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## AN INVESTIGATION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE PRACTICES OF REFLECTIVE TEACHING WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO ADDIS ABABA SECONDARY SCHOOLS EFL TEACHERS IN ETHIOPIA

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### ABSTRACT

*A limited number of studies addressed the issue of practising reflective teaching at the Secondary schools in general and in the English language classroom in particular in Ethiopia. For this reason, the researcher has conducted this study, which is qualitative-quantitative in nature, aiming to assess the frequency of reflective teaching practices from the view of 9th and 10th grade teachers of English as a foreign language in Addis Ababa Secondary Schools and to compare them with their actual practices. The study employed two data collection tools, including an attitude scale questionnaire and classroom observations. To answer the study questions, all the teachers of EFL for the 9th and the 10th grades of Kirkos and Yeka Sub-cities in Addis Ababa, which then counted 96 teachers, were asked to fill the study attitude scale questionnaire. Consequently, an in-depth group of seven teachers was addressed for an in-depth investigation of teachers' actual reflective teaching beliefs and practices, their classrooms were observed. Finally, beliefs were compared with practices. The findings of the study revealed that the population of the study believe they adopt before class conduct and while class conduct reflective teaching practices at high level, while they believe they adopt after class conduct reflective teaching practices at a medium level. In real, the in-depth group teachers held positive attitudes towards reflective teaching, but their classes were basically teacher-centred, and were not rich of reflective teaching practices. While, before and after class conduct reflective teaching practices were less evident which contradicts with their views on how often they adopt such practices. Therefore, Ethiopian EFL teachers should have adequate orientation and training in the skills, practices and strategies involved in reflective teaching, and be encouraged to use them in their career. Since results revealed that reflective teachers' classes can be considered successful.*

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### KEYWORDS

*Reflection; Reflective Teaching; Reflective Practice, EFL teachers; Professional Development*

### INTRODUCTION

The world is in a constant state of change in every aspect: technologically, socially, politically, and economically. This demands a nation's school system to be responsive and continuously update the capacity of its staff. To this end, professional development programs for teachers are seen to play a vital role as they provide opportunities for teachers to learn and grow within the profession. This in turn is expected to have an impact on students' learning outcome (Lowden, 2005). In view of the dynamic nature of teaching as a profession; it seems hard to imagine effective teachers without being intellectually energetic and thoughtful about their work in continuous manner. This implies that teachers, before they start to teach, have to get ready for the real task of teaching so as to initiate their students towards thinking and practicing critically and creatively. So, teachers need to employ many different approaches if they wish to find a way to improve their teaching and learning. Teachers need to be aware of their roles as self-regulated learners in order to examine their practice and document their quest for self-development. How can teachers move to a higher level of awareness of their teaching? One way of doing this is reflecting on their teaching and using observation and reflection as a way of bringing about change.

As far as Teacher Education is concerned, there have been lots of changes over the second half of the century in Second/Foreign Language Teaching and teacher education, and more specifically from 1990 onward (Akbari, 2005; Crandall, 2000; Freeman, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Pica, 2000). These changes characterize a shift from a positivist-oriented perspective to a constructivist-oriented one and a shift from transmission, product-oriented theories to constructivist, process-oriented theories of teaching and learning. Brown (2000) maintains that constructivism came into being as a dominant paradigm only in the last part of the twentieth century. Thus, this new conception of knowledge puts the act of teaching and learning in an entirely different context. As Cunningham (2001) explains, "Constructivism views teaching as an active process where teachers reflect upon their current and past knowledge and experiences to generate new ideas and concepts" (p. 2). As a result, "a shift to a constructivist perspective of teaching and teacher learning makes teachers a primary source of knowledge about teaching" (Crandall, 2000, p. 35).

The paradigm shift in education is also true in Ethiopia. Following the shift of political power in 1991, one of the policies promises and discourses was to effect major change in the national education system. By issuing the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy in 1994, an official

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educational conviction and commitment was formulated which asserted four educational goals: quality, access, relevance and equity. More recently, a 'system overhaul' and 'paradigm shift' was promised and argued for regarding the way teachers are prepared. Among the actions taken, formal schooling has given a slightly modified apparatus or structure. As a result, in the last two decades, the Ethiopian government has embarked on a massive expansion of the national education system with the intention to transform the country. The increasing access to education was also fuelled by the government's promise to meet its official educational goals such as achieving universal primary education in 2015 and secondary education in 2020. To this end, a centrally designed continuous professional development program have been disseminated in a top-down fashion and implemented prescriptively across the country. The overall aim of the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program is to improve teacher effectiveness and raise the achievement levels of students in Ethiopian schools (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2003; 2009). It is expected that effective professional development opportunities for teachers will renew their capacity to improve classroom practices and will have a positive impact on student learning and achievement.

Currently, schools are challenged to raise student achievement through the provision of CPD in Ethiopia. The Ministry of Education has designed and implemented a series of policy guides to address the multifaceted problems in the education sector. These documents include: Continuous Professional Development Guideline (MOE, 2003); Teacher Education System Overhaul (MOE, 2003); and General Education Quality Improvement Program (MOE, 2007). Notably, all these initiatives place substantial emphasis on professional development of teachers. The guidelines of the CPD program were developed in 2003 and introduced to the schools by central reform planners in a top-down approach. As stated in the CPD guide produced by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2003), the overall objectives of the CPD program are aimed at helping teachers to understand the concept of CPD, to engage in high quality CPD and to develop their knowledge and skills continuously, thereby bringing about improvements in student learning and achievement.

