

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into six major parts namely background of the study, scope of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study and definitions of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Over the past two decades, reflective practice has become a central tenet of teacher education and professional development programs (Farrell, 2012). Although it can be traced back to Dewey (2004), who viewed teachers as reflective practitioners and professionals who could be active in developing curriculum and reforming education, the post-method era (Postholm, 2018) has existed since the emergence of the post-method era. Spalding and Wilson (2012) state that *"essential to identifying, analyzing, and solving the complex problems that characterize classroom teaching"* (p. 139) is reflective practice. According to Sellars (2017), reflective practice is a key feature of teachers' professional competence and expertise. According to Loughran (2013), reflective practice allows teachers to explore their teaching experiences, so they can make better decisions about how to deal with situations in the future.

However, despite the ascension of reflective practice as the dominant paradigm in education over the past two decades, it is essential to acknowledge that certain shortcomings and weaknesses persist within the realm of reflective journals. One of the primary drawbacks of reflective journaling lies in its potential to become

excessively subjective and susceptible to the influence of emotions and moods during the writing process. When individuals engage in reflective writing while experiencing heightened emotional states, they may inadvertently limit their perspectives by examining a problem or situation from a singular viewpoint, neglecting the broader and more objective outlook that can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the matter (Argyle, Gadenne, & Rehm, 2013).

Recognizing and addressing these limitations is critical in ensuring the efficacy of reflective practice. By cultivating self-awareness regarding the potential for subjectivity and emotion-driven bias in reflective journaling, educators and learners can work towards enhancing the objectivity and depth of their reflections, ultimately harnessing the full potential of this valuable pedagogical tool.

Scholars have defined and interpreted reflection in various ways; however, all these definitions agree on one thing, that to gain a better understanding, it requires reflection. According to Moon (2013), academic research uses the term to refer to a type of mental processing. According to Liston and Zeichner (2013), Reflective teaching is the capacity to draw on one's knowledge, experiences, and perceptions to make reasoned judgments and decisions about how to act in future situations.

Writing in a reflective journal is thought to improve student teachers' critical thinking because it encourages them to reflect on their understanding of themselves as teachers through a process of discovery and encourages them to consider a variety of teaching strategies in light of their own personal and contextual factors (Farrell, 2012; Lee, 2017) Writing in a reflective journal, among other things,

assists teachers in determining their areas of strength, making enhancements, and connecting their prior knowledge to new information (Brooke, 2012; Lee, 2017)

Dymont and O'Connell (2010) highlighted the perceived benefits of journal writing as well as challenges like time constraints and lack of structure. Degago (2017) reports that pre-service teachers believe journaling takes time and is difficult to think in English in a similar Ethiopian course. However, they stated that this assignment assisted them in comprehending the complexities of teaching and enhanced their teaching practice and reflection skills.

In addition, Zulfikar and Mujiburrahman (2018) stated that the pedagogical approach in teaching is one of the important contexts in journal reflective writing in the context of EFL. In the same vein, Connor, McIntosh, and Gokpinar (2019) assert that writing reflective journals requires following additional generally accepted writing guidelines. Therefore, educators must incorporate teaching attitudes and awareness into their classrooms and familiarize themselves with established writing norms to help their students become more competent and qualified in writing logical, reflective, and critical ideas as teacher (Golzar, Miri, & Pishghadam, 2022).

The aforementioned evidence demonstrates that reflective journaling offers numerous benefits; however, it has not been sufficiently investigated, thereby underscoring the necessity for further research in this domain. Based on the statement above, the researcher is interested and recognizes the need to explore the benefits of reflective journals for EFL teachers through a narrative review study.

1.2 Scope of the Study

This research used relevant journals with regard to the benefits of reflective journals that had been determined. The researcher's study focused on the benefits of reflective journals for EFL teachers.

1.3 Research Question

Grounded in the aforementioned background, this study focused on the following question: What are the benefits of reflective journals for EFL teachers?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to discover the benefits of reflective journals for EFL teachers.

1.5 Significance of the Study

In accordance with the articulated purpose of the study, its significance resides in elucidating the advantages of reflective journaling for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers, thereby fostering a comprehensive comprehension among students, educators, and academic institutions regarding its potential benefits within the educational milieu. Such comprehension holds the potential to enrich teaching methodologies, foster professional development, and ultimately enhance educational outcomes in the domain of English language instruction.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

The researcher defines the terms used in this study about the study's purpose as follows:

Reflective journal: is a personal record of written reflection collected during the research. This journal aims to support practicing metacognition skills, its capacity to analyze one's learning and convert experience into knowledge. Examining one's own perception of the learning process will be difficult with this learning tool: observing one's beliefs, values, and biases and examining them; and incrementally enhancing self-awareness and critical thinking. This study will concentrate on journal reflection for EFL teachers.

EFL teacher: is a trained professional who specializes in teaching English to individuals for whom English is not their first language. These teachers have honed their skills in instructing within English language classrooms, with a particular emphasis on nurturing intricate connections between interaction, language acquisition, and the learning process. Additionally, the commitment and motivation of EFL teachers play a crucial role in sustaining their profession, as highlighted by Ma (2022). In essence, EFL teachers are dedicated educators who facilitate the acquisition of English language skills among non-native speakers through effective pedagogical techniques and a passion for their field.