudi EFL teachers might be unaware of their beliefs and assumptions that guide their choices.


5. The participants regarded reflection as an important path to develop professionally after the workshop.

6. The teachers acknowledged the benefit of reflective teaching e-portfolios and reflective-enhancing task types as a process and a product of their work and expertise.

7. The teachers showed awareness of the collaborative work intended in the workshop and the benefit of working in a community of practice.

8. The teachers became more aware of the need to consider the consequences of their teaching practices.

9. Reflective thinking did not develop with experience, and reflection was a learned skill.

10. The proposed blended workshop seems to have been effective given the limitation of time constraints. More time was needed for introducing the
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different reflection enhancing task types. But this was beyond the scope of the present study.

5.3 Implications of the study

The need to acknowledge the importance of reflective practice stems from the need to direct teachers to the impetus for teaching language effectively. It promotes their need to monitor their own improvement and take responsibility for their own professional development.

Several implications can help education leaders improve teaching outcomes:

1. Encouraging teachers’ to write about their teaching practice can bring significant insights and increase understanding about their practice.
2. Value the role of independent reflection and encourage teachers’ self-learning and observation.
3. Create a community of practice that engages teachers as learners of their own profession.
4. Foster teaching communities through shared online discussion boards.
5. Present opportunities to engage in tasks that enable in-depth examination of their beliefs about teaching English in any professional development program.
6. Establish professional development programs that portray their daily lives to create meaningful experiences and highlight the importance of observing their own practice.
7. Include research-based projects in teacher education to ensure significant changes in teacher practice.
8. Embrace the positive side of thinking about the consequences of the teachers’ choices.
9. Implement online professional programs to integrate technology in the delivery
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of pedagogy and become part of teacher evaluation criteria.

10. Embrace reflective teaching e-portfolios as vital tools to ensure teachers’
growth and evolution both a product and a process.

5.4 Recommendations for further study

The aim of this study is to understand the Saudi EFL teachers’
cceptualization of reflection and reflective teaching e-portfolios; thus, several
recommendations can enhance the area of teacher education and professional
development in future research:

1. replicate the present study with different groups of Saudi EFL teachers in
different parts of the country.

2. Investigate the effectiveness of longer blended learning professional
development programs.

3. Develop modular blended reflection enhancing workshops for developing and
supporting Saudi EFL teachers’ practice of the different reflection enhancing
task types and investigate their effectiveness.
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Appendix A

Semi-structured pre-post interview

Main questions

1. What does reflective teaching mean to you? Possible sub-question if need arises:
   a. Is it a new method of teaching?
   b. Does reflection as a thought process involve anything else?

2. What does reflection as a thought process involve?
   a. Does it involve just deep thinking about a lesson?
   b. Is it a special type of thought?
   c. What exactly does it involve?

3. In what way is your teaching at the moment different from your teaching when you were first appointed as a novice teacher?
   a. Have you made a routine of certain teaching behaviors? What are they?
      Do you use the same lesson plan if you teach a class of the same grade the next year? Do you use more or less the same teaching behaviors?
      Do you think of alternative ways of teaching one and the same thing while planning?
   b. Can you detect other ways of teaching something in class? How often do you try out the new alternative ways you can think of?
   c. Do you remember a class incident in which you tried different ways of teaching something instead of one way you have been accustomed to doing?

4. After you finish a lesson, do you consider the consequences of what you have done in class?
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a. Can you give examples of incidents that made you think of the consequences of your behaviors in class?

b. How often do you consider the results of your behaviors in class?

5. Do you keep a teaching portfolio?

a. Is it a paper and pen portfolio?

b. What do you keep in it?

c. What are the difficulties involved in keeping a teaching portfolio?

d. Do you keep regular teaching diaries?

e. Do you try to develop a teaching philosophy?

f. In what format?

g. Do you write it all at once?

h. Does your teaching philosophy change over time?

i. Have you ever conducted a piece of action research?

j. Can you describe this attempt?

k. How do you feel about it?

l. Have you ever tried to modify a learning experience in the textbook you teach?

m. Give an example. Why did you try to modify it? In what way is your proposed learning experience different from the one of the book?

6. In what way has your participation in this workshop affected your perceptions of:

a. Reflection

b. Teaching portfolio? To be asked only in the post-workshop interview.

- What is reflection?

- What are the different types of reflection enhancing task types?
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- How far do you think you are able now to design your own reflective teaching e-portfolio?
- What are the obstacles to practice reflection regularly?