The CPD guide also intends to promote active learning, problem solving, and student-centred teaching methods that are lacking in the system. Acknowledging that CPD is the most effective process and system of learning, experiencing and sharing throughout a teacher's career, the CPD guide articulates that all serving teachers and head teachers should have the right of access to high-quality and relevant CPD opportunities. The newly employed teachers are also expected to work through a two-year induction program, produced at the national level and supported by mentors. These mentors are selected from experienced members of staff in the schools. Although the CPD guide is largely aimed at improving the performance of teachers in the classroom in





order to raise student achievement and learning, the evidence shows that the program has so far not been successful in fulfilling its promise.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although the benefits of adopting a reflective and constructivist orientation to teaching with emphasis on negotiating curriculum with students (Smith, 2012) were acknowledged by educators and teachers, research shows that this was only done in theory. Efforts to bring about pedagogical change through the Meta cognitive development of student teachers have not been implemented successfully as teachers are still reluctant to change old methods of teaching and continue for the most part to favour, in practice, a teacher-centred approach. Thus, the entire educational system reproduces a practice where reflective and self-regulative processes are rarely employed by teachers. This situation is also evident in High School despite the fact that many High School EFL teachers receive their training concerning reflective teaching. Therefore, although the idea of being reflective is obvious to many, this is a process that has to be guided and designed rather than be neglected. In other words, to succeed one needs to be committed and have a systematic account of it, and it is up to the teachers to improve their teaching profession and their students' active learning involvement. Given this fact, this study aimed at assessing the practice of secondary school EFL teachers' professional development through reflective practice in Addis Ababa Secondary Schools.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the last two decades, language teaching profession has witnessed a dramatic shift of attention and orientation. One of these conceptual shifts which have received much attention is the disappearance of method from academic discussions and the rise of the post-method debate (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). The post-method debate has academically put an end to method discussions and the search for the good method (Kumaravadivelu, 1994), although its practical counterpart, that is, methodology, is still a legitimate notion and very much alive to many teachers. After the successive rise and fall of a series of methods and approaches in the early and mid-twentieth century, the English Language Teaching (ELT) researchers and practitioners came to realize that no single method or approach of language teaching would be the optimal framework to guarantee success in teaching a foreign language especially as it was seen that certain learners seemed to be successful regardless of methods or techniques of teaching (Brown, 2000). Moreover, as far as the history of language teaching has reported, it is clear that some approaches and methods were unlikely to be widely adopted because they were difficult to understand and use, lacked clear practical application, required special training, and necessitated major changes in teachers' practices and beliefs.





Kumaravadivelu's (2003a) first major criticism of the concept of method is that it has limiting and limited effects on language teachers and learners in that it seems challenging to apply the pure forms of the methods in the classroom. Since language learning and teaching needs and situations are idiosyncratic, methods fail to provide actual practitioners with situation-specific suggestions because they are artificially transplanted into the classroom and far from classroom realities. Therefore, method should not be thought of as a valuable construct so there is a need for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method. Secondly, Kumaravadivelu (1994) criticizes conventional methods for not being context-sensitive and giving unnecessary importance to theorizers in pedagogical decision-making process. Accordingly, he presents a set of macro-strategies that are subject to change and enable teachers to discover their own context-sensitive micro-strategies. Along with the macro-strategic framework that is constructed in post method pedagogy, Kumaravadivelu (2001, 2003a, 200b) conceptualizes three-dimensional operating principles namely particularity, possibility and practicality. Particularity seeks to highlight a context sensitive, location-specific nature of language teaching based on local, linguistic, social, cultural and political features. Possibility deals with the socio-cultural realities and socio-political experiences that participants bring to the pedagogical setting. On the other hand, practicality spells out the relationship between theory and practice, highlighting the need for teachers to generate their own theory of practice. The concept of practicality gives the opportunity for teachers to analyze and assess the situations, consider the alternatives and then, construct their own theories according to the needs appeared. This can only be possible through continuous reflection and action.

One of the overarching features of post method pedagogy is that it strongly emphasizes the role of the teachers as decision-makers. In that sense, teacher reflection is seen as a major component; i.e., it is believed that teachers with the help of self-observation, self-analysis and self-evaluation can shape and reshape classroom learning and teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). If the conventional concept of method entitles theorizers to construct knowledge-oriented theories of pedagogy, the post-method condition empowers practitioners to construct classroom-oriented theories of practice. If the concept of method authorizes theorizers to centralize pedagogic decision making, the post-method condition enables practitioners to generate location-specific, classroom-oriented innovative practices (ibid). Teachers are considered as great sources of knowledge as a result of their experience in the past as students, past experience of teaching, knowledge of one or more methods gained throughout their training as teachers, knowledge of other teachers' actions and opinions and their experience as parents or caretakers. Therefore, post-method teachers are encouraged to develop and create their own methods as they gain experience based on their classroom context and knowledge of other methods and approaches. As a result, the constructed method reflects teachers' beliefs, values and experiences (Richards, 2008). In this sense, post-method teachers are autonomous, analysts, strategic researchers and





