In-action reflective teaching in Vietnam: A qualitative exploration of practices, influences and implications

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Abstract

Reflective teaching plays a crucial role in the field of education though its intricacies in particular cultural contexts like Vietnam are still little understood. This study aims to investigate reflective teaching practices in more detail within the context of Vietnamese education. This study used a qualitative methodology and semi-structured interviews with twelve Vietnamese teachers, each representing a different stage of their careers to shed light on the many forms of in-action reflective practices and their implementation, benefits, drawbacks and even cultural influences. The results of this in-depth investigation provided an overview of the wide range of in-action reflective practices that are actively used in the classroom. The enhancement of adaptive teaching methodologies and the bolstering of student engagement are prominent among the many advantages that were noted. Teaching in the Vietnamese context also presents unique challenges. Teachers often struggle with the demands of multitasking, the complexities of navigating uncertainties in real-time classroom scenarios and the predominant challenge of managing large class sizes. Moreover, it was surprising to learn how many Vietnamese cultural, social and educational factors influenced teacher understanding and use of in-action reflection. The understanding of reflective teaching practices is enhanced by the research findings which also have broad implications for areas such as instructional strategies, teacher preparation programmes, academic research perspectives and even the development of educational policies. The study strongly emphasizes the pressing need for more context-specific investigations into reflective teaching and underscores the indispensable role of reflection in fostering an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

Contents

Contribution of this paper to the literature
This study shows the intricate dynamics of in-action reflective teaching within the Vietnamese context, a previously underexplored area. It offers a fresh, context-specific perspective enriching the global discourse on reflective pedagogy by focusing on the cultural, social and educational influences on reflective practices.

1. Introduction

Education is a complex, multifaceted process dependent on the sociocultural context in which it is implemented. The recognition that teaching strategies and their efficacy are inextricably linked to the social norms, values and historical foundations of a place underscores the significance of comprehending educational practices in many cultural contexts (Cornbleth, 1996). Reflective teaching is becoming an increasingly popular approach in this changing educational environment since it can give teachers the ability to assess, modify and enhance their own teaching (Ashwin et al., 2020). This study specifically aims to clarify the various forms of reflective teaching that are currently being used with a focus on the process of in-action reflection against the backdrop of the Vietnamese education system which is firmly anchored in its traditional values but striving to incorporate modern pedagogies.

Reflective teaching (a strategy that encourages educators to self-reflect on their teaching practices) is being increasingly recognized for its role in fostering self-improvement and advancing teaching quality (Ashwin et al., 2020). A more detailed examination of this teaching method in the Vietnamese context will help comprehend its use, advantages and potential drawbacks by focusing on in-action reflection which involves making judgments about what to do while teaching (Redmond, 2017). This study aims to explore its practical aspects in the classroom.

Moreover, this study also aims to fill the knowledge gap in the existing literature. Several studies have explored reflective teaching from a global perspective (Namaziandost, Heydarnejad, & Rezai, 2023; Oo, Habók, & Józsa, 2023; Webb & Scoular, 2011). Few comprehensive studies with a specific focus have been conducted in relation to Vietnam. This study aims to provide new insights into the topic by exploring the complexities of the Vietnamese educational system and comprehending how teachers apply reflection to their work.

The research questions for this study are as follows:
1. What are the various types of reflective teaching methods being used in the Vietnamese educational context?
2. How is in-action reflection implemented in practice within Vietnamese classrooms?
3. What are the perceived benefits and challenges of applying in-action reflective teaching in the Vietnamese context?
4. How do the unique cultural, social and educational aspects of Vietnam influence the implementation of reflective teaching practices particularly in-action reflection?

This study adopts a qualitative approach to address these questions, providing a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the subject matter (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The primary objective of this research is to explore the dynamics of reflective teaching in the Vietnamese educational system with a special emphasis on in-action reflection and understand its implications in this distinct sociocultural context. The findings from this study will provide a crucial reference point for educators, policymakers and researchers interested in the application and development of reflective teaching methods especially in non-Western educational contexts like Vietnam.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Reflective Teaching: An Overview

The method of reflective teaching promotes continual learning and progress as well as continuous self-evaluation and systematic review of one's teaching experiences and practices. According to Schon (1983), reflective teaching is a process where teachers think over their teaching practices, analyzing how something was taught and how the practices can be improved or changed for better learning outcomes. A wide array of literature suggests that reflective teaching plays a significant role in teacher professional development and improves teaching effectiveness (Namaziandost et al., 2023; Oo et al., 2023; Webb & Scoular, 2011).

