



Vietnamese Teachers' Perspectives of the Impact of Reflection-on-action Teaching on Educational Quality: A Grounded Theory Study

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ABSTRACT

In the midst of Vietnam's surge towards English bilingualism and traditional teacher-centric methodologies, the uncharted territory of on-action reflective teaching among English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers emerges as a potential avenue for enhancing pedagogical efficacy and holistic student development. This study delves into the qualitative examination of on-action reflective teaching among EFL teachers in Vietnam, a vital element of professional teaching that has not been adequately explored within the Vietnamese setting. The study is anchored on the model of reflective practice and the ecological systems theory, probing into the manner in which teachers involve themselves in on-action reflection and its subsequent impact on the caliber of teaching and learning. The data was gathered by means of semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers who teach English across various academic levels. The thematic analysis showed that the teachers participated in both individual and cooperative reflection. It was discovered that the ramifications of reflective teaching go beyond merely improving teaching efficacy to encouraging professional advancement, cultivating a culture of constant enhancement, and bolstering ethical teaching practices. The study emphasizes the importance of incorporating reflective practices into teacher professional development, nurturing a reflective atmosphere within schools, and establishing supportive policy structures. While the research provides valuable perspectives on reflective teaching in Vietnam, it also highlights areas requiring further exploration, such as extending the research to rural scenarios and utilizing diverse data gathering techniques.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a global context where teacher reflection is increasingly acknowledged as pivotal to educational enhancement, there remains a distinct research gap concerning its intricate interplay with specific socio-cultural environments, especially in developing nations such as Vietnam. As the importance of quality education grows, teacher reflection is recognized as an essential element enhancing the teaching and learning processes (Namaziandost et al., 2023).

Reflective teaching, as a global pedagogical approach, has received significant attention in diverse educational settings. However, the intricacies of its implementation and efficacy can be heavily influenced by socio-cultural dynamics (Finlayson, 2015). In relation to Vietnam, there is a notable dearth in the literature, suggesting that the

intersection of local cultural norms and reflective practices remains underexplored. This is particularly pressing given the unique educational trajectory of Vietnam, characterized by its Confucian heritage, rapid modernization, and its efforts to integrate global educational standards while preserving local identities (Nguyen, 2008).

Furthermore, as highlighted in the works of Zhan and Wan (2016), the process of reflection-on-action, which seeks to introspectively analyze teaching post-implementation, is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Its manifestations and outcomes can vary across socio-cultural contexts, particularly in nations undergoing significant educational transformations. This leads to pertinent questions on how traditional teaching methodologies in Vietnam, rooted in more didactic approaches, reconcile with the introspective and critical nature of reflective practices. Given this, it becomes essential not just to investigate the concept of reflective teaching in Vietnam but also to understand its unique adaptations, challenges, and potential innovations in such a context.

Thus, it is crucial to underscore that while reflective teaching as a concept might be universally acknowledged, its practice, reception, and outcomes could be distinctively shaped by the socio-cultural and educational milieu. In light of this, the Vietnamese context provides a fertile ground for investigating the nuanced interplay of global pedagogical trends and indigenous educational traditions (Sellars et al., 2018). This inquiry aims to contribute significantly to the broader understanding of reflective teaching across different socio-cultural landscapes (Caruana, 2014; Richardson, 2004). Understanding how these local nuances shape, influence, or perhaps even hinder the reflective practices becomes central to tailoring effective pedagogical interventions. Thus, this research intends to scrutinize on-action reflective teaching in Vietnam, a timely and pertinent subject in the light of the swift transformation in the country's educational framework.

