

Reflective Teaching and Teachers' Professional Growth: A PRISMA-Based Systematic Literature Review (2015–2025)

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Abstract

This study examines the role of reflective teaching in enhancing teachers' professional growth through a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework. While reflective teaching has long been recognised as a key component of effective pedagogy, existing research remains fragmented across conceptual, methodological, and contextual dimensions. To address this gap, the study synthesises 53 peer reviewed studies published between January 2015 and December 2025, identified through a structured search of Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The findings indicate that reflective teaching is a multidimensional process integrating cognitive, social, emotional, and technological elements. It contributes to professional growth by supporting instructional improvement, professional identity development, critical thinking, and emotional resilience. The analysis also highlights the increasing importance of collaborative and technology mediated reflection, particularly through professional learning communities and digital tools. However, the effectiveness of reflective teaching is influenced by contextual conditions, including the availability of structured guidance, institutional support, and opportunities for collaboration. This study contributes to the literature by providing a systematic and integrative synthesis of recent research and by advancing a multidimensional conceptualisation of reflective teaching. It further explains the gap between theoretical expectations and practical implementation, offering implications for teacher professional development and future research.

Keywords: Reflective Teaching, Teacher Professional Growth, Reflective Practice, Systematic Literature Review, PRISMA 2020

Introduction

Background of the Study

Across education systems worldwide, the quality of teaching is widely regarded as one of the most decisive school-level factors shaping student learning, and strengthening it has accordingly become a central policy priority. This emphasis is itself a response to broader social pressures, including rising expectations of educational accountability, the rapid transformation of classrooms through digital technologies, growing concern over teacher

workload, well-being, and attrition, and the accelerated shift toward online and blended learning that followed the COVID-19 pandemic. Within this context, the continuous professional development of teachers is increasingly understood not as an occasional, externally delivered event but as an ongoing and career-long endeavour embedded in everyday practice. Traditional professional development models, typically characterised by short-term workshops and one-off training, have nonetheless been widely criticised for their limited impact on sustained instructional change and teacher learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). As a result, the field has witnessed a marked shift toward practice-based, teacher-centred, and inquiry-oriented approaches that locate professional learning within the everyday realities of classroom practice and treat teachers as active agents of their own development (Admiraal et al., 2021).

This reorientation rests on a particular theoretical understanding of how teachers learn. Rather than acquiring knowledge through transmission alone, teachers are now widely held to learn most effectively when they actively examine, question, and reconstruct their own practice. This view draws on long-standing traditions of experiential and inquiry-oriented learning, in which professional knowledge develops through recurring cycles of action, observation, and analysis. Reflective teaching occupies a central position within this theoretical landscape, since it provides the very mechanism through which everyday classroom experience is converted into professional learning. Locating reflective teaching within this broader theory of teacher professional learning clarifies why it has attracted sustained scholarly attention and why it is increasingly regarded as a core competence for teachers operating in complex and rapidly changing educational environments (Mohamed et al., 2022; Ruangsang, 2025).

Within this evolving landscape, reflective teaching has emerged as a key mechanism for supporting teacher professional growth. Rooted in the work of Schön (2017), reflective teaching involves the systematic examination of teaching experiences through processes such as reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. This perspective was further developed by Brookfield (2017), who emphasised the importance of engaging with multiple lenses, including student feedback, peer perspectives, and theoretical frameworks, to deepen reflective inquiry.

Recent research indicates that reflective teaching has evolved beyond an individual cognitive activity into a complex and multi-dimensional practice. Contemporary studies highlight that reflection is increasingly shaped by social interaction, emotional engagement, and technological mediation (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2022; Faez et al., 2025). Collaborative reflection through professional learning communities enables teachers to engage with diverse perspectives, while digital tools such as video-based reflection and online platforms facilitate more systematic and continuous analysis of teaching practices (Admiraal et al., 2021; Gaudin & Chaliès, 2015).

Despite its recognised importance, the literature on reflective teaching remains conceptually fragmented and methodologically diverse. Existing studies differ markedly in how reflective teaching is defined, operationalised, and evaluated, which makes it difficult to develop a coherent understanding of its role in promoting professional growth (Machost & Stains, 2023; Mohamed et al., 2022). Moreover, recent reviews have tended to examine relatively narrow

segments of the field, such as a single reflective tool, a particular subject area, or a specific group of teachers, rather than integrating evidence across the cognitive, social, emotional, and technological dimensions that increasingly characterise contemporary reflective practice (Faez et al., 2025; Philp-Clark & Grieshaber, 2024). This fragmentation is particularly consequential given the rapid changes of the past decade, during which collaborative and technology-mediated forms of reflection have expanded substantially and reshaped how teachers learn from their practice. A systematic and up-to-date synthesis is therefore both timely and necessary. By consolidating studies published between 2015 and 2025 within a transparent and replicable framework, the present review responds directly to the absence of an integrated account of how reflective teaching contributes to teachers' professional growth, and seeks to draw a scattered but rapidly growing body of evidence into a coherent, multidimensional understanding that can inform both theory and practice.