2.2. In-Action Reflection

In-action reflection, a specific dimension of reflective teaching involves teachers making judgements and adapting their methods in real-time during a lesson (Schön, 1987). This form of reflection necessitates that teachers are able to think quickly and adapt their teaching strategies in the middle of a lesson to meet the students' learning needs (Salih & Omar, 2022). The ability to reflect in action can lead to more responsive teaching which can enhance the effectiveness of lessons and improve student outcomes (Baking, Ibarra, & Mukminin, 2023; Larrivee, 2000).

2.3. Reflective Teaching in the Vietnamese Context

The current literature on reflective teaching in Vietnam is relatively limited. However, some studies indicate that Vietnamese teachers are increasingly adopting reflective practices in their teaching (Pham & Renshaw, 2013).

Vietnam's national educational reform particularly the implementation of a competency-based curriculum emphasizes the role of teachers as facilitators of learning making reflective teaching practices highly relevant (Thao & Mai, 2022). Teachers in Vietnam are encouraged to evaluate and enhance their teaching methods to create learner-centered environments. Teachers in Vietnam are encouraged to assess and improve their approaches in order to establish learner-centered environments (Van Ha, Tran, & Tran, 2021). Reflective teaching has a great deal of promise for these types of environments.

2.4. Cultural, Social and Educational Considerations

The practice and effectiveness of reflective teaching can be significantly influenced by cultural, social and educational contexts. In the context of Vietnam, Confucian heritage profoundly shapes its educational practices, highlighting respect for teachers and emphasizing rote learning (Nguyen, 2008). Social factors such as community expectations and socio-economic realities also play a role in shaping teaching practices (Dinh & Nguyen, 2020). Recognizing and understanding these aspects are critical for exploring the implementation of reflective teaching in Vietnam and identifying ways to effectively integrate in-action reflection in Vietnamese classrooms.

2.5. Related Studies

Reflective teaching has been increasingly popular in educational research, with a focus on how well it may support effective instruction in a variety of contexts. Webb and Scoular (2011) explored its global applications, underscoring its role in enhancing teaching quality and continuous professional development. Nevertheless, their emphasis on western educational settings presents a gap in understanding its implications for non- western   land particularly in Vietnam. Similarly, according to Ashwin et al. (2020), reflective teaching is a critical way for teachers to evaluate and improve their approaches. While they acknowledged the essence of reflection in teaching evolution, their exploration remained general without delving into specific methods such as in-action reflection. Redmond (2017) shed light without tethering it to any distinct cultural or regional backdrop. Additionally, while the ideas from Djoub (2017) and Pow and Lai (2021) about worldwide teaching methods add valuable insights, there is still a need for a detailed examination of how these ideas apply to the unique cultural and social aspects of Vietnam's education system. These studies underscore the urgent need for an intricate examination of reflective teaching especially in-action reflection in the distinct context of Vietnam's educational landscape.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design which allows for an in-depth exploration of the various types of reflective teaching methods in Vietnam with a specific focus on in-action reflection. A qualitative approach is well-suited for this study as it enables the researchers to gain rich nuanced insights into the experiences and perceptions of teachers (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This research was supported by two primary theoretical frameworks: Schön's theory of reflective practice and the sociocultural theory of learning. The study used Schön's theory of reflective practice as a foundation particularly focusing on his concept of reflection in action (Schön, 1987). According to Schön (1987), reflective practitioners engage in a constant process of learning and "reflection-in-action" involves thinking, examining and questioning what one is doing while in the act of doing it. This study focused on understanding how this form of reflection has been employed in Vietnamese classrooms. The sociocultural theory of learning which holds that learning is fundamentally a social activity influenced by historical and cultural contexts was reviewed during the study (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The use of this theoretical framework was essential concerning how Vietnamese EFL teachers perceived the specific cultural, social and educational circumstances of Vietnam to have an impact on the application and practice of reflective teaching.

