

# The Reflective Practices Among English Teachers: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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**Abstract.** The study aimed to capture the lived experiences of the selected Cebu-based English teachers based on their reflective practices in the basic education program. This Husserlian descriptive phenomenological study utilized a semi-structured interview guide to draw out rich narratives from the eight informants. The researcher analyzed the collected data using the Colaizzi (1978) method. Five themes came to light: The Benefits of Reflective Practices, The Drawbacks of Reflective Practices, Handling the Drawbacks of Reflective Practices, Gaining Insights from Reflective Practices, and Supporting Other Teachers' Development. Based on the findings, the study revealed that the informants had benefited from reflective practices and faced drawbacks while implementing them. Based on the findings, the study suggests that teachers may continually use and improve reflective practices that work best for them, explore other reflective practices they have not tried yet, and pursue continuous professional development. DepEd and other institutions may provide various opportunities for professional development, such as practical seminars and workshops centered on reflective teaching. School leaders and administrators may also provide a protected schedule for structured professional learning conversations among teachers.

**Keywords:** Reflective practices; Lived experiences; Colaizzi; English teachers.

## 1.0 Introduction

More than ever, teachers require a more sustainable, convenient, and dependable professional tool. They need a tool or a strategy that allows them to keep track of themselves and to constantly revisit, reflect, and re-evaluate their teaching practices and overall teaching performance. This is to keep up with the ongoing changes in Education 4.0. The instructional methods and the educational landscape have recently undergone significant modifications. These changes have forced teachers to adopt new approaches, procedures, and teaching strategies in response to the rapidly evolving trends and technological developments to ensure the students' overall development (Pant, 2021). It might have other implications that the teachers need to confront right away. In other words, teachers must use a practice that advances their craft. This draws attention to the idea of reflective practice in education. The teachers' reflective practices affect and predict their success (Malmir & Mohammadi, 2017).

Houde (2022) mentioned that John Dewey, an American philosopher, founded the idea of reflective practice. Dewey introduced openness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness as the three attitudes that serve as the cornerstone of reflective practice (Nurfaidah, 2018). According to Nguyen et al. (2015), reflection engages oneself in attentive and critical interactions with thoughts and actions. Zuber (2020) said that reflection is a metacognitive process that involves looking back on prior learning experiences, giving them serious consideration, and applying learning. Reflection allows one to pause and consider what is essential, especially when confronted with a personal or professional challenge (Badaracco, 2020). As stated by Bailey and Rehman (2022), studies show that

reflection can distinguish exceptional professionals from average ones because it serves as the root from which other soft skills develop. Through reflective practice, individuals gain understanding, not from formal education but from their professional experiences (Mathew et al., 2017). Reflective practice allows teachers to reflect on their experiences through continuous professional learning (Schon, 1983, as cited by Houde, 2022).

Reflective practice in teams is a form of innovation leadership (Oeij et al., 2017). By participating in the reflective process, teachers foster a culture of teamwork as they analyze and modify their practice and that of their students and colleagues. This collective effort is to achieve a more holistic and sustainable student education. As stated by McCullough (2020), research has shown that teachers who do not actively reflect on their experiences and ask themselves questions are less likely to modify their practices and end up stagnating. She also further stated that incorporating reflective practice into one's teaching is one of the most significant ways to take control of a teacher's professional development. With the aid of reflective practice, teachers can refocus on their priorities in the classroom community (McCullough, 2020).

Indeed, reflective practice improves teaching performance. Hashim and Yusoff (2021) said in their study that reflective practice enabled teachers to assess the relationship between their teaching and the student's learning. Teachers claimed in their study that reflective activities help them become more progressive and help improve the quality of their instruction. According to Spalding (2020), schools with a reflective teaching culture have an advantage in changing the educational landscape because it empowers teachers to identify areas for improvement swiftly and jointly devise the most effective course of action. Nguyen (2021) in his study found that student-teachers acquired the abilities needed to be effective teachers through reflective practice, and they gained more confidence, learned to evaluate and adapt their lessons, developed critical thinking skills about their instruction, and developed the ability to select among several suggestions for lesson improvement.

Several studies on reflective practices among English teachers have been conducted already. However, there appears to be a lack of local qualitative studies on phenomenologically investigating the reflective practices of the teachers, most especially the English teachers in the province of Cebu. Hence, this study aims to phenomenologically explore the lived experiences of English teachers' reflective practices in Cebu to provide insights into sustainable, transformative, and quality education. The findings of this study would contribute to the academe as this provides valuable insights that promote sustainable, transformative, and quality education to help teachers develop professionally. Furthermore, this study would help the teachers, especially the private and public basic education English teachers in Cebu, to maximize the use of reflective practices, which is beneficial in constantly improving the current teaching methodologies. The informants may learn about the various reflective practices utilized, difficulties encountered, solutions to these difficulties, and suggestions and advice on improving the English teachers' existing reflective practices.

## **2.0 Methodology**

### **2.1 Research Design**

The study used a descriptive phenomenological inquiry method to describe the lived experiences of the individuals. This design also explains how people experience a particular phenomenon. Notably, this study used Husserlian descriptive phenomenology to capture the lived experiences of the English teachers' reflective practices. Husserlian descriptive phenomenology was developed by a German philosopher named Edmund Husserl. This approach seeks to understand human experiences by bracketing assumptions and focusing only on lived experiences. Bracketing is setting aside biases before understanding reality (Le Vasseur, 2003, as cited by Gregory, 2019). Hence, through a reflexive journal, the researcher bracketed any preconceived opinions or biases that might affect the data-gathering process and analysis.

