How Does Teaching Reflection Shape Teacher Confidence? A Theoretical and Empirical Review on Enhancing College English Teachers' Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

This review examines the relationship between teaching reflection and self-efficacy in enhancing the professional development of college English teachers.Self-efficacy, which refers to how well teachers believe they are capable of executing the tasks required to manage the classroom, plan and execute lessons and solve problems, influences their teaching and management strategies. One of the most crucial factors that increases this self-efficacy is that of teaching reflection. Understanding the impact of self-efficacy on teachers' professional development This paper synthesizes literature concerning the concept of self-efficacy, its measurement, and to what extent practical, cognitive, emotional, and critical types of reflection contribute to this development. Examine the factors affecting reflection effectiveness, including reflection methods, frequency, and institutional support. Overall the medium of reflection has its advantages but many opinions indicate a desensitization of reflection due to a lack of time or appropriate support. It also offers recommendations for future studies, such as longitudinal research and cross-cultural analyses, to explore ways in which reflection practices can be maximized to strengthen teacher self-efficacy. Such impact is framed because this systematic writing has provided a holistic structural basis for answering the question of how to strategically implement teaching reflection in the way of enhancing confidence in teachers and positive outputs in learning.

Keywords: Teaching Reflection, Self-Efficacy, Professional Development, College English Teachers, Teacher Confidence

Introduction

Under the current employment situation, higher education has put higher requirements on teachers' teaching quality and academic level. At the same time, students' demand for practical English skills continues to grow, which prompts college English teachers to improve their professional capabilities to meet challenges. As an effective way to enhance professional

abilities, teaching reflection helps teachers deeply analyze the advantages and disadvantages in teaching practice, optimize teaching methods, and thus better meet educational competition and diverse needs. Through critical thinking and analysis, teachers can discover teaching problems, summarize compelling experiences and improve teaching strategies, thereby significantly improving teaching effectiveness (Xu, 2009).

However, college English teachers face multiple pressures, such as a lack of a real language environment, low enthusiasm for students to learn English, insufficient scientific research ability and resource support. These factors result in lower teacher self-efficacy, negatively impacting teaching competency, behavior, and appropriate response to teaching challenges. Previous studies have revealed that high self-efficacy teachers are more likely to adopt flexible and effective teaching strategies to make students' learning more effective and promote students' applications. The higher-level professional development is positively correlated (Rahimi & Zhang, 2020), and their teaching behavior and career satisfaction significantly improved. Teaching reflection and self-efficacy mutually promote each other. Teacher reflection promotes teachers' feelings of control in the teaching process, and at the same time, higher self-efficacy encourages teachers to conduct deeper levels of teaching reflection (Bandura, 1997). Thus, this theoretical framework not only helps to improve teachers teachers

This study plays an important role both theoretically and practically by connecting reflective teaching practices with teacher self-efficacy—especially for college English teachers working in increasingly challenging environments. On the theoretical side, it builds on Bandura's concept of self-efficacy and expands it by weaving in different types of reflection—practical, cognitive, emotional, and critical. This approach helps us better understand how reflection supports teachers' professional growth. From a practical perspective, the study speaks directly to the real-world struggles many English teachers are facing in non-native contexts, such as limited exposure to authentic language use, lack of institutional support and low student motivation. It highlights how thoughtful, structured reflection can help teachers feel more confident, adapt their teaching more effectively and manage emotional demands with greater resilience. More importantly, the study offers meaningful takeaways that can be directly applied in teacher training and development programs. These include building reflective habits that improve classroom decision-making, enhancing teaching strategies in response to student needs, and fostering a more supportive, collaborative teaching culture. By bringing together research and real-world relevance, this work contributes valuable insights and offers practical guidance for schools aiming to empower educators and boost student learning outcomes.