Problem Statement

Although reflective teaching is widely acknowledged as a critical component of effective teaching, several unresolved issues limit a comprehensive understanding of its role in teacher professional growth. First, there is a lack of conceptual clarity and consistency. Reflective teaching is variously conceptualised as technical, practical, or critical reflection, often without clear theoretical alignment. This conceptual ambiguity hinders cumulative knowledge development and complicates cross-study comparison. Second, existing research remains fragmented in scope and focus. Many studies concentrate on pre-service teachers or short-term interventions, while relatively fewer studies examine sustained professional growth among in-service teachers. In addition, prior reviews tend to focus on isolated dimensions of reflective practice, rather than providing an integrated understanding of its multi-dimensional nature. Third, the effectiveness of reflective teaching is highly dependent on contextual and structural conditions. Without structured guidance, reflective activities often remain at a descriptive level, limiting their transformative potential. Institutional constraints, including workload, time limitations, and accountability pressures, further restrict opportunities for meaningful reflection. Finally, much of the existing literature continues to treat reflection as an individual cognitive process, with insufficient attention to its social, technological, and emotional dimensions. This perspective does not fully capture the complexity of contemporary educational environments, where professional learning is increasingly collaborative and digitally mediated. Taken together, these limitations indicate a need for a systematic and integrative synthesis that not only consolidates recent findings but also advances a more comprehensive conceptualisation of reflective teaching.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to conduct a systematic literature review of studies published between January 2015 and December 2025 to examine how reflective teaching contributes to teachers' professional growth. Guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework, this study seeks to provide a transparent and rigorous synthesis of recent literature while developing an integrated understanding of reflective teaching as a multi-dimensional construct.

Research Questions

1. This study addresses the following research questions:
2. How is reflective teaching conceptualised in recent literature?
3. What tools and approaches are used to support reflective teaching?

4. How does reflective teaching contribute to teachers' professional growth?
5. What challenges affect the implementation of reflective teaching?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the literature in three important ways. First, it provides a systematic and up-to-date synthesis of research on reflective teaching, addressing the fragmentation of existing studies and offering a clearer understanding of recent developments. Second, it advances theoretical understanding by conceptualising reflective teaching as a multi-dimensional construct that integrates cognitive, social, technological, and emotional dimensions. This perspective extends traditional models that primarily emphasise individual cognition. Third, it offers practical implications for teachers, educational institutions, and policymakers by identifying the conditions under which reflective teaching is most effective. In particular, it highlights the importance of structured support, collaborative environments, and institutional alignment in fostering meaningful reflective practice.

Scope of the Study

This review focuses on peer-reviewed journal articles published between January 2015 and December 2025. The selected studies examine reflective teaching in relation to teachers' professional growth across diverse educational contexts, including primary, secondary, and higher education. While foundational theoretical works are included to provide conceptual grounding, the primary emphasis is placed on recent empirical and review-based studies that reflect current trends in the field.

Literature Review

Reflective teaching has been widely recognised as a central mechanism for promoting teachers' professional growth. Although its theoretical foundations can be traced back to earlier educational philosophy, the concept has undergone significant development in recent years. This evolution is closely associated with changes in educational environments, the increasing integration of digital technologies, and the growing emphasis on collaborative professional learning. This chapter provides a critical synthesis of literature published between January 2015 and December 2025, focusing on the conceptual development of reflective teaching, its relationship with teachers' professional growth, and the emerging trends and challenges in its implementation.

Conceptual Foundations of Reflective Teaching

Reflective teaching is generally understood as a deliberate and systematic process through which teachers examine their instructional practices, beliefs, and experiences in order to improve future actions. This understanding originates from the work of Schön (2017), who introduced the concepts of reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action refers to the ability to think and adapt during teaching, while reflection on action involves retrospective analysis of teaching experiences. Brookfield (2017) further expanded this perspective by proposing that reflection should be informed by multiple lenses, including personal experience, student feedback, peer perspectives, and theoretical knowledge. This multi lens approach highlights that effective reflection requires more than individual introspection. It requires engagement with diverse sources of insight. Recent studies have extended these foundational perspectives by conceptualising reflective teaching as a multidimensional and context sensitive process. Rather than being limited to cognitive

activity, reflection is increasingly understood as involving social interaction, emotional engagement, and contextual awareness (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2022). Teachers' reflective processes are shaped by their professional identities, institutional environments, and opportunities for collaboration. A key development in recent literature is the differentiation of levels of reflection. Machost and Stains (2023) categorise reflection into technical, practical, and critical levels. Technical reflection focuses on the effectiveness of teaching strategies, practical reflection considers underlying assumptions, and critical reflection examines broader social and ethical implications. However, empirical studies indicate that many teachers remain at descriptive or technical levels of reflection, particularly when structured guidance is absent (Körkkö et al., 2016). This suggests that reflective teaching requires intentional support in order to achieve deeper levels of analysis.

Reflective Teaching and Teachers' Professional Growth

The literature consistently demonstrates that reflective teaching plays a significant role in enhancing teachers' professional growth. One of the most widely reported outcomes is the improvement of instructional practices. Through reflection, teachers are able to analyse their teaching, identify areas for improvement, and adapt their strategies to better meet student needs (Cirocki & Imsa-ard, 2024). Reflection therefore functions as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice. Reflective teaching also contributes to the development of professional identity. By engaging in reflective processes, teachers examine their beliefs, values, and assumptions, which supports the construction of a coherent professional self. This process is particularly important for sustaining long term engagement in the teaching profession. Studies suggest that teachers who actively reflect on their practice are more likely to develop a strong sense of purpose and commitment (Körkkö et al., 2016). In addition, reflective practice enhances critical thinking and professional judgement. Teachers who engage in reflection are encouraged to question assumptions, consider alternative approaches, and make informed decisions in complex classroom situations (Philp-Clark & Grieshaber, 2024). This aligns with broader theories of professional expertise, which emphasise adaptive and reflective thinking as essential competencies. Another important dimension that has received increasing attention is emotional development. Teaching is an inherently emotional profession, and reflective processes provide opportunities for teachers to understand and regulate their emotional experiences. Reflection enables teachers to process challenges, manage stress, and develop resilience (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2022). This emotional dimension is particularly relevant in contemporary educational contexts characterised by high workload and performance expectations.