### **2.2 Research Informants**

The study's informants were eight private and public Cebu-based English teachers of primary education. These informants were carefully chosen based on the following criteria: 1.) English teachers in Cebu; 2.) must have tenure in the teaching profession of at least three years; and 3.) must have experience implementing reflective practices. These informants were contacted individually via Facebook Messenger to confirm their eligibility. Since it is impossible to predict the likelihood of choosing any participant, the researcher used a nonprobability sampling

method. In particular, the researcher used referral sampling, which allowed the researcher to identify some leads who might be interested in and qualified to participate in the study.

Hennink and Kaiser (2021) proved that qualitative investigations can saturate even with relatively modest sample sizes. When there is a replication of existent patterns or themes from data collection, and no new information or insight appears from the additional informants, the study reaches data saturation (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021). This study reached data saturation when the informants brought up similar experiences relevant to reflective practices. On the seventh informant, in particular, the study reached data saturation. To further confirm the saturation, the researcher included one additional informant.

### **2.3 Research Instruments**

In this qualitative study, the researcher used multiple data sources collected by various means (Wa-Mbaleka, 2019). Regarding data collection, the researcher himself communicated and interviewed the informants. Regarding control, the researcher had a huge role in mitigating various factors, like biases, that could impact the results. As the main instrument, the researcher ensured that the study was ethical and that the informants' data was safe. The study used a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide that could effectively capture the lived experiences of the English teachers' reflective practices. Experts in the field of education and English teaching validated the interview guide. The validators are all published researchers, authors, and school leaders.

### **2.4 Data-gathering Procedure**

The researcher submitted a letter requesting an exemption addressed to the university's Research Ethics Committee. Once the request was approved, the researcher secured a copy. Then, the researcher made a list of the possible research informants and messaged them via FB Messenger to confirm their eligibility and willingness. After confirming their eligibility, the researcher asked them for their availability for a one-on-one virtual interview through Zoom.

Following this, the researcher conducted a virtual meeting via Zoom with the participant on a specific schedule. The researcher provided a brief background of the study. To ensure the quality and accuracy of the data, the researcher requested consent from the informants before recording the session. The researcher also reassured the informants that their data was safe and secure. Each interview session lasted 40-60 minutes, considering the informants' busy schedules. During the one-on-one interviews, the researcher also recorded some observations about the informants in a reflexive journal. Reflexive journals are part of the audit procedure for research projects, but they aim to enhance the validity of the research and reduce prejudice (Lincoln & Guba, 1982, as cited by Turner, 2020). These observations include the researchers' judgments, behaviors, and worldviews. The aim was to understand the researchers' biases and how they might affect the study's findings.

After the interviews, the researcher employed intelligent transcription on the audio-video recordings to exclude pauses, status, and filler words. In coding the messages, the researcher used the informants' words as the primary step to encapsulate sentences into single words or phrases. Then, the researcher organized the codes into categories and subcategories. Lastly, the researcher used thematic analysis coding to find recurring patterns and themes.

### **2.5 Data Analysis**

This study sought to capture the lived experiences of the English teachers' reflective practices using Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenology for data analysis. The researcher bracketed any personal assumptions and biases to present the data accurately. Using a reflexive journal, the researcher identified his crucial role in this study and his relationship with the informants. The researcher noted his feelings and thoughts about the participant during the interaction. The data analysis procedure employed Colaizzi's (1978) steps: familiarizing, identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, developing an exhaustive description, producing the fundamental structures, and seeking member verification.

## 2.6 Ethical Considerations

This study had no conflict of interest as the researcher's primary goals are educational development, professional growth, and academic contribution. The researcher assured the informants that all audio-video recordings and documents were safe and secure. The researcher asked for the consent of the informants to participate in this study. The informants are all adults who can give full consent. There were no known psychological, social, or legal dangers that could harm the informants in this study or the researcher who conducted the study. Any known risk only caused inconvenience in filling out the forms and participating in the virtual interviews.

## 3.0 Results and Discussion

The study revealed five themes and seventeen subthemes in Table 1 below.