On-action reflection, the process of introspective contemplation about one's own teaching post-implementation, is a major element of the reflective teaching continuum (Schön, 1983). When perceived from the lens of teacher professional development (TPD), reflection-on-action can be considered a core TPD activity that underscores the importance of continuous learning through self-evaluation (Minh et al., 2023). In the Vietnamese context, the evolution of TPD approaches has seen practices aligning closely with reflection-on-action but may manifest under different terminologies, such as the "lesson study" method. This method involves teachers collaboratively planning, observing, and analyzing lessons to refine their practice, thereby embodying the essence of reflective teaching (Minh, et al., 2023). Furthermore, research has highlighted the dual role of classroom observation in Vietnamese education, serving both as a tool for assessment and teacher development (O'Leary et al., 2023). While observation aims to enhance pedagogical quality, its imbalanced role can sometimes skew more towards assessment rather than genuine professional development, thereby influencing how teachers engage in reflective practices. Such indigenous practices and policy landscapes provide a richer understanding of how on-action reflection might be contextualized and operationalized in Vietnam. It also raises pertinent questions about the authenticity, depth, and breadth of reflective practices given the potentially evaluative pressure of observations (Minh et al., 2023; O'Leary et al., 2023). Drawing on these insights, it becomes evident that while reflection-on-action as a concept is pivotal for enhancing educational quality globally (Cattaneo & Motta, 2021), its unique manifestations and implications in Vietnam, influenced by local TPD practices and policies, warrant a comprehensive exploration. This study, therefore, endeavors to bridge this knowledge gap, aiming to shed light on how Vietnamese teachers engage in on-action reflection amidst the backdrop of national TPD paradigms (Thao & Mai, 2020). The research is guided by the following overarching questions:

- (1) In what ways do Vietnamese teachers partake in on-action reflective teaching?
- (2) How do on-action reflective teaching practices impact the quality of teaching and learning in Vietnam?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. On-Action Reflective Teaching

On-action reflective teaching, also known as reflection-on-action, is a notion originally introduced by Schön (1983). This involves a thoughtful review of teaching actions post-occurrence, intending to enhance future practices. According to Schön (1983), on-action reflection provides an opportunity for teachers to re-examine their experiences, question their presuppositions, and explore various strategies or methods. This concept has been further developed by many researchers. For example, Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) posits that on-action reflection allows teachers to bridge theory and practice, thereby fostering professional development. On the other hand, Zeichner and Liston

(2014) assert that reflective teaching goes beyond the individual teacher's practices and critically scrutinizes the social and political context of education.

2.2. Implications of Reflective Teaching Practices

Reflective teaching practices carry significant implications for the processes of teaching and learning. The act of reflection can cultivate more efficient teaching strategies. It, therefore, enhances student performance (Darling-Hammond, 2016). Teachers who practise reflection are more likely to be attuned to their students' needs and adjust their teaching techniques to optimize learning (Danielowich, 2012).

Moreover, associations have been found between reflective teaching practices and teacher empowerment (Oo et al., 2023) as well as professional growth (Mermelstein, 2018). Through critical analysis of their own practices, teachers can acquire a more precise understanding of their strengths and areas needing enhancement, thus spurring personal and professional development (Hung & Thuy, 2021).

Reflective teaching can further contribute to the overarching objective of educational reform (Perryman et al., 2017). By fostering an environment of ceaseless learning and refinement among teachers, reflective practices may instigate changes in teaching methods, curriculum structuring, and educational policies (Lieberman & Miller, 2011).

2.3. Theoretical Frameworks

This study is principally anchored by two theoretical frameworks: Schön's reflective practice model (1983) and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979). Schön's reflective practice model offers the primary scaffolding to comprehend reflective teaching. This model differentiates between reflection-in-action (reflecting during teaching) and reflection-on-action (reflecting post-teaching). The research specifically hones in reflection-on-action, seeking to grasp how Vietnamese teachers retrospectively review and dissect their teaching encounters.

Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory supplements Schön's (1983) model, providing a multi-faceted framework to examine the factors influencing reflective practices. This theory argues that human development is a product of the interaction between individuals and their surrounding environment, composed of micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems. The microsystem level of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory comprises the immediate environment where an individual actively engages, such as home, school, or workplace. For educators, this could encompass classroom dynamics, student interactions, and teaching materials. The mesosystem entails the interaction between various microsystem settings. Within a teacher's realm, a mesosystem might include the relationships between school and home, including parental participation in school events and parent-teacher dialogues. The exosystem incorporates environments that indirectly impact an individual, where the individual does not participate directly. For example, educational policies at district or national levels or the community's socioeconomic status where the school is situated can significantly influence a teacher's practices. Lastly, the macrosystem embodies the broader socio-cultural context, covering cultural values, economic conditions, and societal beliefs. For example, the cultural significance attributed to education, national standards for teaching, and societal perceptions of the teaching profession can considerably affect a teacher's reflective practices. Utilizing this theory, the study examined influences at the individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1. Research Design

This present qualitative study utilized a grounded-based methodology, targeting the cultivation of a nuanced, contextually relevant insight into on-action reflective teaching practices in Vietnam (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This approach facilitated an in-depth examination of the subtleties and intricacies of reflective teaching practices within the distinctive socio-cultural backdrop of Vietnam.

3.2. Participants

This research involves a total of 15 participants, who were deliberately selected using purposive sampling to assure a diverse representation of teachers from various regions of Vietnam. This sampling technique allows for the selection of individuals who possess specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the study. These teachers spanned different educational stages, comprising lower and higher secondary school teachers, as well as tertiary lecturers. They held diverse experience years in EFL teaching. To respect ethical considerations, all participants were apprised about the study's objectives, methods, potential risks, and benefits. Written informed consent was secured

from each participant prior to their participation in the study. The participants were reassured of their right to retract from the study at any moment without any negative consequences. All participants' identities were anonymized to safeguard their privacy and confidentiality. Table 1 offers detailed information about each participant (Pseudonyms have been used to preserve anonymity).

Table 1. Demographic Data of the Participants

| Pseudonym | Gender | Years of teaching experience | Educational level |
|------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Tran | Female | 5 | Higher Education |
| Nguyen | Male | 10 | Higher Education |
| Pham | Female | 15 | Higher Education |
| Bui | Female | 3 | Higher Education |
| Lam | Male | 20 | Higher Education |
| Dang | Male | 15 | Higher Secondary |
| Do | Female | 5 | Higher Secondary |
| Phan | Male | 25 | Higher Secondary |
| Duong | Female | 10 | Higher Secondary |
| Vo | Male | 30 | Higher Secondary |
| Hoang | Female | 7 | Lower Secondary |
| Le | Male | 20 | Lower Secondary |
| Vu | Female | 12 | Lower Secondary |
| Truong | Male | 8 | Lower Secondary |
| Ly | Female | 15 | Lower Secondary |

It is worth mentioning that by involving a diverse pool of participants, the study aims to capture the richness and complexity of on-action reflective teaching practices in Vietnam, drawing on a variety of perspectives and contexts.

3.3. Data collection instrument

The data collection tool employed in this study is the semi-structured interview. Characterized by a blend of pre-set questions and the liberty for the interviewer to dig deeper based on participants' responses (Cohen et al., 2017), this format was chosen for its ability to delve into participants' experiences and perceptions while maintaining consistency across interviews. To provide structure to the interview process, the following guiding questions were developed:

- How do you define 'reflection-on-action' in your teaching practice?
- Can you describe a recent teaching experience where you engaged in reflection-on-action? What prompted this reflection?
- What methods or strategies do you typically employ when reflecting on your teaching practices?
- How do external factors, such as classroom observations or feedback from peers, influence your reflection process?
- In your experience, how has reflection-on-action influenced your teaching methodologies or strategies?
- How do you perceive the role of socio-cultural norms in Vietnam in shaping or influencing your reflective practices?
- Are there any challenges or barriers you face when trying to engage in reflective practices? If so, how do you overcome them?
- Can you share any positive outcomes or insights gained from your reflective practices?
- Do you collaborate with other teachers in your reflection process? If yes, can you describe this collaborative process?