Contemporary Developments in Reflective Teaching

Recent literature highlights significant developments in how reflective teaching is practised, particularly in relation to collaboration and digital technology. Collaborative reflection has become an important approach in professional learning. Rather than reflecting in isolation, teachers increasingly engage in reflective dialogue through professional learning communities, peer observation, and mentoring. These practices enable teachers to access diverse perspectives and deepen their understanding of teaching (Admiraal et al., 2021). Collaboration also promotes shared responsibility for professional learning and contributes to the development of collective expertise. Digital technologies have also transformed reflective teaching. Tools such as video recordings, online portfolios, and digital platforms allow teachers to revisit their teaching practices and engage in more systematic analysis

(Gaudin & Chaliès, 2015). Video based reflection is particularly effective because it enables teachers to observe their own practice from an external perspective. This can reveal aspects of teaching that may not be apparent during live instruction. Despite these advancements, the effectiveness of collaborative and technology mediated reflection depends on the presence of structured support. Without clear frameworks and guidance, reflective activities may remain descriptive and fail to produce meaningful change.

Challenges in Implementing Reflective Teaching

Although reflective teaching offers significant benefits, its implementation is associated with several challenges. One of the most frequently reported barriers is time constraint. Teachers often face heavy workloads, which limits their ability to engage in reflective activities. Reflection requires time for analysis and critical thinking, which is often difficult to allocate within demanding teaching schedules (Admiraal et al., 2021). Another major challenge is the lack of structured guidance. Without clear frameworks, teachers may struggle to move beyond surface level reflection. As a result, reflection may remain descriptive rather than analytical, limiting its impact on professional growth (Körkkö et al., 2016). Emotional challenges also play a significant role. Reflecting on one's own practice may involve confronting limitations or failures, which can create discomfort. This emotional dimension may discourage teachers from engaging in reflective practice, particularly in environments where support is limited (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2022). Institutional factors further influence the effectiveness of reflective teaching. Educational environments that prioritise performance outcomes over professional learning may limit opportunities for reflection. This suggests that reflective teaching cannot be understood solely as an individual activity but must be examined within broader organisational contexts.

Research Gaps in the Literature

Despite the growing body of research on reflective teaching, several gaps remain. First, there is a lack of longitudinal research examining the sustained impact of reflective teaching on in service teachers. Most studies focus on short term interventions, which limits understanding of long term professional growth. Second, although digital tools are increasingly used in reflective practice, their role in facilitating deep and critical reflection remains underexplored. Existing studies often focus on tool usage rather than learning outcomes. Third, cross cultural perspectives are limited. Most studies are conducted in specific regional contexts, which restricts the generalisability of findings. Comparative research across different educational systems is needed to develop a more global understanding of reflective teaching. Finally, there is a need for more integrative frameworks that capture the multidimensional nature of reflective teaching. Existing models often focus on isolated aspects, such as cognition or practice, without fully addressing social, emotional, and technological dimensions.

Toward a multidimensional Reflective Teaching Framework

Based on the synthesis of existing literature, this study proposes a multidimensional perspective of reflective teaching that integrates cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions. The cognitive dimension focuses on teachers' ability to analyse their instructional practices, evaluate effectiveness, and make informed decisions. The social dimension emphasises the role of collaboration, including dialogue with peers and participation in professional learning communities. The emotional dimension highlights the importance of emotional awareness, regulation, and resilience in reflective processes. These dimensions are interconnected and

jointly contribute to teachers' professional growth. Reflective teaching is therefore not a single process but a dynamic system that operates across multiple levels of professional practice. To illustrate this conceptualisation, Figure 1 presents the multidimensional Reflective Teaching Framework. The framework demonstrates how cognitive, social, and emotional reflection interact to support teacher professional growth.

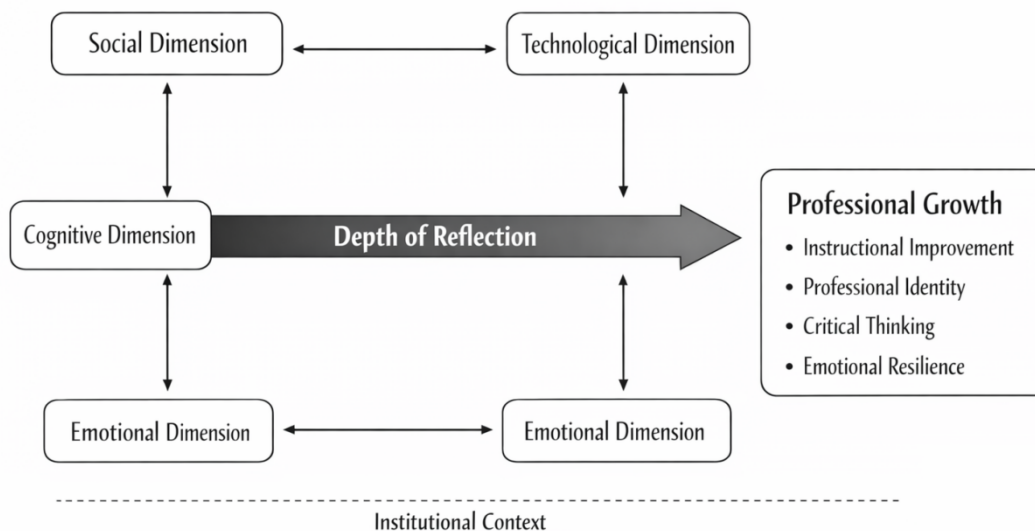


Figure 1 multidimensional Reflective Teaching (MDRT) Framework

Methodology

This study adopts a systematic literature review approach guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework to ensure transparency, replicability, and methodological rigor. Given the conceptual diversity and methodological variation in research on reflective teaching, a systematic review is particularly suitable for synthesising existing evidence and identifying overarching patterns across studies. This chapter presents the research design, data sources, screening procedures, and analytical methods in a structured and transparent manner.