| Table 1. Themes and Subthemes                           |                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Themes                                                  | Subthemes                                              |
| Theme 1: The Benefits of Reflective Practices           | Looking into the Reflective Practices that Work Best   |
|                                                         | Improving the Teaching Performance                     |
|                                                         | Classroom Management Skills                            |
|                                                         | Lesson Preparation Skills                              |
|                                                         | Teaching Strategies                                    |
| Theme 2: The Drawbacks of Reflective Practices          | Professional Skills                                    |
|                                                         | Looking into the Reflective Practices that Work Least  |
|                                                         | Journaling and Video-Recorded Teaching                 |
|                                                         | Classroom Observations                                 |
|                                                         | Teaching Portfolio                                     |
|                                                         | Teaching Inventories                                   |
|                                                         | Self-evaluation                                        |
|                                                         | Peer Observations                                      |
|                                                         | Student Evaluations                                    |
|                                                         | Facing the Drawbacks/Difficulties                      |
|                                                         | Time Constraints Due to Work Demands                   |
|                                                         | Not Working out as Expected                            |
| Theme 3: Handling the Drawbacks of Reflective Practices | Students Not Accustomed to Evaluating Teachers         |
|                                                         | Students' Attitudes Towards Learning                   |
|                                                         | Internal Struggles Due to High Expectations            |
|                                                         | Supervisors' Attitudes Toward fellow Teachers          |
|                                                         | The Importance of Mental Health                        |
| Theme 4: Gaining Insights from Reflective Practices     | Understand Your Purpose                                |
|                                                         | Optimism toward Learning                               |
|                                                         | Good Time Management Skills                            |
|                                                         | Recognize Your Support Needs                           |
|                                                         | Guidance from Seasoned Teachers                        |
| Theme 5: Supporting Other Teachers' Development         | Professional Development Opportunities                 |
|                                                         | Lifelong Teaching-learning Process                     |
|                                                         | Acknowledging Your Self: Strengths and Weaknesses (AS) |
|                                                         | Receptiveness to New ideas                             |
|                                                         | Positive and Supportive Environment                    |
|                                                         | Make Students Understand                               |
|                                                         | Reflection as a Habit                                  |
|                                                         | Self-Appreciation                                      |

The informants' narratives highlighted their lived experiences employing reflective methods through meticulous statement selection, meaning formulation, cluster topic development, and emerging theme processes. The section below presents the extracted significant narratives.

### 3.1 The Benefits of Reflective Practices

The informants shared reflective practices they have used in a while. These informants have been in the teaching field for a considerable time; therefore, they already know which reflective methods suit them the best. Orakci (2021) supported this claim by asserting that teachers' professional experience influences their reflective thinking. When asked which kind of reflective practice suits them the most, they could list a few and explain why each one suits them and why they favor using it. Their best reflective practices include peer conversations, reflection journals, classroom observations, student evaluations, and self-evaluations. Additionally, they detailed the benefits of these practices. Informants 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8 narrated their experiences as follows:

*"Reflection journals... there are things that I can express more when I am by myself."* - Informant 1

*"I prefer reflection journals because I can record my daily reflection, whether good or bad and use them to reflect and learn from it. The reflective journal also helps me find events that impacted me during my class."*  
-Informant 3

The informants claimed that keeping a reflection journal as a reflective practice enables them to recognize impactful experiences, express themselves more fully, and document daily learnings. This claim implies that teachers must continuously employ this reflective practice as it helps them record and evaluate their experiences and knowledge. Zulfikar and Mujiburrahman (2017) reinforced the claim by reporting that reflection journals could help teachers reflect on their instruction and subsequently create feedback for developing their classroom practices. They also claimed that reflection journals are valuable tools for raising teaching awareness, thus enhancing students' knowledge (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2017).

*"First and foremost, I think what I have amplified this school year is the student evaluations."* - Informant 4

*"I have self and peer evaluation form that students fill out every after activity that will help me gauge regarding their progress."* - Informant 4

The informants expressed that they maximized student evaluations as they found them beneficial. Informant 4 said he could gauge students' learning progress through student evaluations. Consequently, teachers also need to consistently implement this practice to help students be mindful of their learning by providing genuine feedback to teachers. This implies that teachers can further monitor their teaching practices and strategies in the classroom. Rempel (2018) affirmed that student evaluations provide a fundamental indicator of course objective success, and they can tell whether a student is engaged (or not) in response to an instructor's actions.

*"As for CO, I would appreciate it if a direct head and MT could give me more suggestions and professional advice to help me improve as a teacher. I trust them because they have more experience, and they are proficient in the field already."*  
- Informant 1

*"Peer reviews of instruction and classroom observations work best for me since I can get reliable and comprehensive feedback from experts in my field."* - Informant 8

Some stated they had picked up new teaching methods and practices through peer conversations. Additionally, hearing constructive criticisms from supervisors and other teachers during classroom observations has helped them widen their perspectives on using efficient teaching techniques. This finding suggests that classroom observations can be a brilliant way to get direct and immediate feedback from other professional teachers. Teachers can seek help from professional teachers to monitor their learning progress. According to Okeke and Van Der Westhuizen (2020), teachers can learn from one another at work by seeking advice, testing ideas, and exchanging ideas—especially from those with more expertise. Teachers should have professional discussions to address discipline-related concerns in school (Okeke & Van Der Westhuizen, 2020).

*"Over the years, I realized that interpersonal and intrapersonal communication strategies help me in terms of reflective practices."* - Informant 2

*"I prefer hearing points to improve from other people."* - Informant 6

The informants also expressed that they felt satisfied doing peer conversations. Aside from their interaction with classroom observers, the teacher can also take advantage of talking casually with their peers about their experiences, challenges, and insights in the classroom. Teachers can speak with peers honestly and confidently compared to supervisors and other school administrators. In other words, teachers can be more honest when interacting with peers. This claim also means that peer conversation is an effective strategy to gain emotional

support. According to Turner et al. (2002), as cited by Chang et al. (2022), a supportive environment has contributed to the teachers' enthusiasm toward work.