The Concept and Measurement of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teachers' self-efficacy refers to teachers' confidence and judgment on whether they can complete teaching tasks (Bandura, 1997). This belief not only affects teachers' self-cognition but also directly affects their teaching behavior, motivation and effects. Teachers with high self-efficacy often face teaching challenges more actively and adopt innovative teaching strategies to improve students' learning outcomes (Rahimi & Weisi, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Self-efficacy is also essential in teachers' responses to complex teaching situations and in ensuring teaching quality. It is mainly based on practical experience and self-reflection, and teachers improve their sense of self-efficacy by

accumulating successful experience and inadequate improvement (Bandura, 1997; Huang, 2022). To measure self-efficacy, scholars have designed a variety of tools, such as the Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES) proposed by Gibson & Dembo (1984) and the Teacher Self-efficacy Scale developed by Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) (TSES), these tools help study and evaluate different dimensions of teacher effectiveness.

The Concept and Dimension of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teachers' sense of self-efficacy refers to teachers' confidence and judgment on whether they can complete teaching tasks (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is a judgment of whether an individual can effectively organize and execute actions in a specific situation to achieve the expected results. This belief is not only a kind of psychological cognition but also an essential source of motivation for teachers to regulate their behavior and attitudes in the teaching process continuously. Self-efficacy directly affects teachers' teaching behavior, teaching motivation and teaching effectiveness. For instance, the more teachers believe in themselves, the more they seek to meet challenging teaching demands and new learning practices (Rahimi & Weisi, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Moreover, teachers' self-efficacy influences the coping ability of teachers in complex teaching states, and it is also a predictor of teachers' teaching quality.

Teacher Self-efficacy is a key concept crucial in the research on teacher professional development. Its essence is the trust of teachers in their teaching capacity, which is predominantly driven by practice and reflection. The teachers' self-efficacy can be significantly promoted (Bandura, 1997; Huang, 2022) via the continuous accumulation of practical experiences and insufficient improvement. Thus, teachers' self-efficacy is a teacher's assessment of their teaching competence and an internal driving force for their continuous improvement of professional ability in teaching practice. In short, teachers' self-efficacy can be considered an overall evaluation of confidence and ability to effectively reproduce teaching behaviors, solve problems, and achieve expected goals based on their experience and judgment of teaching situations.

Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES)

Measurement tools for teacher effectiveness have evolved from rudimentary models to sophisticated designs, resulting in a broad array of commonly used instruments. The Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES), developed by Gibson & Dembo (1984), in which personal teaching effectiveness and general teaching effectiveness were extracted, also lays the foundation of research; The Ohio State University Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES) developed by Hoy (2000) It is changed to three dimensions of teaching strategy, student participation and classroom management to be suitable for diagnosis of the career development stage. Bandura's (1997) Teacher Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (TSEQ) expands to classroom management, academic support and motivational motivation, suitable for complex situational assessment; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy's (2001) Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES) integrates OSTES design, provides long and short versions to meet different needs; the teacher effectiveness short scale launched by Klassen et al. (2009) is suitable for large-scale rapid assessment in a simplified form. These tools have their characteristics and provide diversified support for the research on teacher effectiveness.

The Connotation of Teaching Reflection and Factors Affecting Teachers' Reflection

Teaching reflection is one of the leading professional development routes available for teachers. By critically reflecting on their teaching, they can help find deficiencies and improve their teaching methods to enhance teaching quality (Xu, 2009). It incorporates practical, cognitive, emotional, and critical reflection, focusing on teaching adjustments to different aspects (Rahimi & Weisi, 2018). However, the effect of reflection is affected by a variety of factors. First of all, the effectiveness of reflection methods is significant. Teachers need to master appropriate tools and techniques, but some universities lack systematic training, which makes reflection unable to go deeper (Tavakoli, 2021). In addition, the depth and frequency of reflection can also affect the effect; deep reflection can help identify problems, and high-frequency reflection can help quickly adapt to changes (Borg, 2011). However, teachers face heavy tasks and time pressures, which may cause reflection to remain on the surface, and some teachers also avoid deep reflection because of concerns about insufficient exposure (McDonough, 2014). Therefore, colleges and universities must provide adequate support and tools to help teachers overcome these obstacles and improve reflection results.