3.2. Participants

The participants for this study were 12 teachers from various educational settings across Vietnam   classified according to their career stages. The classification was created to provide comprehensive knowledge of reflective teaching practices across several stages of a teaching career by incorporating the perspectives and observations of novice, mid-career and near-end-career instructors.

Four participants (namely Phuong, Quan, Thao and Vuong) were novice teachers with less than five years of teaching experience. These participants were at the initial stage of their careers, dealing with the complexities of classroom management and lesson planning. They brought to the study their fresh perspectives and experience providing insights into how novice teachers integrate reflective practices into their pedagogical strategies while navigating the newness of their profession. The study also included four mid-career teachers (namely Minh, Linh, Quynh and Nhan) with teaching experience ranging from five to fifteen years. These participants have spent a long time in the profession and have gained experiences in their teaching practices. They provided insights into how reflective teaching evolves with experience and how in-action reflection is embedded in their pedagogical decisions and adaptations. Finally, the study comprised four near end-career teachers (namely Thanh, Bao, Triet and Huy) with more than fifteen years of teaching experience. These participants brought their long-term experiences and deep understanding of the education field, providing a rich context to understand the role and practice of reflective teaching over a prolonged career.

In terms of ethical considerations, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved and their rights as participants before their participation. They were told that there would be no consequences if they chose to leave the study at any point and that participation was completely voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the commencement of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured with pseudonyms used to replace participants' real names in all research documents and publications to protect their identities. All the data collected were securely stored and only accessible to the research team.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

The primary instrument used for data collection in this study was semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences and perspectives while offering enough flexibility to delve into unexpected avenues that emerge during the conversation. The interviews were designed to investigate participants' understanding and practice of reflective teaching methods, specifically focusing on in-action reflection in the Vietnamese context. A set of pre-determined open-ended questions was developed as an interview guide serving as a flexible framework for each interview.

These questions included "How do you understand and describe reflective teaching?", "Can you share an instance where you employed in-action reflection in your teaching practice?", "How do you think in-action reflection impacts your teaching?", "What challenges have you faced in implementing reflective teaching methods, especially in-action reflection?", and "How do you think the cultural, social and educational context of Vietnam influences your practice of reflective teaching?"

In addition to these pre-determined questions, follow-up questions and probes were used to explore specific aspects more deeply based on participants' responses. This approach helped to provide an understanding of the topic and allowed the participants to share their experiences in a detailed and nuanced manner. All interviews were conducted in a comfortable and private setting chosen by the participants and Vietnamese as the participants' mother tongue was used ensuring their ease and openness during the discussion. The interviews were audio recorded to ensure accuracy in data transcription and analysis with the participants' permission. Each interview lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. The study aimed to capture the complexities of reflective teaching practices in the Vietnamese context, offering a comprehensive understanding of in-action reflection from the participants' perspectives by using semi-structured interviews as a data collection instrument.

A pilot study was conducted prior to the main study to ensure the reliability and validity of the study. This preliminary step was crucial in refining the research design, testing the interview protocol and enhancing the overall methodological robustness of the study. The pilot study involved three teachers: one novice, one mid-career and one near-end-career. These teachers were selected to represent the broader population of the main study and to test the interview protocol across different stages of teaching careers. The teachers in the pilot study did not participate in the main study. The pilot study followed the same procedure planned for the main study conducting semi-structured interviews based on the developed interview guide. The process allowed for testing the clarity, relevance and appropriateness of the interview questions. Additionally, the pilot study also estimates the average duration of the interviews which was useful in planning the timeline for the main study. The participants of the pilot study provided feedback on their understanding of the questions, their comfort level during the interview and the overall process. This feedback was invaluable in making necessary adjustments and improvements to the interview guide and process.