The informants believe that these reflective practices positively impact their teaching performance. They detailed concrete testimonies in classroom management, lesson preparation, teaching strategies, and professional skills. The following narratives from informants 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 illustrate these testimonies.

*"I noticed that my classroom management skills and delivery of instruction have improved. I also felt more confident in my field."* - Informant 8

*"I can deliver the lesson so they can get it right away. The evidence is on the students' performance. I tend to be practical."* - Informant 5

Reflective practices have enhanced the participant's classroom management and teaching abilities by adopting or replicating carefully thought-out procedures learned from other teachers. This means that reflective practices have improved the teachers' abilities to create an engaging and relevant learning environment. Korthagen (2017) reinforced this finding by stating that insights drawn from the reflection process can result in effective behaviors in the classroom. In other words, teachers can learn more about their teaching styles and focus only on activities that engage the students well. This implies that students can directly benefit from the improvements in the classroom and their teacher's capacity. As a result, students' performance would also improve. Ciampa and Gallagher (2015), as cited by Suphasri and Chinokul (2021), affirmed that reflection helps teachers become more aware of their teaching practices, which also allows them to unlearn some practices that do not work and prevent unfavorable impacts on the students' performance.

*"Reflective practices' essence is for us, teachers, to take responsibility for our professional development, take part in the curriculum development and how a teacher might improve in his or her teaching for better learning outcomes."* - Informant 3

*"Reflective practice in the teaching-learning process is vital to teachers' professional development. It is an effective way for teachers to improve and share best practices continuously."* - Informant 8

As expressed by Informants 3 and 8, reflection allowed them to take control of their professional development. Reflective practice can help teachers stay current with their skills and be relevant in the teaching profession. They can decide where to improve and create goals for their personal growth to have a fulfilling career. One must take responsibility for their professional development, as shared by participant 39J09. Mermelstein (2018) supported the idea that instructors must grow professionally in various ways to carry out their instructional responsibilities to the best of their abilities and give their students the best learning chances.

The informants also explored the core or essence of reflective practices from a personal and teaching-learning perspective. They described how impactful and relevant these practices are. Narratives from informants 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7 exemplify this.

*"Reflection should be at the heart of the teaching-learning process."* - Informant 4

*"Reflection is a practice that a teacher must do habitually, especially when he/she engages students through feedbacking."* - Informant 6

The informants shared that reflection must be a habit among teachers and be the heart of the teaching-learning process. This implies that reflective practices are vital components of the teaching profession rather than an option or an infrequent endeavor (Zeichner & Liston, 2019). Habitual reflection promotes continuous learning and development. Reflective practices yield many benefits in general. Through the involvement of students and peers, they foster a teacher's development in many facets through constant feedback and learning. In other words, reflective activities enable teachers to take charge of their professional growth. The use of reflective teaching has shown its effectiveness in enhancing the teachers' competence, according to Mesa's (2018) research findings.

Furthermore, according to the informants, reflection allowed them to detoxify their teaching lives. This implies that reflection promotes balance regarding well-being and work-life. Through reflection, the teacher can prevent stress and burnout. Chang et al. (2021) mentioned that teachers doing reflective reappraisal revealed that they experienced reduced emotional exhaustion even though their workloads were challenging and demanding. Reflective reappraisal is reinterpreting experiences to control the impacts of negative feelings (Wood et al., 2020).

### 3.2 The Drawbacks of Reflective Practices

The informants shared some of their preferred reflective practices in the previous sections. However, they also brought up reflective procedures that they found least effective. The reflective practices that work least for some include video-recorded teaching, teaching portfolios, and teaching inventories because of multiple factors such as time constraints due to work demands, technical know-how, and student-related concerns. The narratives below highlight informants 2 and 6 experiences.

*"As for the video-recorded teaching practices, I do not have the time to do it."* - Informant 2

*"I have not tried teaching portfolios yet."* - Informant 6

Informant 2 mentioned that she does not do video-recorded teaching practices as it is time-consuming. On the other hand, informants 4 and 6 expressed that they have not done teaching portfolios yet. This shows that some reflective practices, such as teaching portfolios and video-recorded lessons, are neither practical nor convenient for all teachers given the required preparation. Bokiev et al. (2017) affirmed this claim by mentioning that a teaching portfolio consumes time and is demanding as it necessitates reflective writing skills from the teachers. Moreover, video-recorded lessons are time-consuming and require some technical requirements from the teachers. Hence, teaching portfolios and video-recorded teaching practices are the least explored.

Even though classroom observations, journals, peer observations, and student evaluations were mentioned to be beneficial in the previous sections, some informants consider them less effective due to personal preferences and internal struggles. The accounts from informants 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8 below describe this behavior.

*"I find classroom observation lame when it comes to reflective practices. Whenever there is classroom observation, the teacher can prepare ahead so we cannot tell if that is how they are in their teaching regularly."* - Informant 3

*"I do not do reflection journals because I am so emotional. When I do reflection, the target is to lessen my stress, not add to it."* - Informant 5

Informant 3 admitted that classroom observation is ineffective for her as it does not accurately assess her ability to teach, and it allows him/her to do something extra. This is predicated in a setting where surprised class observations are not permitted, such as a public school. This suggests that observations must be appropriately scheduled and communicated to the teacher. Instead of showcasing what is actual, it invites the informant to display her ideals. On the other hand, informants 2 and 5 shared that they do not do journaling due to personal reasons and preferences. This implies that one reflective practice does not apply to everyone, as teachers have specific needs, contexts, and preferences. Jackson (2018) mentioned that no single strategy applies to everyone. What is crucial is that teachers know when to use the appropriate method.