Research Design

This study employs a systematic literature review to synthesise research on reflective teaching and teachers' professional growth. The review is guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework, which provides a structured procedure for identifying, screening, and analysing relevant studies (Page et al., 2021). Compared with traditional narrative reviews, this approach enhances transparency and reduces selection bias by following predefined criteria. The selection of a systematic review is justified by the fragmented nature of the literature. Studies on reflective teaching vary significantly in terms of conceptualisation, research design, and contextual focus. A structured synthesis is therefore necessary to integrate findings and provide a coherent understanding of the field. The review focuses on studies published between January 2015 and December 2025. This timeframe was selected to capture recent developments in reflective teaching, particularly those related to digital technologies, collaborative learning environments, and contemporary professional development practices.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across four major academic databases, namely Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected because they provide extensive coverage of peer reviewed research in education and teacher

development. The search strategy was developed through an iterative process. Key concepts related to reflective teaching and professional growth were identified and combined using Boolean operators. Synonyms and related terms were also considered to ensure broad coverage while maintaining relevance. The search strings were adjusted for each database to accommodate differences in indexing systems and search functionalities. Filters were applied to limit results to peer reviewed journal articles published in English within the specified timeframe. The detailed search strategy and results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Search Strategy and Database Results

Database	Search String	Filters Applied	Records Retrieved
Scopus	("reflective teaching" AND "professional growth")	2015–2025, English, Journal articles	458
Web of Science	("reflective practice" AND "teacher development")	2015–2025, SSCI indexed	372
ERIC	("teacher reflection" AND "teacher growth")	2015–2025, Peer reviewed, Education	286
Google Scholar	("reflective teaching" AND "professional development")	2015–2025, English	132
Total			1,248

The use of multiple databases enhances the comprehensiveness of the search and reduces the risk of publication bias. The inclusion of Google Scholar also allows the identification of relevant studies that may not be indexed in traditional databases.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the relevance and quality of the selected studies, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were established prior to the screening process. These criteria were designed to align with the research objectives and maintain methodological consistency. The criteria are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria Type	Description
Inclusion Criteria	Reflective teaching related to teachers' professional growth
	Empirical or systematic review studies
	Peer reviewed journal articles
	English language
Exclusion Criteria	Published between 2015 and 2025
	Conceptual only studies
	Studies not focused on teachers
	Books, reports, conference papers
	Published before 2015
	Non English studies

These criteria ensure that the review includes studies that are both relevant and methodologically robust, while excluding sources that may not provide sufficient empirical evidence.

PRISMA Screening and Selection Process

The study selection process followed the four stages of the PRISMA framework, namely identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. During the identification stage, a total of 1,248 records were retrieved from the selected databases. After removing duplicates, 236 records were excluded, resulting in 1,012 unique records. In the screening stage, titles and abstracts were reviewed to assess relevance. A total of 715 records were excluded at this stage due to lack of relevance or failure to meet inclusion criteria. In the eligibility stage, 297 full text articles were assessed. Of these, 244 studies were excluded based on methodological limitations, insufficient empirical evidence, or lack of relevance. Finally, 53 studies were included in the qualitative synthesis. The selection process is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3
Study Selection Process

Stage	Description	Number
Identification	Total records identified	1,248
Duplicate removal	Records removed	236
Screening	Records screened	1,012
Screening exclusion	Records excluded	715
Eligibility	Full text assessed	297
Eligibility exclusion	Records excluded	244
Inclusion	Final studies included	53

This structured process ensures transparency and allows the study selection to be replicated by other researchers. The study selection process is visually presented in Figure 2.