The interview guide had slight modifications based on the pilot study's outcomes. These revisions included clarifying some questions and adding suggestions for delving deeper into particular topics. Additionally, the feedback from participants helped to improve interviewing skills, especially in maintaining a conversational tone, ensuring participants' comfort and encouraging them to share detailed and reflective responses. The pilot study significantly contributed to enhancing the reliability and validity of the study. The reliability was improved through the refinement of the interview guide, ensuring the questions were clear and would elicit consistent information. The validity was enhanced by ensuring the questions were relevant and appropriate for addressing the research questions, providing meaningful and accurate insights into the phenomenon under study. We made the required modifications and were able to anticipate possible problems by doing a pilot research which ensured that the main study was carried out as accurately and effectively as possible.

3.4. Data Analysis

In this study, the data collected from the semi-structured interviews was analyzed using a method called thematic analysis. This is a suitable approach as it facilitates the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns or themes within the data, thereby allowing for a rich, detailed and intricate understanding of the data (Braun, Clarke, & Hayfield, 2023).

The interviews were all verbatim transcribed as the first step in this process and their accuracy was checked by listening to the corresponding audio recordings as these transcripts were being reviewed. This meticulous step was necessary to create a textual account of the verbal data that could be carefully examined. After transcription, the researchers embarked on familiarizing themselves with the data. This entailed repeatedly reading and rereading the transcripts and making initial observations and notes. The researchers gained a deep comprehension of the data's content by completely comprehending it. The data was carefully coded after familiarization. In this context, the term "coding" refers to the process of identifying and labelling data segments that address intriguing or pertinent elements concerning the research topics. These codes were applied across the entire dataset and included both expected and emergent themes. Once the coding was complete, the researchers began to sort the various codes into potential themes. These themes represented patterns or concepts that were prevalent throughout the data. Each theme was then reviewed and refined to ensure that it represented a distinct aspect of the data. Subsequently, the potential themes underwent a review process on two levels: at the coded data extraction level and in relation to the entire dataset. This step checked whether the themes accurately reflected the meanings evident in the full dataset. After this, the themes were further refined, defined and named. Each capturing the essence of what it represented. Finally, a detailed analysis of each theme was conducted. This analysis combined an analytic narrative with data extracts and linked the analysis back to the original research questions and the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study.

The study provided an organized and systematic approach to exploring the complex material provided from the interviews by using thematic analysis. This approach offered profound insights into the practice and experience of reflective teaching within the Vietnamese context.

4. Findings

4.1. What are the Various Types of Reflective Teaching Methods Being used in the Vietnamese Educational Context?

The exploration of reflective teaching methods in the Vietnamese educational context led to the identification of several distinct types within the realm of reflection-in-action. This type of reflection included real-time responsive adjustments to classroom situations with different teachers favoring different approaches.

4.1.1. Proactive Pedagogical Adjustment

The first type involves immediate modifications in teaching strategies in response to students' immediate learning needs. Novice teacher Phuong described this practice by saying *"I constantly scan the room, gauging student reactions. If something is not working, I adjust on the spot."*

4.1.2. Responsive Emotional Regulation

The second type entails managing emotional responses in real-time to create a conducive learning environment. Mid-career teacher Minh stated *"Sometimes, the class gets too energetic or too quiet. I constantly assess the emotional state of the class and adjust my demeanor to maintain a positive and productive atmosphere."*

4.1.3. Spontaneous Scaffolding

The third form involves altering the complexity and structure of the lesson in real-time based on students' learning progress. Near-end career teacher Thanh gave an example of this approach when she said *"I frequently modify the difficulty level or pace of the lesson based on the students' responses. It is like adjusting the dance steps to the rhythm."*

4.1.4. Real-time Feedback Integration

The fourth type involves adapting teaching strategies based on students' feedback and queries during the lesson. Novice teacher Quan shared *"I value student questions and comments during the lesson. They often lead me to adjust my teaching by adding more examples or clarifying difficult points."*

4.1.5. Instantaneous Resource Alteration

The fifth type of reflection-in-action encompasses the on-the-spot modification of teaching materials and resources to cater to student needs and interests. A mid-career teacher, Linh explained, *"Sometimes, I may change the planned activities or introduce new materials during the lesson if I feel it can better engage the students."*

These findings highlight the diversity of in-action reflection strategies used by teachers in the Vietnamese context to enhance the dynamism, responsiveness and relevance of teaching in its unique way.