*"I do not like evaluating myself. It will be biased if I evaluate myself. I may only focus on the good points because I want to "glorify" myself or focus on the bad because I do not want to sound "humble."* - Informant 7

*"I do not find this (student evaluation) reliable since students may tend to be subjective. Their age and maturity may also affect the quality of their evaluation."* - Informant 8

Regarding self-evaluations and student evaluations, informants 7 and 8 mentioned that they do not find these evaluation forms compelling. The former mentioned self-evaluation enables biases on the participant's part and

added that peers, not the teachers themselves, evaluate to guarantee objectivity, accuracy, and reliability. The latter claimed that student evaluations are unreliable as they are too subjective. Stroebe (2020) stated that student evaluations of instruction do not reflect the teacher's effectiveness. Several non-teaching-related criteria, such as the instructors' gender, foreign accents, and minority status, influenced this. It implies that the effectiveness of student evaluation depends on the student's age and maturity. This necessitates age-appropriate evaluation techniques that would be better for teachers and students. Frimpong (2021) mentioned that students can easily manipulate developmentally appropriate materials, reducing the teacher's time to provide more explanation to learning content.

The informants describe their difficulties in using some of these reflective practices. The supervisor's attitude towards other teachers, internal struggles due to high expectations, students' attitudes towards learning, and work demands contributed to the teachers' struggles. Informants 2, 4, and 6 detailed the following difficulties:

*"I think having no time. This is very challenging since I am in a public school..." - Informant 3*

*"There are many demands. Moreover, apart from that, I would have wanted to try teaching inventories." -Informant 4*

The informants expressed their struggles with high work demands. This shows that high work demands impede the informants from engaging in reflective practices and other professional and personal growth opportunities. The informants just stick to those reflection practices that they find convenient and do away with time-consuming ones. In addition to teaching, public school teachers often have various non-teaching responsibilities that force them to take on many additional duties and obligations that take time away from their actual teaching (David et al., 2019). This is true for both public and private school teachers. Private teachers face difficulties juggling their obligations because they frequently work past the terms of their contracts (Gumarang, 2021). Ancho and Bongco (2019) corroborated this claim by emphasizing that teachers spend more than eight hours a day performing their obligations and often feel pressured to complete their work outside of the classroom at home, which can occasionally impact their personal lives. This shows that reflective practices are extra work for teachers. Villarejo et al. (2022) mentioned that teachers would experience exhaustion due to their line of work, given the nature of the task and the demands placed upon them professionally. As a result, they just focus their priorities on a few issues that they currently deem to be important. Informants 4 and 7 further detailed the following difficulties:

*"Students who do not take the reflective practices seriously. I just get generic answers from them (Student Evaluation). They are not used to the culture of evaluating their teachers." -Informant 4*

*There are times when students are not honest with their evaluation because they want to get on the good side of the teacher."*  
- Informant 7

Regarding evaluations from students, informants 4 and 7 narrated their struggles with student evaluations. Informant 7 claimed that students' honesty affects the quality of evaluations. Furthermore, informant 4 mentioned that some students do not take class/teacher evaluations seriously as they are not accustomed to the culture of evaluating their teachers. This may affect the teacher's performance because they would not know whether the students enjoyed the activities or not or whether they have learned something from the class or not. Mohammadi (2021) complemented the claim by stating that performance evaluation is a vital and significant activity for all organizations as it seeks to enhance the caliber of teaching and learning processes. If teachers do not receive quality evaluations from students, then the purpose of doing this reflective practice is unproductive. Informant 7 shared the following difficulties:

*"There are also times when feedback given after the classroom observations is not reasonable because the observer does not know the behavior of the students or why you teach how you teach in a specific class" - Informant 7*

*"Some observations are not reasonable because some observers focus on mistakes. They sometimes do not see the effort teachers put in, or the behavior of the students in the classroom." - Informant 7*



On the other hand, informant 7 narrated her struggles with the supervisor's way of giving feedback during class observations. The informant claimed that some observation inputs are unreliable as the observer does not have an in-depth context or understanding of the student's behaviors and abilities. Giving feedback is focused on the mistakes and fails to recognize the teachers' efforts. This finding suggests that observer biases may impact job satisfaction, motivation, and morale because the instructor felt devalued and unappreciated. Feedback must be constructive and fair and highlight accomplishments and growth areas. Liu et al. (2019) stated that observers or evaluators must know the content, instructional methods, and evaluation systems so that teachers can fully appreciate the feedback. According to James and Wyckoff (2020), teacher evaluation should concentrate on the best methods for determining a teacher's efficacy. If a teacher has some areas for improvement, evaluators must assist the teacher in working on those areas.

### **3.3 Handling the Drawbacks of Reflective Practices**

When asked how they handled the drawbacks or challenges, the informants recounted several unique ways that embodied Filipino teachers' natural resilience and adaptability. The subthemes that support this theme include the following: the importance of Mental Health, Understanding Your Purpose, Optimism towards Learning, Time Management, and Recognition of Your Support Needs.