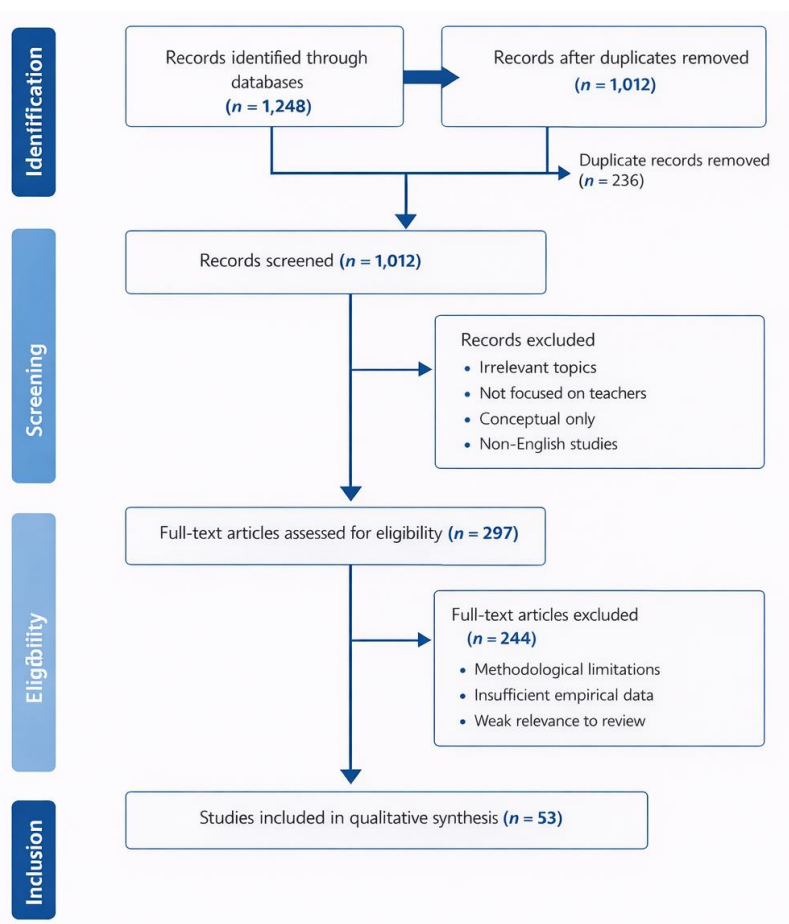


Figure 2 PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process

Reasons for Exclusion

To enhance methodological transparency, the reasons for exclusion were systematically recorded at both the screening and full text stages.

Table 4

Reasons for Exclusion at Screening Stage

Reason	Number
Irrelevant topic	178
Not focused on teachers	124
Conceptual only	99
Non English publications	36
Other reasons	278
Total	715

Table 4 indicates that the majority of exclusions during the screening stage were due to lack of relevance. This reflects the broad initial search strategy, which prioritised coverage over precision.

Table 5

Reasons for Exclusion at Full Text Stage

Reason	Number
Methodological limitations	82

Insufficient empirical data	61
Weak relevance	55
Context mismatch	46
Total	244

At the full text stage, exclusions were primarily based on methodological quality and relevance. This stage represents a more rigorous evaluation of study credibility.

Characteristics of Included Studies

After the selection process, the characteristics of the included studies were analysed to provide an overview of the research landscape. This includes methodological approaches, geographical distribution, and educational contexts.

Table 6

Distribution of Studies by Methodology (n = 53)

Methodology	Number	Percentage
Qualitative	28	52.8%
Quantitative	10	18.9%
Mixed methods	15	28.3%
Total	53	100%

The dominance of qualitative research suggests that reflective teaching is often explored through in depth and context sensitive approaches. The presence of mixed methods studies indicates an emerging effort to combine qualitative insights with quantitative validation.

Table 7

Geographical Distribution of Studies

Region	Number
Asia	21
Europe	15
North America	10
Other regions	7
Total	53

The geographical distribution shows a strong concentration of studies in Asia and Europe, reflecting growing interest in reflective teaching in these regions.

Table 8

Educational Context of Studies

Context	Number
Primary education	14
Secondary education	19
Higher education	12
Teacher training	8
Total	53

The results indicate that reflective teaching is widely applied across different educational levels, with a particular emphasis on school based contexts.

Data Extraction and Coding Framework

To ensure systematic comparison across studies, a structured data extraction framework was developed. This framework allows key variables to be consistently recorded and analysed.

Table 9

Data Extraction Framework

Category	Description
Author and year	Publication information
Country	Study context
Educational level	Teaching setting
Methodology	Research design
Sample	Participants
Reflective tool	Method used
Key findings	Outcomes
Quality indicators	Validity and reliability

This framework ensures consistency in data extraction and facilitates the identification of patterns during analysis.

To illustrate the application of the data extraction framework, a representative subset of ten studies was selected from the total of 53 included studies is presented in

Table 10.

Table 10

Representative Sample of Included Studies

Author	Year	Country / Context	Method	Sample	Reflective Tool	Key Focus	Source
Uştuk & De Costa	2021	Turkey / EFL	Qualitative (lesson study)	In-service teachers	Lesson study (collaborative reflection)	Reflection and teacher professional development	Uştuk and De Costa (2021)
Körkkö et al.	2016	Finland	Qualitative	13 pre-service teachers	Portfolio writing	Reflection and professional learning	Körkkö et al. (2016)
Núñez Pardo & Téllez	2015	Colombia	Qualitative action research	31 EFL teachers	Reflective writing	Personal and professional growth	Núñez Pardo and Téllez (2015)

Lap et al.	2024	Vietnam	Quantitative	EFL teachers (survey-based)	Reflective teaching practices	Reflection and professional development	Lap et al. (2024)
Li	2025	China	Qualitative	Pre-service teachers	Reflective journals	Reflective practice and professional growth	Li (2025)
Mermelstein	2018	Mexico / EFL	Qualitative	EFL teachers	Reflective teaching practices	Reflection as professional development	Mermelstein (2018)
Chen & Chen	2022	China	Mixed-methods	349 teachers + 10 interviews	Reflective practice survey	Reflective skills and teacher learning	Chen and Chen (2022)
Baluchzada	2023	International / EFL	Systematic review	20+ studies	Reflective teaching	Effect on professional development	Baluchzada (2023)
Gaudin & Chaliès	2015	International	Literature review	255 studies	Video-based reflection	Reflection in teacher education	Gaudin and Chaliès (2015)
Faez et al.	2025	International	Systematic review	10 studies	Multiple reflective practices	Reflection and teacher self-efficacy	Faez et al. (2025)

Table 10 presents a representative sample of studies included in the PRISMA-based systematic review, focusing on the relationship between reflective teaching and teachers' professional growth. The selected studies demonstrate methodological diversity, encompassing qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, and systematic review designs. Across diverse educational contexts, reflective practices such as lesson study, portfolio writing, reflective journals, and video-based reflection are consistently associated with enhanced professional learning, improved teaching practices, and increased teacher self-efficacy. These findings provide strong empirical support for the role of reflective teaching as a key mechanism in promoting teachers' professional development. Furthermore, the variation in reflective tools suggests that reflective teaching is not a single fixed approach, but a flexible and context-dependent practice shaped by different educational settings.