decision-makers. Such teachers are also reflective as they observe their teaching, evaluate the results, identify problems, find solutions, and try new techniques. Based on this, there is a movement from “science-research conceptions” towards “art-craft conception of teaching” as well as a shift from top-down process to bottom-up process as teachers “theorize what they practice or practice what they theorize” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a, p. 37). However, One should notice that post-method does not disregard the knowledge of existing methods and approaches because these methods make you aware of your beliefs and principles and provide inexperienced teachers with some valuable initial knowledge (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This process can only occur when teachers have a sense of plausibility which means subjective understanding of the teaching they do. In this sense, Akbari (2007) claims that one of the consequences of the post method era can be regarded as the rise of reflective practice in language teaching. The literature thus argues that teachers should have the opportunity to generate their theory of practice within a particular context and shape them according to the needs of the students. In the method era, however, teachers have had to implement what the language teaching methods dictated and there was a gap between theorizers and practitioners, which resulted in teachers having almost no critical voice (Akbari, 2007). Thus, the concept reflective practice has direct implications for post method pedagogy as it enables teachers to “develop more informed practice, make tacit beliefs and practical knowledge explicit leading to new ways of knowing, articulating and teaching ” (Crandall, 2000, p. 40).

Post-method pedagogy in the realm of EFL/ESL has been characterized with the motto of theorizing what is practiced and practicing what is theorized. This motto summarizes one of the most important duties of an EFL/ESL teacher- that is reflection. Teacher’s reflection at the heart of post-method pedagogy refers to teachers’ moments of reflecting upon their previous experiences in order to improve their teaching. The persistent dissatisfaction with the notion of method and the old model of teacher education gave rise to post method approach of teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). The top-down criticism levelled against the method era entails, it is being too prescriptive in the sense that teachers do not seem to have any voice in what to teach and how to teach it (Crandall, 2000; Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Pennycook, 1989; Richards and Rodgers, 2002). In comparison with the traditional teacher education which “views teachers as passive recipients of transmitted knowledge rather than active participants in the construction of meaning ... and which does not take into account the thinking or decision-making of teachers” (Crandall, 2000, p. 35), the post-method era in language teaching is characterized with a movement away from fixed methodological packages for teaching language toward a concern with teachers’ professional expertise, growth, wisdom, experience, learners’ needs, the context of teaching, and the political conditions of the environment in which teaching takes place (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Richards, 2002).





The post method pedagogy is widely accepted in education in many countries today. The post method condition is a practice-driven construct which calls into question the traditional conceptualization of teachers as a channel of received knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2003a); it raises serious questions regarding the traditional dichotomy between theorizers and practitioners with a view to empowering teachers whereby they can “theorize what they practice and practice what they theorize” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; p. 545). In this era “it is teachers who have to act as mediators between theory and practice, between the domain of disciplinary research and pedagogy” (Widdowson, 1990, p. 22). As Kumaravadivelu (2001) holds all pedagogy is a politically charged process in which particularity is embedded in active awareness of local conditions. Within the pedagogy of particularity as one of the constituents of the post method debate, teachers are entrusted with “observing their teaching acts, evaluating their outcomes, identifying problems, finding solutions, and trying them out to see once again what works and what does not” (p. 539). In fact, teacher autonomy is a key component of post method in a way that “it can be seen as defining the heart of post method pedagogy” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 548). Within the post method framework teachers play a key role in language classes and the exponential increase and eagerness in taking teachers into account as the focal point of education is manifest in the strikingly increasing number of journal articles dealing with language teacher education in the world. Since post method problematize the traditional concept of method, there is a need for alternatives that can help teachers materialize the objectives set by post method.

Much research in teacher education has concentrated on individual elements of effective teaching such as the best way of teaching content. There has been less emphasis on understanding the complex process of effective teaching in its entirety. In-service teachers of English as a foreign language have already had a certain amount of teaching experience before they joined the continuous professional development (CPD) programme. Such prior experience has considerable impact not only on teachers beliefs about teaching English but also on their classroom practice. Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of the evolution of teachers’ thinking and practice ,it is crucial to take the developmental view and to examine teachers’ experience from the developmental perspective seeking to understand how teachers’ beliefs and practices may have shifted from the beginning and to end of the (reflective practice) programmes. Through all these studies, it is observed that the professional development process moves from the training perspective to one of reflection and indicate that reflection is an important aspect to be taken into consideration by teachers who want to have effective professional development. These studies support the present investigation because reflection is seen as a tool, a strategy, and an opportunity for professional development that empowers teachers to be aware of their own practices, to be critical and to be equipped to change it. Conceptualize high quality or effective professional development as that which results in improvements in teachers’ knowledge and





instructional practice, as well as in improved student learning outcomes. It is about empowering staff and should be a seamless part of teaching and not an added burden (Sparks, 2005).

*Reflective Teaching Approaches*

Many different approaches can be employed if one wishes to become a reflective teacher, including observation of oneself and others, team teaching, and exploring one’s view of teaching through writing (Richards, 2008).