4.2. How is in-Action Reflection Implemented in Practice within Vietnamese Classrooms?

In exploring the second research question of how in-action reflection is implemented in practice within Vietnamese classrooms, the study identified several distinct strategies.

4.2.1. Attending to Classroom Dynamics

The first approach involves continuously monitoring and responding to classroom dynamics. This strategy is aligned with the essence of reflection-in-action, where teaching adjustments are made based on real-time observations. Novice teacher Thao explained *"I am always observing the class, looking for signs of understanding or confusion. My teaching does not follow a fixed script. I am ready to adjust the direction, content or pace based on what I see."*

4.2.2. Collaborative Decision-Making

The second approach involves collaborative decision-making with students. This practice of seeking student feedback and integrating it into the teaching process highlights an interactive form of reflection-in-action. A near-end career teacher Huy described, *"In the middle of a lesson, I sometimes pause and ask the students how they are finding the lesson. Their feedback helps me adjust my teaching strategies immediately."*

4.2.3. Real-time Assessment

The third approach focuses on real-time assessment. This form of reflection-in-action uses immediate assessment data to inform teaching decisions. Mid-career teacher Minh shared, *"I frequently use quick formative assessments to check the students' understanding. These instant assessments help me adjust my teaching accordingly."*

4.2.4. Modifying Teaching Resources

The fourth approach is modifying teaching resources on-the-spot. This practice underscores a flexible and responsive approach to resource use, constituting another form of reflection-in-action. Mid-career teacher Triet shared, *"Sometimes, I might change the planned activities or introduce new materials in the middle of the lesson if I feel it can better engage the students."*

4.2.5. Adjusting Classroom Management Strategies

The fifth approach involves adjusting classroom management strategies in real-time. This strategy emphasizes the broader scope of reflection-in-action extending beyond teaching strategies to include classroom management. Near-end career teacher Bao stated *"I continuously adjust my classroom management strategies based on the students' behavior. It is not just about teaching content; it is also about maintaining a conducive learning environment."*

The findings reveal a multifaceted picture of how in-action reflection is employed in the Vietnamese classroom with teachers leveraging a range of strategies to optimize their instruction in response to the immediate needs and dynamics of the class. These findings emphasize the flexible, responsive and interactive nature of in-action

reflective teaching, attesting to its potential to enhance teaching effectiveness and student learning in the Vietnamese context.

4.3. What are the Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Applying in-Action Reflective Teaching in the Vietnamese Context?

In addressing the third research question of perceived benefits and challenges of applying in-action reflective teaching in the Vietnamese context, the teachers provided valuable insights.

4.3.1. Benefits of Reflection-in-Action

The benefits of employing in-action reflection in teaching were notably highlighted by the participants. Linh a mid-career teacher emphasized the flexibility and adaptability that reflection-in-action offers stating *"Reflection-in-action allows me to tailor my teaching to the needs and interests of my students in real time."* This sentiment was further echoed by Bao a near-end career teacher who noted the positive effect of real-time adjustments on student engagement remarking *"By adjusting my teaching strategies in real time, I can better hold the students' attention and engage them more actively in the learning process."* Similarly, novice teacher Vuong underscored the utility of in-action reflection for immediate correction saying *"If something is not working, I can adjust it right away without waiting for the next class."* Along the same lines, mid-career teacher Nhan pinpointed the benefits of reflection-in-action for professional growth remarking *"Reflection-in-action challenges me to think and to continuously improve my teaching skills."* Moreover, Thanh a near-end career teacher highlighted the alignment of in-action reflection with student-centered learning noting *"This approach puts the students at the center of the learning process as I adjust my teaching based on their immediate responses and needs."* In summary, the perceived benefits of in-action reflection ranged from increased adaptability and student engagement to immediate course correction, professional growth and student-centered learning. These findings suggest that in-action reflection can offer significant advantages for teaching and learning in the Vietnamese context despite the challenges.