Data Analysis

The extracted data were analysed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which is particularly suitable for synthesising findings across heterogeneous studies as it allows patterns to emerge inductively from the data. The analysis was conducted through several stages. First, all selected studies were read thoroughly to ensure familiarity with the data. Second, key concepts related to reflective teaching and professional growth were systematically coded. Third, these codes were organised into broader categories and further refined into overarching themes. Through this process, four major themes were identified, namely the conceptualisation of reflective teaching, reflective tools and approaches, professional growth outcomes, and implementation challenges. These themes subsequently form the analytical framework for the findings presented in the next chapter.

Quality Appraisal

To ensure the credibility of the review, the methodological quality of the included studies was systematically evaluated.

Table 11

Quality Assessment Criteria

Criteria	Description
Research design	Clarity and appropriateness
Sample adequacy	Size and relevance
Data collection	Systematic procedures
Data analysis	Transparency and rigor
Validity and reliability	Supported conclusions

Studies that did not meet minimum quality standards were excluded during the eligibility stage. This process enhances the reliability of the findings.

Methodological Rigor and Limitations

Several strategies were employed to enhance methodological rigor. The use of multiple databases ensured comprehensive coverage. Clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria reduced selection bias. The PRISMA framework provided transparency, and systematic data extraction ensured consistency.

Despite these strengths, several limitations should be acknowledged. The review is limited to English language publications, which may exclude relevant studies. In addition, grey literature was not included. The study also relies on qualitative synthesis rather than meta analysis, which limits the ability to quantify effect sizes.

Findings*Overview of Findings*

Based on the systematic analysis of 53 selected studies, four major themes were identified: conceptualisation of reflective teaching, reflective tools and approaches, professional growth outcomes, and implementation challenges. These themes emerged inductively through thematic analysis and represent consistent patterns across diverse educational contexts.

The findings indicate that reflective teaching is not a single or uniform process but a complex and multidimensional phenomenon shaped by theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and contextual conditions. While earlier studies have consistently emphasised the importance of reflective practice in professional learning, recent research suggests that reflective teaching continues to evolve in response to changing educational environments, particularly with the integration of digital technologies and collaborative practices (Beauchamp, 2015; Ruangsan, 2025).

In addition, the methodological distribution identified in Chapter 3 indicates that qualitative approaches dominate the field, suggesting that reflective teaching is often explored through context sensitive and interpretive perspectives that prioritise teachers' experiences and meaning making processes (Körkkö et al., 2016).

Conceptualisation of Reflective Teaching

The analysis reveals that reflective teaching is conceptualised in diverse yet interconnected ways. Most studies are grounded in the foundational work of Schön (2017), who conceptualised reflection as a process involving reflection in action and reflection on action. However, contemporary research extends this understanding by incorporating broader dimensions of reflection.

A key pattern across studies is the differentiation between levels of reflection. Brookfield (2017) distinguishes between technical, practical, and critical reflection, with critical reflection representing the deepest level of analysis. Empirical studies indicate that many teachers remain at descriptive or technical levels of reflection, particularly when reflection is not supported by structured frameworks (Körkkö et al., 2016).

Recent literature further conceptualises reflective teaching as a multidimensional competence that integrates cognitive, emotional, and contextual elements. For example, Beauchamp and Thomas (2022) argues that reflection involves not only analytical thinking but also emotional awareness and identity construction. Similarly, Mohamed et al. (2022) emphasises that reflective practice should be understood as a holistic process that connects experience, beliefs, and professional action.

Another important trend is the shift from individual to socially mediated reflection. Reflective teaching is increasingly viewed as a dialogic process shaped by interaction with peers, mentors, and professional communities (Admiraal et al., 2021). This shift reflects a broader understanding that professional knowledge is co constructed through social engagement rather than developed in isolation.

Reflective Tools and Approaches

The findings demonstrate that a wide range of tools and approaches are used to facilitate reflective teaching. These can be broadly categorised into individual, collaborative, and technology mediated approaches.

Individual approaches, such as reflective journals and portfolios, remain widely used in both pre service and in service teacher education. These methods allow teachers to document their experiences and engage in reflective analysis over time. However, studies indicate that these approaches often result in surface level reflection when not supported by structured guidance (Körkkö et al., 2016).

Collaborative approaches have gained increasing attention in recent literature. Practices such as peer observation, mentoring, and professional learning communities enable teachers to engage in reflective dialogue and share perspectives. Admiraal et al. (2021) demonstrate that collaboration enhances the depth of reflection by encouraging critical discussion and exposure to alternative viewpoints.

Technology mediated approaches represent a significant development in reflective teaching. Tools such as video recordings and online platforms allow teachers to revisit their teaching practices and engage in more systematic analysis (Gaudin & Chaliès, 2015). Video based reflection is particularly effective because it enables teachers to observe their own behaviour

from an external perspective, which can reveal aspects of practice that are not immediately visible during instruction.