*In-Class*

*Reflective*

*Teaching*

*Practices*

Teacher reflection has been viewed to be of three related types based on the flow of thought and action the teacher follows. One type of reflection occurs during the class practices; another type happens in consequence to the class events and the last type precedes the class actions. And Schön (1983, 1987) have clearly explicated different types of reflection. According to him, the times when teachers are perplexed over puzzling class activities, while carrying them out, and need to make on-the-spot decisions, they need to apply reflection-in-action to resolve the problem. In fact, this type of reflection happens during the events in the classroom while teachers, for any reasons, cannot resort to the routine actions they perform in similar situations. The times when teachers reflect back on what happened in their classes, analysing them consciously in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of roles of the teacher and student, the motivations and behaviours in the learning context, they are involved in reflection-on action. Contrary to these two types of reflection, in which teacher thinking targets at current or past class routines, in reflection-for-action, teachers’ thinking is directed at future courses of action. Teachers, in this type of reflection, benefit from the other two types of reflection in planning their future courses of actions. To succeed in various types of reflection, teachers need to be equipped with three main characteristics, that is, open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness. According to Dewey (1933/1993), open-mindedness relates to teachers’ receptiveness to new ideas. In other words, open-minded teachers listen to and recognize the views and knowledge of others about their class events. Dewey defines responsible teachers as those who pay wise heed to the consequences of their actions, and wholehearted teachers as those who take risks in bringing meaningful changes in their students and schools. Farrell (2007), further, elaborates on attributes of reflective teachers by maintaining that reflective teachers carefully consider various aspects of their classes, including what they are doing, why they are doing this, and what will be the consequences of their conduct. Through literature review, it’s noticed that reflective teachers implement certain reflective teaching practices as follow.

*A. Increasing student-student interaction*

Scrivener (2005) suggests that reflective teachers are to get more student interaction through certain practices. Some of the practices he suggests are (1) Asking questions rather than giving





explanations (2) Allowing time for learners to listen, think, and process their answers and speak. (3) Making use of pairs and small groups to maximize opportunities for learners to speak. (4) Encouraging interaction between learners rather than between learner and teacher, and teacher and learner.

*B. Eliciting information from learners*

Scrivener (2005) states that eliciting means drawing out information, language, ideas, etc, from the learners. This technique is based on the principle that learners probably know more than what the teachers may give them credit for. Reflective teachers start with what their learners know. That is a productive way to begin new work and involving learners in question-and answer movement towards new discoveries, and that is surely more effective than simply giving lectures.

*C. Encouraging a friendly relaxing learning environment*

Kattan (2008) suggests that through reflective teaching, teachers become more able to show trust in their learners and share some responsibility with them. If there is a trusting, positive, supportive rapport amongst learners and between learners and teachers, then there is a much better chance of useful interaction happening. The author suggests that engaging learners in games and similar group activities may help in easing the fear of negative evaluation since the learners' attention is on the message not on the language, and thus will help in creating a friendly relaxing learning environment. They also encourage and increase cooperation since most participants will do all they can do to win, rather than pay attention to correctness of linguistic forms. They are very useful as they give learners a break and at the same time allow them to practise the different language skills.

*D. Motivating learners*

Kattan (2008) points out that reflective teaching helps teachers get learners more motivated through the use of creative activities; these activities many include drama, games ... etc.

*E. Managing the classroom efficiently*

Pollard (2002) says that reflective teachers are capable of managing their classroom efficiently, since reflection helps them gain certain characteristics which include; (1) Wittiness; teachers who are with it are able to anticipate and to see where help is needed. They are skilful at scanning the class whilst helping individuals and they position themselves accordingly. They are alert; they can pre-empt disturbance; and they can act fast. (2) Overlapping; overlapping teachers can do more than one thing at the same time. This is like 'multi-tasking'. Most teachers work under such pressure that they must think about and do more than one thing at a time. Decisions must be made very rapidly. When learners perceive that the teacher is with it enough to know what is going on than they are more likely to remain on task. (3) Pacing; through pacing, reflective





teachers can make appropriate judgements about the timing and the phasing of the organization, manner and content of sessions. (4) Orchestration; a reflective teacher works with the whole class rather like a conductor controls an orchestra. Whether teachers are adopting whole class, individual or group teaching strategies, part of their job is to maximize the time that all the learners in the class are on task and paying attention. Involving all the learners in the learning activities of a classroom involves developing the sensitivity to be able to read how individual learners are responding, and to be able to anticipate the most effective way of maintaining interest or reengaging attention.

*F. Varying roles teachers take while learners are conducting in their activities*

Scrivener (2005) says that after giving the instructions for a task and learners start doing it, a teacher needs to check whether learners have understood the basic instructions or not. The teacher can do this by quietly wandering around the room. As the main aim of many activities is for learners to get a chance to work on their own, the teacher's presence might actually be interference. So once the activity is safely under way teachers have to decide on the roles they take while learners are conducting their activities. These roles include actual participation in the activity, monitoring discreetly, and vanishing; (1) to vanish is when a teacher maintains a presence in the room, but doesn't offer help, (2) to monitor discreetly is when a teacher maintains a presence in the room, but does not offer help unless there is a significant problem. (3) Finally, s/he may sit down and join a group and take part as if s/he were one of the groups, offering ideas, helping with questions, and joining in discussions.

*G. Conducting reflective lessons and activities' beginnings*

Pollard (2002) emphasises the importance of the beginnings of a class in setting a tone for class. She points out that reflective teachers are able to introduce and interest the learners in the planned classes and activities through providing them with a clear indication of the learning objectives of the class, a clear explanation of what they are expected to do. Teachers are also expected to structure class activities in practical, organizational terms.

*H. Conducting reflective lessons and activities' endings*

Pollard (2002) believes that reflection can lead teachers to carrying a careful thought-out and well executed ending to a session. This can be done through (1) reviewing with learners the educational progress and achievements carried out in the lesson, or (2) reinforcing good work and activities which have been successfully completed.