The Connotation of Teaching Reflection

Teaching reflection is an essential way for teachers to develop professionally. Its core lies in teachers actively and continuously critically thinking, analyzing their teaching practices, and improving teaching quality by adjusting teaching behaviors (Xu, 2009). This process helps teachers discover shortcomings in teaching practice and promotes teaching innovation while deepening the understanding and application of educational theory (Dewey, 1933; Bartlett, 1990). Specifically, teaching reflection is essential for improving teaching literacy through self-observation, evaluation, and adjustment (Bartlett, 1990). Bartlett defines it as a teacher development approach, emphasizing optimizing educational practices through reviewing, evaluating, and improving teaching experiences. The connotation of teaching reflection covers multiple dimensions. Rahimi and Weisi (2018) divide it into practical reflection, cognitive reflection, affective reflection and critical reflection.). These dimensions correspond to teachers' thoughts and adjustments to teaching operations, theoretical understanding, student emotions, and education's social and cultural background.

Factors Affecting Reflection Effect

Teaching reflection significantly impacts the self-efficacy improvement of English teachers in colleges and universities, and its effect is affected by multiple factors. Of these, the effectiveness of reflection methods is a critical point among all research, for which teachers need to master structured reflection methods and technical tools to ensure high-quality reflection. Without systematic reflective training and guidance in some universities, teachers are not provided with the necessary support in reflection (Tavakoli, 2021). For instance, the absence of recording and feedback tools may result in reflection being mere formal reflection and not deeper reflection, making it difficult to refine teaching behavior. Also important is how much and how often they reflect. Those deep reflections help teachers to get into the essence of teaching questions. That high reflection frequency can make teachers better adapt to changing teaching environments and keep teaching strategies dynamic and optimized.

On the other hand, both time constraints and psychological dysfunction are barriers to reflective practice. College English teachers often bear a heavy teaching task, and the limited

time for reflection causes reflection activities to stay at the shallow summary stage, making it hard to carry out systematic optimization (Borg, 2011). Moreover, teachers avoid reflection because they are afraid, or it does not lead to the meaning of reflection, which only restricts the depth of reflection and forms a vicious circle. The educational environment and culture are also crucial for reflective practice, and a lack of trust and collaboration can make teachers feel isolated, making participation less appealing (McDonough, 2014). Reflection becomes even more complex in EFL teaching environments where cultural and institutional factors influence teachers. Solutions address adequate reflection tool provision, teacher support, and educational culture, in addition to optimizing reflection schedules to ensure results reflect the overall quality and effectiveness of reflection.

The Impact of Teaching Reflection on the Self-Efficacy of English Teachers in Colleges and Universities and Its Promotion Mechanism

Teaching reflection, as a self-oriented in-depth practice, significantly improves the sense of self-efficacy of college English teachers. This improvement is reflected in many aspects, including strengthening self-cognition, optimizing teaching strategies, improving problem-solving capabilities, promoting professional knowledge construction, and enhancing the sense of effectiveness of classroom management. However, to maximize the incentive effect of reflection, colleges and universities need to provide comprehensive support for teachers to reflect through various methods such as supporting cultural construction, tool provision, reflection training and collaboration mechanisms.

Strengthening Self-Cognition: Discovering Potential from Teaching Details

Teaching reflection helps teachers analyze their teaching behaviors, reveal their advantages and disadvantages, and thus enhance self-confidence and classroom control. Kuranchie (2019) pointed out that teachers can refine the unique value of their teaching roles through classroom records or student feedback. For example, through classroom video playback, teachers can find that the questioning session has not fully stimulated students to think deeply and clarify the direction of improvement. To promote this process, colleges and universities should establish a cultural atmosphere that supports reflection through policy support, time guarantee, and regular reflection-sharing sessions, encouraging teachers to integrate reflection into daily teaching practices and inspiring more teachers to tap their potential deeply.