The interview guide, crafted around the research queries and the theoretical frameworks guiding the study, includes questions aiming at understanding how teachers engage in on-action reflective teaching and the implications of such practices. This guide was initially piloted with three teachers not participating in the current study. The feedback obtained from this pilot study was employed to fine-tune the phrasing and sequence of the questions, ensuring clarity and the elicitation of meaningful responses.

All interviews were conducted by the primary researcher, experienced and trained in qualitative interviewing. To allow participants to express themselves comfortably, interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, the mother tongue of both the interviewer and the interviewee (Creswell, 2012). Each interview commenced with an introduction, encompassing a reminder of the study's purpose, participants' rights, and the confidentiality of their responses. The interview process followed the guide, but also permitted probing and follow-up questions to delve into intriguing or unexpected responses. With participant consent, interviews were audio-recorded. Each interview, lasting roughly 60 minutes, ensured ample time for a thorough discussion of the topic while respecting participants' time obligations.

Post-interview, the audio recording was transcribed word-for-word in Vietnamese. To confirm accuracy, these transcriptions were reviewed while listening to the audio recordings. A professional translator, fluent in both Vietnamese and English, then translated the transcriptions into English. The translated transcripts underwent another review for accuracy, taking into consideration the cultural and contextual nuances of the original language.

3.4. Data analysis

For data analysis, this study employed a thematic analysis based on Braun et al.'s (2023) six-phase framework to detect, analyze, and report themes within data collected. By doing so, this method offers a rich, comprehensive, and intricate portrayal of the data.

The initial step required the researcher to immerse themselves in the data by repeatedly reviewing the transcripts and jotting down preliminary ideas. This familiarization process enabled the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions. Subsequently, a systematic coding process was undertaken. In an effort to ensure a rigorous and transparent coding process, sample coding was employed. A subset of the data was initially coded independently by two researchers, following which their coding results were compared to ascertain congruence and minimize potential conflicts in code assignment. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved, ensuring a shared understanding and interpretation of the codes. Coding highlighted significant features of the data that could potentially contribute to recurrent themes. Initial codes were produced for both semantic content and latent content, capturing explicit meanings as well as implicit ideas. For instance, a participant's statement like "I often think back on my lessons." might be coded as "reflective thinking", while a comment such as "Reflection helps me improve." could be assigned a code like "impacts of reflective teaching". To maintain consistency in the coding process, coding rules were established. A sample of a coding rule used in this study was: "*Statements that express a positive or negative outcome of reflection should be coded under impacts of reflection.*" These rules ensured that data were coded in a consistent manner across the board. As the coding progressed, emerging codes were organized into broader categories. For example, codes like "reflective thinking", "peer discussions", and "journaling" were grouped under a broader category called "reflective practices". The third phase consisted of assembling codes into potential themes by examining how different codes could merge to form a comprehensive theme. This process included sorting various codes into potential themes and sub-themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. During the fourth phase, the themes were evaluated concerning the coded extracts and the complete data set. This review aimed to verify if the themes accurately depicted the meanings present in the data set as a whole. Some themes were refined, amalgamated, or discarded during this phase, ensuring that the final themes offered a coherent and precise representation of the data. Once a satisfactory thematic map of the data was established, the subsequent phase involved defining and refining the themes. This process entailed identifying the 'essence' of each theme and determining what aspect of the data each theme captured. Each theme was then assigned a succinct, impactful name that instantly gives the reader a sense of what the theme is about. The final phase consisted of intertwining the analytic narrative and data extracts, and contextualizing the analysis concerning the existing literature. The 'story' that the researchers narrated about the data, where and how they interpreted meaning, links the analysis back to the research questions and the literature reviewed earlier in the report.

The data analysis process was iterative, oscillating between the different stages as necessary. Utilizing thematic analysis enabled a rich, comprehensive, and intricate portrayal of the data, enhancing the understanding of on-action reflective teaching practices in the Vietnamese context.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. In what ways do Vietnamese teachers partake in on-action reflective teaching?