*I. Keeping track of the variety of directions different classes take*

Boyd & Boyd (2005) point out that reflective teachers tend to keep track of what has been going on in the class. They add that this can be simply done through writing a short journal entry at the





end of each class period. In such entries, teachers write down a short description of what they have taught and assigned. This is highly important, especially for those who teach different sections of the same grade. Doing this, the teacher stays organized. This also helps teachers clear up uncertainties. Otherwise, the classes and content can run together and create unintentional repetition or omission.

*J. Recurring challenges taking place in class*

Pollard (2002) points out that reflective teacher are most likely to recur challenges through the adaptation of a number of strategies;(1) The first strategy for dealing with misbehaviour might be to ignore it especially if it has only happened once or a teacher considers it to be a minor infringement of the classroom rules, picking up on each and every infringement may be time consuming and detract from the educative content of the session. (2) Pre-empting general misbehaviour to reduce incidents of inappropriate behaviour through; (a) being clear about general class rules. (b) Having clear learning objectives and making sure learners understand them.(c) Explaining activities and tasks clearly and being sure that every learner knows what to do and how to do it. (d) Showing approval of appropriate work and rewarding effort. (e) Being supportive of any problems encountered. (f) Being consistent. (3) Dealing with inappropriate behaviours according to their consequence; (a) if inappropriate behaviour only occurs once and seems inconsequential, a reflective teacher is to note it, and wait to see if it builds. S/he can indicate that s/he has noticed and disapproves the behaviour but take no action. (b) If repeated, a reflective teacher may make sustained eye contact, use non-verbal gestures, move towards the student, invite the learner to participate, ask a question or encourage a comment. (c) If persistent, a reflective teacher names the learner firmly and positively, stops the action, briefly identifies the inappropriate behaviour, comments on the behaviour, not on the learner, keep voice low, and if necessary isolate the learner.

In all cases, reflection helps teachers deal with the situation as quickly and neatly as possible; they don't let the situation distract their attention from the rest of the class and the goals of the lesson.(4) Being fair, and if necessary s/he apologizes.

*K. Being adaptive and flexible, monitoring learners' needs and adjusting classroom activity accordingly*

Stout (1989) characterizes reflective teachers by being adaptive and flexible, monitoring learners' needs and adjusting classroom activity accordingly. He adds that their flexibility pertains to the ability to modify instruction according to individual learners' needs and to specific learning circumstances.





*L. Helping learners develop their own self-reflection skills*

Sharp (2003) points out that a teacher's reflection and sensitivity to diverse learning styles will assist in creating equitable learning environments for all learners and help them develop their own self-reflection skills. She suggests that a teacher can encourage dialogue and reflection in class through asking learners to representing the opinion of the reader, what they learn from the reading... etc.

*M. Finding ways leading to creating authentic learning communities*

Larrivee (2000) points that teachers who enjoy self-awareness, self-inquiry and self-reflection are able to find ways leading to creating authentic learning communities; this is done by adjusting the "power over" into "power with" learners through calling for teaching styles that better align with emerging metaphors of a teacher as a social mediator, learning facilitator, and reflective practitioner.

*O. Acting with integrity, openness, and commitment*

Larrivee (2000) identifies reflective teachers as those who act with integrity, openness, and commitment rather than compromise, defensiveness, or fear.

***Reflective Teaching Activities***

A reflective teacher may get involved in a number of reflective teaching activities both at the individual and the collaborative levels, these activities both in class or outside the classroom. These include:

*A. Teacher Diary:* Tice (1992) suggests that the teacher diary is the easiest way to begin a process of reflection since it is purely personal. She suggests that after each lesson a teacher can write in a notebook about what happened. S/he may also describe his/her own reactions and feelings and those s/he observed on the part of the learners. S/he is likely to begin to pose questions about what s/he has observed.

*B. Peer Observation:* Richards and Lockhart (1994) suggest that peer observation can provide opportunities for teachers to view each other's teaching in order to expose them to different teaching styles and to provide opportunities for critical reflection on their own teaching.

*C. Self-Reports:* self-reporting involves completing an inventory or check list in which the teacher indicates which teaching practices have been used within a lesson or within a specified time period and how often they were employed. The accuracy of self-reports is found to increase when teachers focus on the teaching of specific skills in a particular classroom context and when the self-report instrument is carefully constructed to reflect a wide range of potential teaching





practices and behaviours (Richards & Nunan, 1990). Self-reporting is of great importance since it allows teachers to make a regular assessment of what they are doing in the classroom. They can check to see to what extent their assumptions about their own teaching are reflected in their actual teaching practices.

*D. Journal writing:* journal writing is a procedure which is becoming more widely acknowledged as a valuable tool for developing critical reflection. The goal of journal writing is to; (1) provide a record of the significant learning experiences that have taken place, (2) help the participant come into touch and keep in touch with the self-development process that is taking place for him/her, (3) provide the participants with an opportunity to express, in a personal and dynamic way, his/her self-development, (4) foster a creative interaction between the participant and the self-development process that is taking place, between the participant and other participants who are also in the process of self-development between the participant and the facilitator whose role it is to foster such development (Bailey, 1990).

*E. Lessons recording:* for many aspects of teaching, audio or video recording of lessons can provide a basis for reflection. While there are many useful insights to be gained from diaries and self-reports, they cannot capture the moment to moment processes of teaching. Many things happen simultaneously in a classroom, and some aspects of a lesson cannot be recalled. Many significant classroom events may not have been observed by the teacher, let alone remembered, hence the need to supplement diaries or self-reports with recordings of actual lessons emerges (Pak, 1985).