Promoting the Optimization of Teaching Strategies: Establishing Personalized Teaching Methods

In this way, teaching reflection can encourage teachers to adjust teaching strategies flexibly, respond better to student needs in the classroom, and continuously improve teaching suitability and innovation ability . Research by Rahimi and Zhang (2020) supports the argument that teachers' reflective of students' engagement outcomes in the classroom can enhance traditional teaching. For instance, the teachers have found that conventional teaching forms are insufficient to engage students in the intercultural communication course, so they have adopted role-playing and group discussion to enhance the classroom effect. To help teachers organize the reflective diaries, case analysis templates, and online reflection platforms to systematically record and organize their teaching behaviors and support the scientific and efficient implementation of targeted adjustment of the teaching strategy.

Improving Problem-Solving Ability: Growing from Challenges

Teaching reflection gives teachers the ability and confidence to deal with teaching challenges. The six-stage reflection model proposed by Brookfield (2017) emphasizes the systematic path from describing problems to developing an action plan. For example, in reflection, teachers found a gap between the textbook's content and the student's level; they solved the problem of insufficient student interest by adjusting the teaching rhythm or introducing diversified learning resources. This innovative solution effectively enhances teachers' teaching confidence. To help teachers deal with teaching problems more efficiently, colleges and universities should improve teachers' theoretical and practical abilities through reflection training, including skill training in situational simulation, case analysis and action plan formulation.

Promoting the Construction of Professional Knowledge: Extracting Knowledge Systems from Experience

Teaching reflection helps teachers systematically build professional knowledge by summarizing teaching experience. Carrington and Selva (2010) pointed out that teachers can summarize effective teaching strategies through continuous reflection and gradually form a teaching resource library adapted to different student groups. For example, through years of reflection and practice, teachers can accumulate more contextual materials for specific topics, improving the pertinence and adaptability of teaching. To further support this mechanism, colleges and universities can organize reflection report exchange meetings and case display activities, encourage teachers to share their experiences, and incorporate reflection results into the teaching evaluation system to form a virtuous cycle of teaching improvement and career development.

Enhancing the Effectiveness of Classroom Management: Realizing Student-Centered Teaching

Classroom management effectiveness is one of the essential dimensions of self-efficacy. Teaching reflection effectively improves teachers'] classroom control by adjusting classroom strategies. Borg (2015) pointed out that teachers discovered and adjusted the content of tasks to improve student engagement and classroom interaction by reflecting on classroom videos. For example, teachers introduce more interactive activities in reflection, thereby enhancing the dynamic management capabilities of the classroom. Colleges and universities can provide teachers with a collaboration and sharing platform by establishing a reflection community, promoting experience exchange between peers, and forming a collaboration mechanism between novice teachers and senior teachers to improve classroom management.

Through the comprehensive application of the above mechanisms, teaching reflection has comprehensively promoted the improvement of the self-efficacy of English teachers in colleges and universities. To maximize the effectiveness of this process, colleges and universities should adopt multi-dimensional support strategies, including establishing a reflection culture, providing diversified tools, carrying out high-quality training, building a reflection community, and improving the evaluation system. These comprehensive measures can improve the professional capabilities of individual teachers and provide a practical basis for the continuous optimization of the education system.

Research Review and Outlook

Since people gradually realized the motivational mechanism of reflection on self-efficacy, many studies have been conducted around this topic, expanding the in-depth understanding of this field from multiple dimensions. However, by reviewing the existing literature, it is evident that current research still needs to be further refined in certain aspects, such as optimizing research design and diversifying methodologies. In future research, improving research design, expanding the sample coverage, deepening the content exploration, and introducing diversified analytical methods will help provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between reflection and self-efficacy, offering more substantial theoretical support for practical applications.