On-Action Reflection as a Formal and Informal Practice. Most participants (n=13 out of 15) reported engaging in on-action reflection both formally and informally. Formally, they documented their reflections in teaching journals or shared their reflections during structured debriefing sessions with colleagues. Informally, they engaged in reflection while traveling home, before going to bed, or during any quiet moment they had during the day. Ms. Tran shared: “At the end of the day, I take a few minutes to jot down my reflections in my teaching journal. I think about what worked, what did not, and how I can improve.” Mr. Le emphasized the informal nature of his reflection: “My reflection often happens on my motorbike ride home. I replay the day’s lessons in my head, ponder on students’ reactions, and think about how I could do things differently next time.”

These findings are consistent with previous studies, indicating that teachers engage in on-action reflection in varied ways, depending on their individual preferences, the availability of time, and the level of support they receive (Bannigan & Moores, 2009; Fuertes-Camacho et al., 2021; Hilden & Tikkamäki, 2013; Schön, 1983). Schön’s model of reflective practice (1983) helps to explain these findings. According to Schön, on-action reflection involves looking back on teaching practices, considering why certain actions were taken, how effective they were, and how things could be improved. The excerpts from the teachers illustrate this process, as they reflect on their teaching experiences after the event. However, the informal nature of reflection, as described by Mr. Le, underscores the need to consider the broader context of teaching. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979) suggests that the microsystem (in this case, the school or classroom environment) might not always provide the time or space for formal reflection, leading teachers to engage in on-action reflection in their own time and space.

Reflection Driven by Student Learning. All participants (n=15) reported that their on-action reflection was primarily driven by student learning. They reflected on their teaching practices with the aim of enhancing student engagement and understanding. Mr. Dang expressed: “When I reflect, my main question is: ‘Did my students understand the lesson?’ If not, I consider how I can adapt my teaching to facilitate better understanding.” Ms. Pham echoed this sentiment: “My reflections revolve around my students – how engaged they were, how they responded to different activities. Their learning is my ultimate goal.”

These findings resonate with the literature, highlighting that effective reflection involves focusing not just on teaching actions, but also on the impact of these actions on student learning (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). Under Schön’s model of reflective practice (1983), reflection serves as a tool for improvement, which in the context of teaching, often translates to improving student learning. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979) adds another layer of understanding by emphasizing the interaction between teachers and students (microsystem), suggesting that students’ responses and learning outcomes are integral to teachers’ reflective processes.

On-Action Reflection as a Collaborative Process. A majority of the participants (n=12 out of 15) mentioned that they often engage in reflection as a collaborative process, discussing their teaching practices and student responses with their peers. They described this as a valuable avenue for gaining alternative perspectives and enhancing their teaching strategies. Ms. Vu stated: “I often discuss my classes with other teachers. Their insights help me view my teaching from different angles and give me new ideas for my future classes.” Similarly, Mr. Truong shared: “The collective reflection sessions we have in our school are very useful. I can learn from the experiences of my peers and apply their strategies in my own teaching.”

This theme aligns with existing literature which posits that reflective teaching can be an interpersonal and collaborative process, where teachers learn not only from their own experiences but also from the experiences of their peers (Larrivee, 2000). From the perspective of Schön’s model of reflective practice (1983), this collaborative reflection can be seen as a way of expanding the repertoire of a teacher’s knowledge-in-action. By discussing and reflecting on their experiences with peers, teachers can identify a wider range of possible actions and approaches for their future teaching. Meanwhile, by the light of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979), these peer interactions and discussions can be viewed as part of the mesosystem, the interrelations between different groups or settings that influence a person’s development. In this case, the interaction with peers provides an external influence that shapes teachers’ reflective processes and practices.