*"I could say I have matured emotionally as I have learned the art of letting it all go. Mental health matters more."*  
- Informant 1

*"I just carry on. There is no point in sulking over drawbacks."* -Informant 7

Emotional maturity enables the participant to let some things go and place more importance on mental wellness. This approach towards struggles is healthier than embracing and solving them all at once. This finding implies that, through reflection, teachers have become more aware of their mental health needs. Teachers now place a higher priority on their well-being. Salinas-Falquez et al. (2022) stated that the most resilient people can handle pressure and, as a result, feel more in control, handle challenging circumstances, and maintain a higher emotional equilibrium in stressful conditions.

In the succeeding section, informants 2, 3, and 4 described their experiences with understanding their purpose and being optimistic towards learning to handle challenges.

*"If these occur, I always remind myself about my purpose. As a teacher, every time I am down, I need to help myself."*  
-Informant 2

*"I still find ways to do reflective practices. After lunch, I look at the scores of the students, check outputs, and can recall the things we did during our class."* -Informant 3

Informant 2 shared that she overcame specific difficulties by engaging in reflections and understanding her purpose as a teacher. This finding suggests that teachers' sense of purpose may guide their aspirations in life. Teachers can create strategies for overcoming difficulties by continually reflecting on their experiences. Having a purposive career or life entails commitment among teachers. Lu (2021) said committed teachers are eager to engage with their students and regularly consider their development. They actively compete for competence in instructing and teaching by applying numerous techniques.

Informant 3 displayed optimism towards learning by looking for opportunities to reflect, moving forward despite the challenges, and making reflection an essential part of the teaching-learning process. This finding means that a teacher's professional success results from a positive attitude toward learning and dedication to engaging in reflective practices. Lu (2021) substantiated this claim by stating that people with high and positive expectations tend to achieve and frequently maintain objectivity. Optimism also increases flexibility and is the most important factor in reducing stress-related symptoms (Lu, 2021).

Additionally, the narratives from informants 6 and 8 below represent how time management and recognizing their support needs helped them overcome their struggles.

*"I manage my time by listing what I must accomplish or submit within the day. I usually start with setting priorities and organizing the day around the most important tasks. I believe that knowing my priorities can help me track everything I need to do throughout the day no matter how overwhelming it may seem."* -Informant 6

*"Expressing my challenges and being aware of my strengths and weaknesses helped me receive the support I needed."* -Informant 8

Informant 6 shared that she could reflect because she used effective time management. She made sure to set priorities and get adequate rest. This finding means effective time management can aid teachers in minimizing distractions, accomplishing tasks on time, and setting time for relaxation and reflection. This also results in teachers having spare time to explore opportunities for growth and development. For teachers to manage their time according to their working hours, Gul et al. (2021) suggested they have a positive attitude toward scheduling, planning, managing paperwork, handling interruptions, etc. This may be possible by providing teachers with more training in time management skills. Spratt (2019) further confirmed that providing teachers with the time and environment for group reflection was crucial to their professional growth.

Informant 8 said that to open up about her struggles, she needed to be aware of her support needs. Talking about these issues with some seasoned educators could help her overcome these challenges. This finding suggests that teachers become proactive in developing professionally by recognizing their weak points and specific needs and seeking help from other professionals. In this manner, teachers become more responsible for their learning and growth. Vikaraman et al. (2017) said that good mentor training and adequate administrative support are essential to uphold the teaching standard for beginning teachers and assume duties as teacher leaders.

### **3.4 Gaining Insights from Reflective Practices**

The informants' personal and professional reflective practices had benefits and drawbacks. They developed compelling methods to overcome the obstacles encountered. They gained some insights or reflections from their positive and negative experiences that could inspire them to carry on and continue to thrive as professionals. Informants 1 and 6 provided the excerpted accounts below that described their insights.

*"Teaching is a lifetime learning."* -Informant 1

*"Self-reflection is one way for a person to think critically. This means it has a vital role in learning."* - Informant 6

Informant 1 expressed that the teaching-learning process is a lifelong endeavor. It involves many difficulties, hardships, and fortitude. This finding suggests that teachers must be committed to continuously improving their craft to better adapt to the changing demands of the academe. To make this possible, teachers need support from school leaders and institutions by providing them with professional development programs that address their current and future needs. Washington (2021) asserted that a lack of access to high-quality professional development causes educators to be less equipped to serve their communities and reduces the impact teachers are likely to have during students' instructional time.

Informant 6 added that self-reflection is vital in helping one become a critical thinker, and one can make it possible by documenting everyday learning. This finding implies that, through reflective practices, teachers can develop critical thinking, one of the essential skills in the 21st century. Moreover, by thinking more critically, teachers can better evaluate themselves and their performance. Yurtseven and Altun (2017) claimed that teachers could regularly assess their work's good and bad parts because of the self-reflection process. The teachers' better grasp of their strengths and weaknesses could inspire them to pursue different professional development means. Zahid and Khanam (2019) said reflective teaching practices should be essential to teachers' professional growth. Thus, teachers constantly work to improve their skills (Mermelstein, 2018). According to Mathew et al. (2017), teachers can manage the demands of time and the needs of the learners if they reflect on their daily teaching and learning activities for their professional development. Informants 7 and 8 further shared the following insights.