Recent research also highlights the growing role of digital tools in supporting reflective practice and teacher professional development. These tools facilitate continuous reflection and enable teachers to engage in more structured and evidence based analysis of their teaching practices. However, the findings indicate that the effectiveness of these tools depends on the presence of pedagogical support and structured frameworks.

Professional Growth Outcomes

A central finding of this review is that reflective teaching contributes to multiple dimensions of teachers' professional growth.

First, reflective teaching enhances instructional effectiveness. Teachers who engage in reflection are better able to analyse their practices, identify areas for improvement, and adapt their teaching strategies to meet student needs. This aligns with the findings of Cirocki and Imsa-ard (2024), who highlight the role of reflective practice in improving teaching quality.

Second, reflective practice supports the development of professional identity. By examining their beliefs, values, and experiences, teachers are able to construct a coherent sense of professional self. Körkkö et al. (2016) argue that this process is essential for sustaining long term engagement in the teaching profession.

Third, reflective teaching promotes critical thinking and professional judgement. Teachers who engage in reflective processes are more likely to question assumptions, consider alternative approaches, and make informed decisions in complex classroom situations (Cain et al., 2019).

Fourth, reflective practice contributes to emotional development and resilience. Teaching is an inherently emotional profession, and reflective processes provide opportunities for teachers to process experiences, manage stress, and develop coping strategies. Beauchamp and Thomas (2022) emphasis that emotional awareness is a key component of reflective practice and plays an important role in teacher well being.

However, the findings also indicate that the impact of reflective teaching is not uniform. The benefits of reflection are closely related to its depth and structure. When reflection remains superficial, its contribution to professional growth is limited.

Implementation Challenges

Despite the recognised benefits of reflective teaching, several challenges limit its effectiveness.

One of the most frequently reported challenges is time constraint. Teachers often face heavy workloads, which reduce opportunities for reflection. Admiraal et al. (2021) note that reflective practice requires dedicated time and cannot be sustained without institutional support.

Another major challenge is the lack of structured guidance. Without clear frameworks, teachers may struggle to move beyond descriptive reflection. This limitation is consistently

reported across studies and represents a key barrier to achieving deeper levels of reflection (Körkkö et al., 2016).

Emotional challenges also influence engagement in reflective practice. Reflecting on one's own teaching may involve confronting limitations or failures, which can create discomfort. Beauchamp and Thomas (2022) highlight that this emotional dimension may discourage teachers from engaging in reflection, particularly in unsupportive environments.

Institutional factors further shape the implementation of reflective teaching. Educational environments that prioritise performance outcomes over professional learning often provide limited support for reflective activities. Benade (2015) argues that reflective practice should be embedded within organisational structures in order to be effective.

Synthesis of Key Patterns

The synthesis of findings reveals that the effectiveness of reflective teaching depends on the interaction of multiple conditions.

Three key conditions emerge as critical. First, structured support is necessary to guide teachers toward deeper levels of reflection. Second, collaborative environments enhance reflection by facilitating dialogue and shared learning. Third, institutional conditions must support reflective practice by providing time and resources.

These findings are consistent with broader perspectives on professional learning, which emphasise the importance of integrating individual reflection with collaborative and organisational processes (Admiraal et al., 2021).

When these conditions are present, reflective teaching is more likely to lead to meaningful professional growth. When they are absent, reflection tends to remain superficial and has limited impact.

The findings also reveal a gap between theoretical expectations and practical implementation. While theoretical models emphasise critical reflection, empirical evidence suggests that achieving this level remains challenging in real world contexts.

Discussion

Reinterpreting Reflective Teaching in Contemporary Contexts

The findings of this study suggest that reflective teaching has evolved from a predominantly individual and cognitive process into a multidimensional and contextually embedded practice. While early theoretical perspectives, particularly those proposed by Schön (2017), conceptualised reflection as a form of professional inquiry centred on reflection in action and reflection on action, the present review indicates that contemporary reflective teaching extends beyond these foundational ideas.

Specifically, the analysis demonstrates that reflective teaching is increasingly shaped by social interaction, emotional engagement, and technological mediation. This aligns with recent scholarship that conceptualises teaching as a situated and collaborative practice rather than an isolated activity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2022). In this sense, reflective teaching should be

understood not merely as a strategy for improving instructional practices but as a dynamic process of professional meaning making.

This reinterpretation addresses a key limitation identified in previous literature, which often treated reflection as an individual cognitive activity. By integrating social and emotional dimensions, the present study contributes to a more comprehensive and contemporary understanding of reflective teaching.

Explaining the Gap Between Theory and Practice

One of the most significant insights emerging from the findings is the persistent gap between theoretical expectations and practical implementation of reflective teaching. Although theoretical models emphasise critical reflection as essential for professional growth, the evidence suggests that most teachers engage primarily in descriptive or technical reflection. This discrepancy can be explained by several factors. First, reflective practice requires time, cognitive effort, and emotional engagement, which are often constrained in real world educational contexts. Teachers frequently operate under conditions of high workload and limited institutional support, which restrict opportunities for deep reflection (Admiraal et al., 2021).

Second, the lack of structured guidance limits the depth of reflective engagement. Without clear frameworks, teachers may struggle to move beyond surface level reflection, resulting in limited impact on professional development (Körkkö et al., 2016).

Third, emotional factors play a critical role. Reflecting on one's own teaching may involve confronting limitations or uncertainties, which can create discomfort. As noted by Beauchamp and Thomas (2022), this emotional dimension can act as both a catalyst and a barrier to reflection.