Limitations in Sample Size

Currently, in the field of college English teachers' teaching reflection and self-efficacy research, most studies have a small sample size, and the teachers involved are teachers from a single region or region (a small teaching and research group). For instance, other studies may only study English teachers from one university or a few language institutions from a particular region. However, this sample selection strategy presents some time-saving benefits in data gathering and dramatically impairs the generalizability of research findings (Akbari, Behzadpour, & Dadvand, 2022; Baluchzada, 2023). The small sample size makes it challenging to reflect the diversity of teachers across the entire educational system, especially concerning the cultural and socioeconomic background, teaching experience, and educational resource distribution (Gustavsson, Andersén, & Berglund, 2019). Additionally, the small sample size may lead to statistical limitations, increasing the uncertainty of the conclusions (Borg & Edmett, 2019). More importantly, this limitation hinders the application of research results in various educational contexts, making it difficult to provide comprehensive theoretical support for educational policy formulation (Rahimi & Weisi, 2018; Widiastari & Fithriani, 2024).

Limitations in Research Methodology

These studies are primarily cross-sectional and based on one-time data analysis to indicate that teaching reflection will correlate with self-efficacy. Even though this design can yield results in a relatively short period and its implementation is highly efficient, it lacks adequate insight into the dynamic relationship between the ins in the long run (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). In other words, for example, how teaching reflection impacts self-efficacy among various cohorts of teachers (e.g., novice teachers, mature teachers, senior teachers) cannot be addressed with cross-sectional studies (Rahimi & Weisi, 2018). Moreover, this kind of design is also insufficient to understand the cumulative effect of teaching reflection and whether high involvement of practice over time might contribute to teachers'] effective practice, such as improvement of classroom management and students'éngagement (Borg, 2011). So, further longitudinal studies need to be carried out in the future to fill this gap, making the more general long-term effects of teaching reflections visible (Gustavsson, Andersén, & Berglund, 2019).

Limitations in Research Content

Existing studies mostly remain at the conceptual framework level of teaching reflection and self-efficacy, lacking in-depth exploration of specific mechanisms (Gustavsson, Andersén, & Berglund, 2019). For example, although research has pointed out that teaching reflection

can enhance teachers' self-efficacy, how different types of teaching reflection affect various dimensions of self-efficacy (e.g., classroom management efficacy, teaching strategy efficacy, student engagement efficacy) have not been thoroughly analyzed (Tavakoli, 2021). Moreover, there is a lack of contextualized studies on reflection practices. For instance, studies on how reflection is applied and its effects in different teaching scenarios (such as extensive class teaching, group discussions, or online teaching) still lack sufficient evidence (Borg, 2011; Shirazizadeh & Moradkhani, 2018). These content limitations affect understanding of the actual mechanisms of teaching reflection and restrict the practical implications of research findings (McDonough, 2014).

Lack of Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Most studies are constrained by one culture or region in a way that does not consider culture in its moderation of the relationship between teaching reflection and self-efficacy (Borg & Edmett, 2019). As an illustration, teachers from certain cultures might hold more external attributions regarding teaching issues (e.g., students' ability, institutional constraints). In contrast, teachers from other cultures might engage in introspective reflections (Gustavsson, Andersén, & Berglund, 2019). Moreover, the cultural background might also shape the teachers'] acceptance of reflective practices. Different cultures may promote different tendencies, such as facilitating critical reflection in one but a stronger emphasis on conforming to existing teaching practices in another (Tavakoli, 2021). Limited cross-cultural comparisons complicate generalizing research conclusions to educational settings outside the national context. They would benefit from a complete understanding of global educational practices (McDonough, 2014).