*"My most significant learning so far has been learning from others and applying what I do in the classroom. It is good to learn from others apart from my own experiences."* - Informant 7

*"I have learned that doing reflections allowed me to innovate, revisit my practices, work on my areas of improvement, and identify my best practices. Most importantly, it challenges me to strive to be better."* -Informant 8

Informant 7 said that, through reflective practices, she could learn from others. This finding necessitates that teachers implement more reflective practices that involve many interactions with the people around them, such as students, peers, and other community stakeholders. Informant 8 also shared that reflective practices foster innovation and development. This finding infers that teachers who are doing reflective practices continually seek growth and development in various areas. They can excel in many aspects, such as research and development, educational administration, curriculum development, etc. Consequently, these teacher improvements can impact the student's success. This is complemented by the study of Yurtseven and Altun (2017), who stated that teachers' sharing of classroom reflections significantly influenced students' academic success. Informants 2, 4, and 5 further expressed the insights below.

*"Reflection should be at the heart of the teaching-learning process. You are not a teacher if you do not reflect."* -Informant 4

*"It really helps me acknowledge who I am as a teacher, what parts I could still improve, and what else I could still give to my students."* -Informant 2

According to informant 4, reflection is at the heart of the teaching-learning process. This finding suggests that teachers cannot be teachers if they cannot reflect on what they have done. Pang (2020) reinforced this finding by asserting that a teacher, as a reflective practitioner, should have strong analytical and evaluative skills to process practical inquiries about education and reach pragmatic conclusions.

Informant 4 also noted that reflection engages active conversation with oneself, students, and co-teachers. Moreover, informant 2 said that reflection enables self-discovery. These findings imply that reflection fosters collaboration between teachers, co-teachers, and teachers and students. Through constant collaboration, teachers can have more experiences and eventually draw more insights from them. These insights are instrumental in discovering themselves better as individuals and professionals. In their study, Hong et al. (2019) concluded that the instructors' awareness of their teaching beliefs and the underlying impact of routine teaching practices in the classroom increased due to their reflections. According to the research of Farrell (2015), which was also mentioned by Hong et al. (2019), reflection assisted teachers and researchers in realizing what has to be changed in their teaching techniques. Spinelli (2019) also supported this finding, claiming that reflective processes have a part in altering perspectives, self-perceptions, and practices.

### **3.5 Supporting Other Teachers' Development**

It is fulfilling to enhance one's teaching capacity through reflective practices. Still, it is much more satisfying to have had the opportunity to influence or help others in the community, especially those who also face the same struggles. Teachers must embody sharing one's giftedness as a genuine act of kindness. Informants 6 and 7 expressed their thoughts as follows:

*"Be more open for (sic) feedback and strategies. These will surely help you become better in teaching- all for student's success."* -Informant 6

*"I advise that they take what they learn from peers, supervisors, and student evaluations to heart because it can greatly impact and improve their teaching. Reflective practices are good for you."* -Informant 7

Informants 6 and 7 expressed that teachers must be receptive to new ideas and criticisms. This finding implies that teachers' openness and adaptiveness to new concepts, strategies, and standards would widen their understanding of the world and their current perspective on various local and global issues. Teachers do not just confine themselves to a certain norm or standard. Regarding their classroom practice, they do not just stick to one strategy. They become more experimental on what else might work for them. They become more exploratory about how else they can better their craft. They become more reflective of their experiences. Pang (2020) said that reflective teachers should compel and frequently link their reflection to good teaching practices to improve the curriculum, understand student and teacher competence, encourage professional development, and support

community service. Teachers should put into practice the important lessons they have acquired from their peers, as informant seven had stated. Furthermore, informant three also expressed her ideas as follows:

*"Ask yourself daily, "How did it go, and how do you know?" Let us surround ourselves with enthusiasm. There is no perfect teacher, but reflection can help us identify those barriers that keep us from improving. Let us not be too hard on ourselves because we always have room for improvement."* -Informant 3

Informant 3 articulated that teachers need a positive and supportive environment to implement these reflective practices and identify what keeps them from growing professionally. This finding suggests that teachers' emotional state can hinder their success. If teachers do not feel appreciated and supported, they will not be empowered and committed to advancing their careers. They would not be motivated to explore opportunities for growth and development. They would merely opt to do the bare minimum. Wahyudi (2018) said that teachers with high emotional intelligence can better comprehend their students' personalities, convey their lessons effectively, and provide them with advice and direction. In other words, they perform better. Chen and Chen (2022) established that individual and organizational factors influenced the growth of teachers' reflective practice skills. Mesa (2018) proposed that professional development programs should have the support of seasoned teachers in giving high-quality feedback. Informant 4 also shared these suggestions.