Reflective Teaching Facilitated by Professional Development Programs. Nearly half of the participants (n=7 out of 15) reported that their participation in professional development programs significantly contributed to their

reflective practices. They indicated that these programs offered them structured opportunities to reflect on their teaching, introduced them to reflective tools and techniques, and encouraged them to incorporate reflective practices into their regular teaching routines. Mr. Phan said: *“The professional development program I attended introduced me to the concept of reflective teaching. It offered me practical tools for reflection, which I now use regularly.”*

This finding supports previous research indicating that professional development programs can play a crucial role in promoting reflective teaching among teachers (Avalos, 2011). Concerning Schön’s reflective practice model (1983), professional development programs can enhance teachers’ reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action by providing theoretical knowledge and practical tools. Meanwhile, according to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979), these programs can be seen as part of the exosystem, external environments that indirectly affect the individual. In this case, professional development programs provide an external resource that enhances teachers’ capacity for reflective teaching.

In juxtaposing the current findings with the broader literature, it is evident that while many congruences exist, there are some noteworthy divergences. For instance, literature has increasingly highlighted the importance of technological tools, like digital portfolios and online communities of practice, in facilitating reflection (Cirocki & Widodo, 2019; Montgomery, 2003; Mumford & Dikilitaş, 2020). Such technological avenues did not emerge prominently in the current study, suggesting a potential area-specific or demographic difference in preferences or access to these tools. Additionally, certain external challenges to reflection, such as administrative pressures or curriculum demands, commonly cited in the literature (Peralta et al., 2021), did not seem to be a central concern for the participants in this study. These differences could be due to the unique contextual factors of the current study’s setting or the specific cohort of teachers interviewed, underscoring the importance of acknowledging the multifaceted and contextual nature of reflective practices in the teaching profession.

4.2. How do on-action reflective teaching practices impact the quality of teaching and learning in Vietnam?

Enhancing Teaching Effectiveness. All participants (n=15) perceived that on-action reflective teaching had positive implications for their teaching effectiveness. They explained that reflection helped them identify areas for improvement, refine their teaching strategies, and respond more effectively to students’ needs. Ms. Do reflected: *“By reflecting on my teaching, I have been able to identify my weaknesses and address them. It has helped me become a better teacher.”* Mr. Dang additionally shared: *“Reflection allows me to evaluate my teaching methods and adjust them according to my students’ needs. It has made my teaching more effective.”*

These perceptions align with previous research which suggests that reflective teaching can enhance teachers’ ability to adapt their teaching to students’ needs, thereby improving teaching effectiveness (Christensen et al., 2022). Under Schön’s model of reflective practice (1983), on-action reflection allows teachers to challenge their assumptions, revise their knowledge-in-action, and devise more effective teaching strategies. From the perspective of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979), enhancing teaching effectiveness can be seen as an interplay between microsystem and mesosystem influences, where reflection on direct interactions with students (microsystem) leads to improvements in the broader educational context (mesosystem).

Facilitating Professional Growth. A majority of participants (n=14 out of 15) stated that on-action reflective teaching was instrumental to their professional growth. They expressed that it promoted continuous learning, fostered critical thinking, and increased their confidence as educators. Mr. Truong stated: *“Reflective teaching has made me a lifelong learner. I constantly learn from my experiences, which fosters my professional growth.”* Ms. Ly said: *“Reflection has helped me think critically about my practices. It has also boosted my confidence because I feel more in control of my teaching.”*

These findings are in line with existing research emphasizing the role of reflective teaching in fostering teachers’ professional development and self-efficacy (Larrivee, 2000). Schön’s model of reflective practice (1983) sees professional growth as a result of the ongoing cycle of action, reflection, learning, and adaptation. In terms of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979), professional growth can be understood as an ongoing process of development shaped by interactions within and between multiple environmental systems.

Improving Student Learning. Most of the participants (n=12 out of 15) believed that their on-action reflective teaching practices positively affected student learning. They reported that reflection allowed them to cater to diverse learning needs, create a more engaging learning environment, and thereby improve student outcomes. Mr. Nguyen noted: *“Reflective teaching has helped me better cater to my students’ different learning styles, which I believe has*

improved their learning.” Ms. Pham shared: “*Through reflection, I have been able to create a more engaging and effective learning environment. I see better engagement and understanding from my students.*”

These implications align with previous studies indicating the potential of reflective teaching to enhance student learning by promoting responsive and learner-centered teaching (Korthagen et al., 2001). In the context of Schön’s reflective practice model (1983), the improved student learning is an outcome of teachers refining their knowledge-in-action based on reflection, leading to more effective and responsive teaching. From the perspective of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979), the impact on student learning signifies changes in the microsystem, as a result of interactions between the teacher’s reflective practices and their teaching environment.