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What approaches and strategies of reflective teaching do the secondary EFL teachers employ to help their students to learn the target language?
2. How often do EFL teachers use reflective teaching practices as viewed by them (measured by the attitude scale questionnaire)?

### THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

*The present study aims to assess reflective teaching practices as perceived and practiced by teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Addis Ababa City.*

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study proposes that a systematic implementation of reflective practice can have practical and positive benefits for high school EFL teachers in Ethiopia. Generally, the findings of this study are expected to have the following significance:





1. Most importantly, this study is expected to provide methodological insights and information to EFL teachers which help them to implement the principles of reflective teaching appropriately.
2. In addition, it is expected to provide pedagogical contributions and serve those who wish to develop curriculum and design ELT materials as a reference to incorporate reflective teaching principles with the actual classroom practices.
3. It may also stimulate other researchers to conduct similar or further studies and serve as an initial work.

## METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed a mixed methodology in researching the problem of investigation, in which quantitative and qualitative approaches were mixed within and across the stages of the research process (Creswell et al, 2003), with greater focus on qualitative method to investigate the experience of teachers engagement with a reflective teaching practice.

### *Participants*

The population of this study consisted of all the teachers who teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for the 9th and 10th grades in Yeka and Kirkos sub-city of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in government and private schools. The attitude scale questionnaire was given to all the population (96 teachers), 91 responded to the questionnaire. This shows that the sample of the study is almost inclusive (93.75% of the total population). Next; purposeful “in-depth” sample was selected after the analysis of the data gathered through the questionnaire. Seven teachers who scored the highest on the attitude scale questionnaire were selected and their classrooms were observed.

### *Data Collection Instruments*

The instrument used in the study was an attitude scale questionnaire, developed, on the bases of literature review, to assess how frequently the subjects of this study believe they adopt certain reflective teaching practices, and classroom observation.

### *The Questionnaire (Attitude Scale)*

Criteria for the attitude scale questionnaire were collected from a number of sources that were part of the literature review among which are; Richards, J. C., & Lockhart, C. (1994), Richard and Nunan (1990), and Pollard (2002). The final questionnaire consisted of forty-three items and covered the following specific categories.

- *Pre-class Conduct Reflective Teaching Practices* (items 1,2,3,4,5,35 and 36).
- *While-class Conduct Reflective Teaching Practices* (items 6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18, 19, 23, 37, 40, 41, 42 and 43)





•*After-class Conduct Reflective Teaching Practices*  
(items 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38 and 39)

### ***Classroom observation***

Classroom observations were carried out in the classrooms of the seven selected teachers, each teacher's classroom was observed three times for a whole period (forty-five minutes). The intent of the observation was to look for evidence of reflective teaching practices in these classrooms, to see what common practices and classroom strategies these teachers share in regard to adapting reflective teaching practices, and to get an interpretative context for the questionnaire data. It was the base for the researcher's reflection on the seven teachers' practices; the classroom observation reports were analysed, and reflective actual practices emerged. These practices were categorized, and theories emerged consequently.

### ***Procedures***

To gather data about reflective teaching in Addis Ababa high schools, the researcher was given a list of the public and private schools from the Yeka and Kirkos Sub Cities Education office. Prior to recruiting research participants and collecting data, the researcher spent ample of days in visiting schools where the participants were teaching. This gave different advantages for the researcher like acquainting himself with the concerned bodies and the prospective research participants. The study primarily used quantitative and qualitative data to identify, analyze and draw a general conclusion on the believes practices of reflective teaching in helping EFL teachers to become more efficient practitioners and the approaches as well as strategies that facilitate the achievement of reflective teaching in secondary schools (9-10) of the Yeka and Kirkos Sub-cities in Addis Ababa with the reviewed research findings of the past and to draw a general conclusion. The researcher followed two stages. Stage (1): At this stage the researcher aimed at investigating the views teachers had on their own practices of reflective teaching. In order to do so, an attitude scale questionnaire which included a number of practices which are considered to indicate teacher self-reflection (Before class conduct, during class conduct and after class conduct) was prepared. It also included a small number of practices which are considered to be negative. This questionnaire was given to all the population of the study. Stage (2): At this stage the researcher aimed at investigating the actual practices of reflective teaching during class conduct. In order to do so, three staggered classes for each of the in-depth group members were attended. The researcher jotted down notes in order to help the reporting of what went on in class for later interpretation.





*Questionnaire Data Analysis*

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated to answer the first question of the study which is; How often do EFL teachers use reflective teaching practices as viewed by them (measured by the attitude scale questionnaire)?

*Qualitative Data Analysis*

The classroom observations were analysed qualitatively to answer the following study questions. What are the mostly shared actual practices among teachers who achieved the highest scores on an attitude scale questionnaire of reflective teaching practices as viewed by the researcher (by classroom observations)?