*"It is giving the teachers great freedom. Same thing with our students, we should not be generic. We should not be generalizing about the needs of our students."* -Informant 4

*"As much as possible, we ask them about these evaluations so that we can respond to their needs. We give them the agency, and we give them the chance to take ownership of their needs, like teachers who will have to take ownership of their needs so that they can recognize that they need it."* -Informant 4

Informant 4 added that teachers should be free to use any reflective practice that can help address the specific needs of the teacher and the students. Teachers must be deliberate when doing reflective practices and ask for support from seasoned teachers. These findings imply that teachers' academic freedom in choosing a suitable reflective practice fosters creativity. Hence, teachers who can use any practice they find convenient and valuable become more accountable for their actions as they succeed or fail in their decisions. Mermelstein (2018) supported the idea that learning from knowledge and experience can be as successful as learning from other knowledgeable lecturers or researchers. Teachers can contribute more to their teaching community by learning more effective teaching techniques and sharing their knowledge and experiences when they regularly and critically reflect on their teaching methods (Mermelstein, 2018). Mesa (2018) asserted that teachers can utilize reflection independently or jointly to feel more in control, depending on whether they wish to accept criticism from others. Informant 4 further noted that for students to take responsibility for their learning, teachers must help them understand that evaluations are done to address their needs. This finding conveys that teachers and students need each other's support to succeed. According to Seifert and Sutton (2019), students will not learn if they do not understand the purpose of what they are doing. Thus, teachers must let their students understand their goals. Informant 5 emphasized the importance of self-appreciation among teachers. This finding means that teachers must value themselves and do activities that give them happiness. Furthermore, self-appreciation fosters confidence, grit, and self-care among teachers. Teachers with positive self-esteem can be role models that students can admire. The finding also infers that teachers who do not appreciate themselves may end up burned out and live a less fulfilling career and life. According to Mermelstein (2018), the key is for teachers to appreciate the importance and relevance of their teaching and instructional activities. In their study, Chen and Chen (2022) proved that personal goal orientation on an individual's psychological level can affect the reflective skills of the teachers.

The study's discoveries have implications for how different types of reflective practices – depending on which one a teacher finds most effective – can help them develop professionally and personally. Based on the emergent themes, the necessity of teachers' continuous professional development with the help of reflective practice and a positive learning environment was emphasized. To adapt to the shifting trends of the twenty-first century, teachers must strengthen their reflective teaching skills.

### 3.6 The Essence

A phenomenological study was a reflective experience for the researcher. It was an immersive journey into the depths of other people's lives. The researcher had to dive into this quest to fully understand what and how it feels like to be in their situation in hopes of bringing those rich and unique experiences to the surface. A teacher's life is multifaceted; however, the researcher aimed to dive deep into the reflective practices of English teachers to capture and shed light on their experiences.

There are so many aspects to learn about a person's experience. All these experiences are unique and valid as these people come from different backgrounds. The researcher realized that people experience hardships and other unfavorable situations for them to strive to become better versions of themselves continually. Moreover, a person's experience that is reflected upon becomes learning. Otherwise, it stays as a memory of the experience or, even worse, gets forgotten. As the informants recounted their experiences surrounding the phenomenon, the researcher realized how crucial the role of reflective teaching is in the life of a teacher. Despite the numerous challenges faced in the teaching-learning process, the researcher recognized how dedicated and resilient Filipino teachers are. The researcher also observed how these teachers from varying backgrounds shared similar experiences about reflective teaching. Professionally, their experiences are relatively comparable, but their perspectives are very diverse. The researcher was reminded that no one practice works for everyone. Every teacher has a unique personality and preference that would require a different strategy. Furthermore, reflection is essential and relevant no matter what timeline in the educational landscape you are in. It is a sustainable practice for in-depth and lifelong learning. Reflective practice empowers teachers to become powerful classroom influencers that students and other stakeholders can consider role models. Most importantly, reflective practice contributes to a teacher's well-being.

### 4.0 Conclusions

In summary, English teachers have benefitted from reflective practices personally and professionally. These reflective practices have helped them value themselves more and place a higher priority on their mental health and well-being, which implies a better teaching disposition and performance. Moreover, these reflective practices have been beneficial in fostering English teachers' continuous professional development, which necessitates personalized reflection, ongoing learning, and enhanced collaboration among other teachers. By integrating reflective practices in the classrooms, these teachers can apply effective pedagogy in teaching English, suggesting improved student learning outcomes. These practices can still be enhanced through constant implementation and exploration depending on the teachers' current needs and educational landscape. Based on the study findings, the recommendations are presented as follows:

- a) Teachers may continually use and refine reflective practices that work best with their teaching styles and needs.
- b) Teachers may also explore other reflective practices, such as teaching portfolios and video-recorded lessons, to gain new perspectives.
- c) Teachers may pursue continuous professional development as early as possible through seminars, workshops, research, further education, etc.
- d) DepEd and other private institutions may provide more practical seminars and workshops on implementing reflective practices. They may also focus on one reflective practice to strengthen its usability.
- e) School leaders and administrators may also provide a protected schedule for professional development activities (e.g., structured professional learning conversations among teachers). This structured professional learning conversation may be implemented twice or thrice a month and be done consistently to address the teachers' current needs.

The qualitative data uncovered several findings that could be valuable for other academic researchers. By extending this research, more perspectives and theories regarding reflective practices might come to life. Future studies centered on reflective teaching may be done. These studies include the following: A Meta-Synthesis on English Teachers' Reflective Practices, A Descriptive Analysis of Reflection Journals, A Qualitative Study on Teaching Inventories and Portfolios, An Analysis of Classroom Observations, A Phenomenological Study on Peer

# Review of Teaching, and A Descriptive Phenomenology on Continuous Professional Development through Reflective Teaching.

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## 6.0 Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest involved in this study.

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