Fostering a Culture of Continuous Improvement. A significant number of participants (n = 11 out of 15) indicated that engaging in on-action reflective teaching contributes to fostering a culture of continuous improvement in schools. They believed that when reflection becomes a routine part of teaching, it encourages a mindset of ongoing development and openness to change. Mr. Phan said: “When teachers engage in reflection, they start to see teaching as a work in progress, always open for improvement. This mindset gradually permeates the school culture.” Ms. Vu shared: “*In my school, reflective teaching has opened up more dialogues about teaching practices. We learn from each other and strive to do better.*”

These comments echo existing research which underscores the role of reflective practices in fostering a professional learning community and a culture of continuous improvement (Alzayed & Alabdulkareem, 2021; Fekede, 2017). Using Schön’s model of reflective practice (1983), this process can be seen as a shift towards a learning organization, where individuals’ on-action reflections and learning cumulatively lead to collective learning and improvement. According to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979), the formation of a culture of continuous improvement signifies changes in the exosystem, influenced by individuals’ interactions in the microsystem and mesosystem.

Promoting Ethical Teaching Practices. Almost half of the participants (n=7 out of 15) believed that on-action reflective teaching also had implications for promoting ethical teaching practices. They suggested that reflection allows them to consider the ethical dimensions of their actions and make decisions that uphold the best interests of students. Mr. Lam noted: “*Reflective teaching has made me more conscious about the ethical aspects of my teaching. I consider the fairness and inclusivity of my methods more seriously now.*” Ms. Bui stated: “*Through reflection, I think about the impact of my actions on my students’ well-being. It guides me to teach in a way that respects and nurtures them.*”

These findings resonate with prior research emphasizing the potential of reflective teaching to sensitize teachers to the ethical aspects of their practice (Husu et al., 2008). In the scope of Schön’s reflective practice model (1983), reflection allows teachers to question their assumptions, understand their values, and align their actions with ethical considerations. According to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979), the promotion of ethical practices can be seen as an outcome of interactions at the microsystem level (e.g., reflection on the teacher-student relationship), influencing wider systemic practices in the meso- and exosystems.

Referring the current findings to the broader literature, several commonalities emerge, showing a convergence of perspectives. However, certain nuances are worth noting. For instance, while the participants emphasized the role of on-action reflective teaching in promoting ethical teaching practices, broader literature often expands this conversation to include broader moral dilemmas and institutional ethics in teaching (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2011). This suggests that the participants may be focusing more on classroom-level ethics, possibly overlooking larger institutional ethical considerations. This differentiation is important to understand the scope and depth of reflective practices across different teaching communities. Similarly, while the promotion of a culture of continuous improvement was highlighted by the participants, existing research also underlines the role of school leadership, policies, and institutional support in cultivating this culture (Hora & Smolarek, 2018; Sun & Gao, 2019; Thao et al., 2023). This dimension was not prominently evident in our study, pointing to potential gaps in how reflective teaching translates to broader school cultural changes in the context we explored. Overall, these differences indicate the complex, multifaceted nature of reflective teaching and its implications, suggesting that while many themes are universally relevant, the depth, focus, and scope of reflection can vary based on individual, institutional, and contextual factors.

5. CONCLUSION

This study is contextualized in Vietnam, a nation currently undergoing educational reforms with a heightened emphasis on ameliorating teaching and learning quality. The study was focused on on-action reflective teaching, an essential facet of professional teaching practices, yet underexplored in the Vietnamese milieu. The goal of the study was to comprehend how Vietnamese teachers employ on-action reflective teaching and the implications of these practices for the quality of teaching and learning in the country.