Wolcott (1994) suggests a general review of collected data by reading it and jotting notes in the margins of the text, this was the researcher's first step to becoming familiar with the participants' views. The researcher looked for patterns in the data. The researcher read the classroom observation reports and coded them in the thematic analysis of data. The researcher developed themes using words and phrases that served as labels for teachers' actions. The researcher searched through the data to find themes that cut across the cases. Thus, the findings were stated in terms of reflective practices which were most frequently observed in actual practices. Themes drawn from collected data were categorized in a way that could help the researcher to answer the questions which were originally set to be investigated.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of this study in two fold patterns of observations; (a) the quantitative findings as presented in the tables relating to the quantitative part of the study, and (b) the qualitative findings as reflected in the grounded theory of what the researcher observed in the reports of classroom observation. Both categories of findings (quantitative and qualitative) aim at abstracting descriptive generalizations on the reflective teaching beliefs and practices of the 9th and 10th grade- teachers of English as a foreign language in Addis Ababa, Yeka and Kirkos sub-city secondary schools.

1. How often do EFL teachers use reflective teaching practices as viewed by them (measured by the attitude scale)? Thus, data gathered by the attitude scale questionnaire were analysed; descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated. At this stage, the researcher had made some calculations and came up with certain descriptive statistics. The calculations and their results can be summed up as follows.

First: the population's means and standard deviations for the overall attitude scale questionnaire and for each of the three categories in it were calculated. Results appear in table 1. This table





shows that the highest mean is the one of the scores of the items that assesses before class conduct reflective teaching practices (4.24 point out of 5 on average). Next, comes the mean of the scores of the items that assess while class conduct reflective teaching practices (4.03 point out of 5 on average). Finally, came the mean of the scores of the items that assess after class conduct reflective teaching practices (3.58 point out of 5 on average). In addition, the mean for all the items of the categories of the questionnaire is (3.90). This table suggests that targeted EFL teachers believe they generally practice reflective teaching at a medium level.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Scores and Standard Deviations on The RT Scale Distributed by the RT Categories

Category	Mean	Standard deviations
Pre-class reflective teaching practices	4.24	0.5
In- class reflective teaching practices	4.03	0.37
Post- class reflective teaching practices	3.58	0.57
The questionnaire	3.9	0.54

Second: means and standard deviations for the six items that assess the teachers' beliefs on how frequent they adopt before class conduct reflective teaching practices were calculated; they appear in table 2. Results reveal that five items scored high level of reflective teaching averages, while only one item scored an average of medium level of reflective teaching. In general, it was noticed that items that assess how frequent teachers take the general needs of their classes in consideration while planning a lesson, pre-set the aims of their lessons and think about the general readiness of their classes got the highest scores. While the items which assess how frequent they pre-set the aim of individual activities, think of possible outcomes of an individual activity they do, and think of obstacles they might face come second. Whereas, the item that assesses how frequent they have alternative plans and activities comes last. In particular, the practice that got the highest score (4.53) is thinking about the general needs of classes as a whole while planning lessons, while the practice that got the lowest score (3.86) is having alternative activities and plans for what teachers practise in teaching English.





Table 2: Means and standard deviations of teachers' scores on the RT scale on pre-class RT practices

No.	The items	Mean	Standard deviations
1	I pre-set the aim(s) of the whole lesson.	4.36	0.75
2	I think of the possible outcomes when doing a classroom activity.	4.22	0.79
3	I pre-set the aim of the activity which will be practised.	4.29	0.8
4	I ask myself about the obstacles I might face in class.	4.13	1
5	I have alternative activities and plans for what I practise in teaching English.	3.86	1.03
35	While planning a lesson, I think about the general needs of my class as a whole.	4.53	0.72
36	While planning a lesson, I think about the general readiness of my class.	4.32	0.83

Third: means and standard deviations for the twenty items that assess the teachers' views on how frequent they adopt in-class reflective teaching practices were calculated, they appear in table 3. Results reveal that 13 out the 20 items scored averages indicating a high level of reflective teaching (ranging between 4 to 4.51). Items that go under this category are those assessing how frequent EFL teachers believe they adopt practices that encourage reflectivity among their learners including encouraging learners to correct their own mistakes, express their opinions, extract main ideas ... etc. It also includes items that assess teachers' attitudes towards the teaching process. Whereas, 6 out of 20 items scored averages indicating medium level of reflective teaching ( ranging from 3.38 to 3.91); items that go under this category are those assessing how frequent EFL teachers believe they themselves are being reflective in class through adjusting plans, using gestures ... etc. Whereas, the only item that scored an average indicating a low level (2.77) of reflective teaching is the one assessing how frequent EFL teachers believe they are guided by impulse in class.





Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Scores on the RT Scale on In-Class RT Practices

No.	The items	Mean	Standard deviations
6	In class, I make sure I am acting according to what I have planned to do.	4.28	0.76
7	As I proceed with the activity, I ask myself "what is the most suitable thing to do now?"	4.27	0.85
8	In class, I ask myself whether it is the right time for either a change of mood or pace.	3.78	1.1
9	In class, I ask myself whether I am using time efficiently or not.	4	1.09
10	In class, I ask myself how the class is going on.	4.21	0.92
11	I encourage my learners to make guesses and predictions.	4.31	0.84
12	I encourage my learners to express their opinions freely and to voice their thoughts.	4.49	0.8
13	I encourage my learners to take responsibility of their own learning.	4.13	0.8
14	After reading a text, I encourage my learners to extract the main idea.	4.31	0.92
15	In class, I ask questions rather than give explanations.	3.91	0.93
16	I allow time for my learners to listen, think, process their answers, and speak.	4.36	0.66
17	I create opportunities for student talk and interaction.	4.07	0.93
18	I use gestures to replace unnecessary teacher talk.	3.71	1.08
19	I allow my learners to finish their own sentences.	4.51	0.66
23	I consider the process of teaching as important as its outcome.	4.42	0.7
37	When learners' responses do not match what is expected from the lesson, I re-adjust lesson plan	3.78	1.16
40	In class, I am largely guided by impulse.	2.77	1.13
41	In class, I am largely guided by routine.	3.6	1.06
42	I blame myself when some of my learners fail to carry out some tasks.	3.38	1.06
43	I encourage my learners to correct their mistakes.	4.48	0.66



