

EXPLORING THE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE OF TESOL NOVICE AND STUDENT TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The nature of teaching requires teachers in general and TESOL teachers in particular to continuously learn to develop professionally. This is especially true for early-career teachers, who encounter various difficulties in their beginning years of teaching. In this context, reflective practice has been argued as a useful form of professional development that helps teachers to overcome their initial challenges (Farrell, 2016). This study investigated the reflective practice of a group of five TESOL novice and student teachers in an EFL context to explore whether this process helped them to improve on their problems in teaching and to uncover the difficulties they encountered while conducting such a process. Data were collected from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews (before and after classroom observations), and written reflections. Findings revealed that engaging in reflective process resulted in a greater awareness of one's own practice and problems, encouraged these teachers to seek ways to improve their teaching and provided emotional support for early-career teachers. However, time constraints and the perceived inconvenience of writing journals emerged as barriers to novice and student teachers' commitment to reflective practice. The findings of this study suggest practical implications for teachers, teacher educators and researchers in practicing, facilitating and researching reflective practice. As a country-specific case study, this research contributes to the wider TESOL literature on reflective practice and lays the foundations for other research on teacher professional development especially in the context of Vietnam.

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