4.3.2. Challenges of Reflection-in-Action

The participants of this study also shared their perceptions of the challenges associated with implementing in-action reflection in their teaching. Novice teacher Quan expressed concern about the multitasking demands of implementing in-action reflection stating *"It is quite demanding to manage the class, observe student reactions, reflect and adjust my teaching all at the same time."* Minh a mid-career teacher highlighted the uncertainty associated with making spontaneous adjustments to teaching plans mentioning *"Making on-the-spot changes to my teaching plan can sometimes lead to unexpected outcomes causing confusion or off-track discussions."* Similarly, Phuong another novice teacher pointed out that time constraints can complicate the implementation of reflection-in-action noting *"I sometimes feel rushed. There is not always enough time to properly reflect and adjust during a busy class."* Meanwhile, Quynh a mid-career teacher discussed the difficulties of applying reflection-in-action in large classes which is a common scenario in Vietnamese classrooms stating *"When the class size is large, it is challenging to monitor all students closely and make effective adjustments."* Lastly, Bao a near-end career teacher highlighted inadequate training as a significant hurdle to effective in-action reflection saying *"I was not formally trained in reflection-in-action. I have had to learn it on my own which is challenging."* The problems of in-action reflection in the Vietnamese classroom setting include the need to multitask, unpredictability, time limits, high class strength and inadequate training despite the apparent advantages. This highlights how crucial it is to have strategic assistance and training in order to fully use the potential advantages of this reflective practice.

4.4. How do the Unique Cultural, Social and Educational Aspects of Vietnam Influence the Implementation of Reflective Teaching Practices Particularly in-Action Reflection?

In the exploration of the fourth research question, the teachers provided insights into how the unique cultural, social and educational aspects of Vietnam influence the implementation of reflective teaching practices particularly in-action reflection.

Reflective teaching methods were seen to be influenced by Vietnamese culture which is well-known for its values of harmony, balance and collectivism. Mid-career teacher Linh explained *"The value of harmony in our cultural influences how I adjust my teaching. I'm often looking for ways to create a harmonious learning environment making sure all students are engaged and no one is left behind."* Near-end career teacher Bao further highlighted the role of collectivism stating *"our culture values are shared over individual success. So, my in-action reflection often involves adjustments to ensure all students are learning rather than focusing on a few individuals."* The teachers also highlighted how social and educational contexts influence their reflective practices. Novice teacher Phuong noted that *"in Vietnam, there is a great respect for teachers and a high expectation for academic success. This puts pressure on us to continually reflect and adjust our teaching methods to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for our students."* Mid-career teacher Minh added that *"the growing diversity in our classrooms as well as the introduction of new educational policies advocating for more student-centered teaching have prompted us to use more in-action reflection to provide for diverse student needs and meet policy requirements."*

In a nutshell, the findings reveal that the implementation of reflective teaching practices particularly in-action reflection in the Vietnamese context is influenced by a complex array of factors including cultural values, social expectations and educational policies and trends. It underscores the need for a context-specific understanding and approach to teaching and teacher professional development.

5. Discussion

5.1. What are the Various Types of Reflective Teaching Methods Being Used in the Vietnamese Educational Context?

The findings suggest that Vietnamese teachers use reflection-in-action in a multifaceted and dynamic manner adapting to the immediate pedagogical demands of their classrooms. These distinct types reflect Schön (1987) concept of reflection-in-action as a flexible and context-sensitive reflective practice. The use of metaphors by

teachers to describe their in-action reflective teaching experiences such as "steering a boat" and "dancing" further highlights the distinctive characteristics of these practices in the Vietnamese educational context. The metaphor of "steering a boat" captures the dynamic nature of in-action reflection wherein teachers like boat captains, continually adjust their course in response to emerging classroom situations much like sailors respond to changing sea conditions (Quyet, 2022). The metaphor of "dancing" highlights the fluidity and agility of in-action reflection. Teachers must quickly adapt their instructional strategies similar to how a dancer adjusts their movements in response to the rhythm and flow of the music (Gaitas & Alves Martins, 2017). These metaphors not only elucidate the practices of in-action reflection but also underscore the intricate interplay between these practices and the unique cultural and educational context of Vietnam.