Directions for Future Research

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to explore the interactive relationship between teaching reflection and self-efficacy at different stages of a teacher's] career. Research can reveal how reflection enhances teachers' professional abilities by tracking teachers' reflective habits and long-term accumulation. In addition, expanding the sample size, primarily through cross-regional and cross-cultural collaborative studies, will help increase the representativeness and universality of research conclusions. In terms of research methods, future studies should combine quantitative and qualitative research to explore the impact of different teaching reflection models on teacher efficacy. Furthermore, an in-depth exploration of the mechanisms of teaching reflection, particularly in terms of emotional, cognitive, and critical reflection and their influence on teacher efficacy, will provide more theoretical support for teacher development. Finally, cross-cultural comparative research will help understand how teaching reflection affects self-efficacy in different cultural contexts, providing valuable educational policy and practice guidance.

Conducting Longitudinal Research

Future research should design a systematic longitudinal research framework to explore the interactive relationship between teaching reflection and self-efficacy at different stages of a teacher's career, revealing how long-term accumulation of reflective habits shapes teachers' professional abilities. For example, research could examine how novice teachers gradually enhance their classroom management efficacy through reflection or how senior teachers maintain their professional vitality and innovative capacity through reflection. This

type of research will fill the gaps left by cross-sectional studies and provide scientific evidence for dynamic support strategies for teachers' career development.

Expanding Sample Size

Future research should involve sampling in more diverse educational environments, such as differences in types of schools (e.g., public vs. private), regions (e.g., urban vs. rural), and countries (e.g., Eastern vs. Western). Future studies, for example, collaborative studies of teaching reflection and self-efficacy across regions, could broaden the sample scale and explore the differences between teaching reflection and self-efficacy across areas. It will enhance the representativeness and universality of research conclusions and provide data to support the formulation of more adaptable educational policies.

Adopting Diverse Research Methods

Another future research direction should be to apply quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods comprehensively. Generally, macro trends can be revealed by large-scale surveys and micro details of the practices of reflection captured through in-depth interviews. Another possibility is to triangulate the records for classroom observations with other data sets to gauge the impact of processing reflection in terms of immediate change to actual teaching behavior engagement in classrooms. Intervention studies, such as experimental research designs to explore the impact of various reflection training models on teacher efficacy, can also be introduced.

Exploring the Mechanisms of Teaching Reflection

The specific mechanisms of teaching reflection are worth further exploration. For example, research can explore how emotional reflection allows teachers to cope with burnout, how cognitive reflection increases the effectiveness of their teaching strategies, and how critical reflection enhances teacher innovation. So, these studies cannot only advance the knowledge towards developing a theory of teaching reflection but also give empirical backing while designing teacher education programs.

Conducting Cross-Cultural Comparative Research

Cross-cultural research can reveal the similarities and differences in teaching reflection practices in different cultural contexts and their impact on teacher efficacy. For example, comparing differences in the frequency, depth, and content of teaching reflection among teachers from other countries can help educational administrators design more culturally sensitive teacher training programs. This helps promote experience-sharing in globalized education and provides scientific support for international educational cooperation.

In conclusion, future research can provide a more comprehensive perspective and approach for studying the relationship between teaching reflection and self-efficacy, both in terms of theoretical deepening and practical guidance.

Conclusion

Teaching reflection is an essential approach for improving the self-efficacy of college English teachers and facilitating professional growth. Its features involve enhanced self-awareness, more effective teaching and learning designs, increased problem-solving capacity, and stimulated knowledge construction. However, suppose reflection remains an

ideal and is not effectively practiced. In that case, it will bring more challenges to our work: teachers have time constraints, lack of guidance, lack of tools, psychological barriers, etc. As a result, a reflective culture, tool support and training, reflective communities, and the integration of teaching evaluation systems can work together to help teachers overcome obstacles propelling their reflection process effectively in colleges. These early findings highlight the importance of conducting future studies using larger sample sizes, varied approaches, and longitudinal studies to understand the mechanisms associated with reflection among EFL teachers and how reflection can be encouraged in nurturing contexts that meet their unique needs to improve their teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

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