The findings unveil that on-action reflective teaching is a complicated and multifaceted process for Vietnamese teachers. They partake in reflection both individually and cooperatively, utilizing various information sources such as their observations, colleagues' feedback, and students' outcomes. Additionally, the findings suggest that on-action reflective teaching has extensive implications for the quality of teaching and learning. It can amplify teaching efficacy, promote professional development, enhance student learning, cultivate a culture of continuous refinement, and advocate ethical teaching practices. These findings confirm the merit of reflective teaching and highlight the significance of incorporating reflective practices into teacher professional development initiatives. In summary, this study accentuates the pivotal role of on-action reflective teaching in improving education quality. It implies that nurturing reflective practices among teachers is a beneficial venture for educational reform in Vietnam and elsewhere.

The current study elucidates a nuanced perspective from the Vietnamese context. While reflective teaching has been researched and lauded in various educational contexts as a powerful tool for teacher professional development, its application, intricacies, and implications in Vietnam remained relatively uncharted. The current research bridges this gap by providing rich insights into how Vietnamese teachers understand, practice, and benefit from on-action reflective teaching. By uncovering these specific practices and beliefs within a Vietnamese setting, this paper not only affirms the universal benefits of reflective teaching but also offers a fresh lens, revealing culturally-specific nuances, challenges, and opportunities that can inform more contextually relevant teacher education and development strategies. Furthermore, while the global literature on reflective teaching often emphasizes the individual benefits to teachers and students, the current study extends this understanding by elucidating the systemic advantages, particularly in fostering a culture of continuous improvement and ethical teaching practices within schools. In essence, this study amplifies the discourse by articulating how, in the midst of nationwide educational reforms, reflective practices can be the linchpin that transforms teaching cultures, not just classroom practices. This understanding, grounded in the Vietnamese context, enriches the global body of knowledge, suggesting that the broader systemic benefits of reflective teaching might be more profound than previously recognized in other contexts.

The findings of this study carry several implications for practice, policy, and future research in the context of teaching and learning, applicable in Vietnam and other regions. For educators, the results emphasize the significance of on-action reflective teaching in boosting teaching efficacy and student learning. Teachers should be motivated to actively participate in reflective practices, both individually and cooperatively, to fine-tune their teaching strategies, cater to diverse student needs, and foster continuous professional advancement. For educational institutions, schools should cultivate a reflective environment where teachers feel secure and supported to discuss their teaching practices, exchange experiences, and learn mutually. This can be expedited by allocating dedicated time for reflection, promoting collaborative learning communities, and offering mentorship programs. For policy makers, the findings propose that reflective teaching should be assimilated into teacher education and professional development schemes. Policy initiatives should strive to establish frameworks that encourage reflective practices, offer institutional support, and appreciate teachers' professional growth. Moreover, considering the socio-cultural influences on reflective teaching, policies should encourage a positive societal attitude towards teaching as a reflective profession.

While this study offers invaluable insights into on-action reflective teaching practices and their implications in Vietnam, it is crucial to recognize its constraints. First, the sample size was relatively limited and restricted to urban areas, potentially affecting the findings' broad applicability. Second, the study solely depended on semi-structured interviews for data gathering, which might not entirely encapsulate the intricacy of reflective practices within real-time classroom environments. Third, the study design did not incorporate a longitudinal aspect, which could have given more profound insights into the evolution and effect of reflective teaching over a period.

Given these limitations, the study suggests several recommendations for future research. Upcoming studies should aim to include larger and more varied samples, covering teachers from a range of areas, age groups, teaching

experiences, and education levels. Besides interviews, the use of different data collection methods, like classroom observations, reflective journals, and document analysis, could present a more rounded view of reflective teaching practices. Longitudinal studies could prove beneficial in comprehending the long-term implications of reflective teaching on teacher advancement and student learning outcomes. Lastly, future investigations might consider implementing mixed-methods approaches to probe the phenomena from both qualitative and quantitative angles, which could help gain a more nuanced understanding of on-action reflective teaching.

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