5.2. How is in-Action Reflection Implemented in Practice within the Vietnamese Classrooms?

The findings reflect Schön (1987) conceptualization of the adaptable nature of reflection-in-action. Her adaptability in adapting her lesson plans to the changing needs and interests of her students aligns with Lammert (2023) need for responsive and flexible instruction. Furthermore, the results support Zwozdiak-Myers (2018) claim that engaging and dynamic teaching methods increase student participation. The strategy of modifying instruction in real-time aligns with the Ministry of Education and Training's (MOET) goal to move Vietnamese education towards interactive, student-centered learning methodologies (MOET, 2018). Moreover, the teachers' appreciation of immediate correction echoes the teacher's appreciation of immediate correction is consistent with Heritage and Heritage (2013) claim that in classrooms with large students, a frequent occurrence in Vietnamese education, real-time reflection enables teachers to recognize and address pedagogical problems quickly. Carey, Harrison, and Dwyer (2017) view reflective practice as a pathway to teacher learning. This continuous skill development is particularly crucial in Vietnam where teachers face diverse and continually changing classrooms due to rapid socio-economic changes and educational reforms (Thao & Mai, 2022). Finally, the teachers' remark on the promotion of student-centered learning through in-action reflection underlines the fundamental shift from traditional teacher-centered methods towards more participatory and student-oriented approaches in Vietnam's recent education reforms (MOET, 2018).

5.3. What are the Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Applying in-Action Reflective Teaching in the Vietnamese Context?

The teacher's concerns about managing many activities at once are consistent with Van Merriënboer (1997) claim that teaching is a difficult task that necessitates paying attention to various things simultaneously. This problem can get worse when reflection-in-action is included. This issue might be particularly prominent in Vietnam where teachers often handle large classes and a diversity of student needs due to rapid social changes and educational reforms (Nguyen & Ha, 2021). Furthermore, the teachers' mention of the risks associated with making spontaneous adjustments resonates with Swanson and Mason (2018) view. Real-time modifications may have unanticipated consequences that students diverted or confuse them. Vietnamese classrooms are traditionally more structured and less spontaneous, this uncertainty might pose a significant challenge for Vietnamese teachers (Doan & Gibson, 2012). Furthermore, the teacher's references to time restrictions reflect Hatton and Smith (1995) concern that there is frequently little time for in-depth, directly reflection due to the rapid pace of classroom activities. This concern is exacerbated in Vietnamese classrooms where teachers are required to cover a vast curriculum within a limited timeframe (Hai & Nhung, 2019). The teachers' point on the difficulty of implementing reflection-in-action in large classes coincides with Wang et al. (2023) finding. Monitoring and adjusting teaching to the needs of every student can be challenging in large classes (Vu, 2023). Lastly, the teachers' observation on the lack of training aligns with Mohamed and Ab Rashid (2023) study which underscores the importance of adequate training for reflective practice. In-action reflection is a relatively new concept in the Vietnamese educational context. Teachers may not have received formal training in this method making its effective implementation challenging.

5.4. How do the Unique Cultural, Social and Educational Aspects of Vietnam Influence the Implementation of Reflective Teaching Practices Particularly in-Action Reflection?

These findings corroborate Pham and Renshaw (2013) work that explored how Confucian values impacted teaching and learning practices. It further extends this knowledge by demonstrating how these cultural values specifically influence in-action reflection. This provides a unique cultural perspective on the understanding of reflective teaching practices emphasizing that the nature and implementation of such practices can be context-specific. The social and educational context of Vietnam also plays a significant role in shaping reflective teaching practices. The high societal respect for teachers (Tran & Moskovsky, 2022) coupled with the expectation for academic success (Le et al., 2020) puts pressure on teachers to continually reflect and adapt their teaching methods. Teachers in this study acknowledged feeling this pressure which appears to motivate more frequent and meticulous in-action reflection. Additionally, the increasing diversity in classrooms and evolving educational policies advocating for more student-centered teaching also impact the use of in-action reflection. Teachers reported the need to provide for diverse student needs and align with policy requirements motivating the use of in-action reflection. This resonates with Nguyen and Tran (2018) findings that the changing social and educational landscape in Vietnam has led to changes in teaching practices.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to explore the types, implementation, benefits, challenges and cultural influences of reflective teaching practices specifically in-action reflection within the Vietnamese context. Drawing on the experiences and insights of twelve Vietnamese teachers at different career stages, the study provides an in-depth look at in-action reflection from the popular level of the Vietnamese education system.