Taken together, these factors suggest that reflective teaching is not inherently effective. Its impact depends on the conditions under which it is implemented. This finding contributes to the literature by shifting the focus from reflection as a concept to reflection as a situated practice shaped by contextual constraints.

The Central Role of Collaboration in Reflective Practice

Another important contribution of this study is the identification of collaboration as a key mechanism for enhancing reflective teaching. The findings indicate that collaborative approaches, such as professional learning communities and peer observation, significantly deepen reflective engagement.

This supports the argument that reflection is not solely an individual cognitive process but a socially constructed activity. Through interaction with peers, teachers are exposed to alternative perspectives that challenge assumptions and promote deeper levels of analysis (Admiraal et al., 2021).

Furthermore, collaboration contributes to the development of shared professional knowledge. Reflective dialogue enables teachers to co construct understanding and develop collective expertise, which is essential in complex and dynamic educational environments.

However, the effectiveness of collaborative reflection depends on the presence of supportive organisational cultures. In environments where collaboration is limited or superficial, its potential benefits may not be fully realised. This highlights the importance of institutional conditions in shaping reflective practice.

Technology Mediated Reflection as an Emerging Dimension

The increasing use of digital technologies represents a significant development in reflective teaching. The findings suggest that tools such as video recordings and online platforms provide new opportunities for teachers to engage in systematic and continuous reflection. Technology mediated reflection enhances visibility and accessibility. For example, video based reflection allows teachers to observe their own teaching from an external perspective, which can reveal aspects of practice that are not immediately apparent during instruction (Gaudin & Chaliès, 2015).

However, the integration of technology also introduces new challenges. Without appropriate pedagogical frameworks, digital tools may be used in ways that do not promote meaningful reflection. In some cases, technology may reinforce surface level reflection rather than facilitating deeper analysis.

This suggests that technology should be understood as an enabling condition rather than a solution in itself. Its effectiveness depends on how it is integrated into reflective practices and supported by appropriate guidance.

Implications for Teacher Professional Development

The findings of this study have important implications for teacher professional development. First, reflective teaching should be systematically integrated into professional development programmes. Rather than being treated as an optional activity, reflection should be embedded within ongoing professional learning processes.

Second, structured frameworks are necessary to support deeper reflection. Teachers require guidance in order to move beyond descriptive accounts and engage in analytical and critical reflection.

Third, collaborative environments should be promoted. Professional learning communities and peer based approaches provide opportunities for reflective dialogue and shared learning. Fourth, institutional support is essential. Schools and educational systems must create conditions that enable reflective practice, including allocating time for reflection and recognising its value as part of professional work.

These implications highlight that reflective teaching is most effective when it is embedded within a broader system of professional learning that integrates individual, social, and organisational dimensions.

Theoretical Contributions of the Study

This study makes several important contributions to the existing literature on reflective teaching.

First, it provides a systematic and integrative synthesis of recent research, addressing the fragmentation identified in previous studies. By bringing together diverse perspectives, the study offers a more coherent understanding of reflective teaching.

Second, the study advances theoretical understanding by conceptualising reflective teaching as a multidimensional construct that integrates cognitive, social, emotional, and technological dimensions. This extends traditional models that primarily emphasise individual cognition.

Third, the study contributes to theory by explaining the gap between reflective teaching as an ideal and its implementation in practice. By identifying the conditions that influence reflective practice, the study provides a more realistic and context sensitive framework.

Finally, the study highlights the importance of considering reflective teaching within broader organisational and institutional contexts. This perspective shifts the focus from individual practice to systemic conditions, offering new directions for research and theory development.

Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study suggest several directions for future research.

First, there is a need for longitudinal studies that examine the sustained impact of reflective teaching over time. Such studies would provide deeper insights into how reflection contributes to long term professional growth.

Second, future research should explore the role of digital technologies in greater depth. While existing studies highlight their potential, more empirical evidence is needed to understand how technology can support deep and meaningful reflection.

Third, the emotional dimension of reflective teaching requires further investigation. Future studies should examine how emotional processes influence engagement in reflection and professional development.

Fourth, cross cultural research is needed to explore how reflective teaching is implemented in different educational contexts. This would contribute to a more global understanding of reflective practice.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how reflective teaching contributes to teachers' professional growth through a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework. By synthesising 53 studies published between January 2015 and December 2025, the study provides a comprehensive and up to date understanding of reflective teaching across diverse educational contexts.

The findings indicate that reflective teaching is a multidimensional process that extends beyond instructional improvement. It supports the development of professional identity, critical thinking, and emotional resilience, while also facilitating adaptive and context responsive teaching practices. At the same time, the study demonstrates that reflective teaching is not inherently effective. Its impact depends on the depth of reflection and the conditions under which it is implemented.

From a theoretical perspective, this study advances existing literature by conceptualising reflective teaching as an integrated construct that combines cognitive, social, emotional, and technological dimensions. This perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of reflective practice and reflects contemporary developments in education.

From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the importance of structured support, collaborative environments, and institutional alignment in fostering meaningful reflective practice. Reflective teaching should be embedded within professional development systems rather than treated as an individual activity.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The review is restricted to English language publications and relies on qualitative synthesis, which limits generalisability. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies, digital reflection practices, and cross cultural comparisons in order to further advance understanding in this field.

In conclusion, reflective teaching remains a central and evolving mechanism for teacher professional growth. Its effectiveness depends on the integration of individual reflection with collaborative and organisational processes, suggesting the need for a more holistic approach to teacher development.

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