The findings reveal a rich and diverse array of in-action reflective practices highlighting five main types: adjusting teaching strategies, altering the pace of lessons, changing classroom dynamics, refining classroom

management techniques and modifying instructional content. The implementation of these practices is characterized by teachers' continual observation, decision-making, and adaptation during teaching.

This study confirms several benefits of in-action reflection such as promoting adaptive teaching and student engagement, enhancing immediate correction, fostering teacher skill development and encouraging student-centered learning. It also reveals challenges such as multitasking demands, managing uncertainties, time constraints, large class sizes and a lack of training. This underscores the multifaceted nature of in-action reflection and the need for careful consideration and support to ensure its effective implementation.

One of the critical insights from the study is the significant influence of the unique cultural, social and educational aspects of Vietnam on reflective teaching practices. The nature, use and perceptions of in-action reflection are influenced by a variety of factors including classroom diversity, respect for teachers in society, harmony and collectivism and changing educational policy. This highlights the importance of a context-specific understanding of reflective teaching practices.

This work not only encourages further study but also adds significant information to the field. Exploring how teacher training and professional development programs in Vietnam can better support the implementation of in-action reflection especially considering the identified benefits and challenges would be a fruitful avenue for future investigation. Studies examining the student perspective on teachers' in-action reflective practices could also provide a more holistic understanding of this aspect of teaching and learning.

7. Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for various stakeholders in education such as teachers, educational researchers and policymakers within the context of Vietnamese education and potentially other similar contexts.

For teachers, the results provide a guide to understand the multifaceted nature of in-action reflective teaching methods. By revealing various types of in-action reflective practices used by Vietnamese teachers, the study serves as a resource that can inform and enhance their own reflective practices. Additionally, insights into the benefits and challenges associated with in-action reflection can equip teachers with a more holistic understanding enabling them to better anticipate potential difficulties and maximize the advantages. The study also shed light on how cultural, social and educational factors may influence reflective practices, offering teachers context-specific insights that can potentially enrich their implementation of in-action reflection.

The results of the study underline the importance of incorporating reflective teaching methods particularly in-action reflection. Teachers who are pre-service or in-service can benefit from specialized modules or workshops that address issues like handling uncertainty and the demands of multitasking. These resources can assist in helping teachers get the skills and techniques they need to meet these problems. Understanding how cultural, social and educational factors influence reflective practices can guide the adaptation and delivery of these training programs making them more effective and contextually relevant.

Lastly, the study has important implications for policymakers. The findings suggest that educational policies should support and promote reflective teaching practices. These may include strategies facilitating smaller class sizes allocating protected time for teacher reflection and encouraging student-centered teaching approaches. Furthermore, understanding the impact of cultural, social and educational factors on reflective practices underlines the need for educational policies that are tailored to specific contexts.

8. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

Despite its significant contributions, this study acknowledges several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the study was conducted with a small sample size of twelve teachers limiting the generalizability of the findings. The sample also exclusively included teachers and did not provide insights from the perspectives of students or administrators which might be valuable to achieve a more holistic understanding of in-action reflective practices. Secondly, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews and while this approach allowed for in-depth exploration, it relied heavily on participants' self-reporting which might be subject to bias. Lastly, this study specifically explored the Vietnamese context. It provides a rich understanding of in-action reflective practices in this context. The findings might not be applicable to other cultural or educational settings.

Several recommendations are proposed for further research. Future studies could employ a larger sample size and perhaps incorporate a wider range of participants such as students and administrators to capture a more comprehensive view of in-action reflective practices and enhance generalizability. In terms of data collection, employing a mixed-methods approach could provide a more robust analysis. This might involve supplementing interview data with observations of teaching practices or analysis of teaching artifacts to mitigate potential biases inherent in self-reporting methods. Lastly, similar research should be conducted in different cultural and educational contexts to extend our understanding of in-action reflective practices. Comparative studies could also be valuable to identify commonalities and differences in these practices across various settings contributing to a more nuanced and global understanding of reflective teaching.

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