*Fourth:* means and standard deviations for the sixteen items that assess teachers' beliefs on how frequently they adopt post-class reflective teaching practices were calculated. Results appear in table 4. They reveal that five items scored averages indicating high level of reflective teaching (scoring from 4.19-4.08); those items assess how frequent EFL teachers believe they reflect on their classes individually and show readiness to change. While eight items scored averages indicating a medium level of reflective teaching (scoring from 3.91-3.04); those items assess how frequent EFL teachers believe they reflect on their classes with their learners, colleagues and administrations. In addition, three items scored averages indicating a low level of reflective teaching; those items assess how frequent EFL teachers believe they attend their colleagues' classes (2.41) and write class reports (2.49).

Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Scores on the RT Scale on Post-Class RT Practices

No.	The items	Mean	Standard deviation
20	After a classroom activity, I question its effectiveness	3.88	1.04
21	I ask my learners to evaluate activities we usually do	3.04	1.14
22	I vary my teaching strategies according to teaching situational activities	4.18	0.88
24	I use a checklist after class to find out to which extent my lesson objectives have been achieved	2.8	1.28
25	I write class reports	2.49	1.33
26	I compare pre-set outcomes to the actual realized outcomes	3.38	1.04
27	I have readiness to change my teaching style considering the new evidence	4.19	0.85
28	After class, I evaluate my performance	3.91	1.1
29	I attend my colleagues' classes, and offer them feedback	2.41	1.41
30	I exchange ideas about effective teaching practices with other colleagues	3.64	1.17
31	I open myself to feedback from peers	3.84	1.12
32	I open myself to feedback from the school authority	3.8	1.2
33	I am able to analyse my own practice and the context in which it occurs	4.11	0.84
34	I reflect on my practice by standing back from my own teaching, evaluating my situation and taking responsibility for my own future action	4.08	0.84
38	After class, I try to find out how obstacles that I have encountered during the implementation of my lesson plan could have been avoided	4.11	0.74
39	I share an undesirable, negative and discouraging classroom experience with a colleague	3.49	1.23

***Mostly Shared Actual Reflective Teaching Practices***

This section aimed at answering the second question of the study which is; What are the mostly shared actual practices among teachers who achieved the highest scores on attitude scale of the reflective teaching practices as viewed by the researcher (by classroom observation)? Through the analysis of the twenty-one observations of the seven teachers, it was noticed that the teachers were not rich in examples of reflective teaching practices. Those practices have been abstracted from the classroom observations reported analysed, clustered and categorized into four main themes which are (1)Increasing learners' interaction(2)Helping learners develop their own reflection skills(3)Encouraging a friendly relaxing motivating learning environment; and(4) Managing the classroom reflectively and efficiently.

***Discussions***

This section aimed to discuss the descriptive generalizations and outcomes, which have been abstracted building on the categories of findings (quantitative and qualitative), within the conceptual frame of reference that this researcher developed based on the literature review presented earlier.

***Frequency of Using Reflective Teaching Practices by the whole Study Population.***

Following is a summary of the study most important descriptive quantitative findings.

(1) *Reflective teaching practices*: The study population believed they use RT practices at a high level before and while class-conduct, while they practice RT at a medium level after class conduct. This finding contradicts with what Isikoglu (2007) calls for saying that teachers need to rethink, revise, and solve their educational experiences.

(2) *Before class conduct reflective teaching practices*: The study population believed they were highly reflective when it comes to planning for a class as a whole, they become less reflective when it comes to thinking of each activity as a unit, and they become least reflective when it comes to having alternative plans. This contradicts with what Steinberg S.&Villaverde, L. (1999) point to saying that prescribed strategies and plans rarely work in various educational contexts. Thus, having alternative plans is so important.

(3) *While class conduct reflective teaching practices*: The study population believed they highly adopt practices that encourage reflectivity among their learners. They believed they themselves were being reflective in-class at a medium level. While they believe that they were seldom guided by impulse in their classes. This finding agrees with what Richards & Nunan (1990) point to as a benefit for reflective teaching saying it: "helps teachers move from a level where they may be guided largely by impulse, intuition or routine, to a level where their actions are guided by reflection and critical thinking" (p.23).





(4) *After class conduct reflective teaching practices:* The study population believed they highly adopt technical RT practices. They thought they adopted personal RT practices at a medium level. While they think they seldom reflect with colleagues.

*Mostly shared actual reflective teaching practices among teachers who achieved the highest scores on the attitude scale of the reflective teaching practices* through the analysis of the twenty-one observations of the seven teachers, it was noticed that they were not rich in examples of reflective teaching practices and strategies which can be clustered and categorized into four main themes as follows;

(A) *Increasing learners' interaction:* The observed classes of the seven teachers were teacher-centered. Teachers were not trying to increase the learners' interaction in terms of (1) Asking questions rather than giving explanations; (2) making use of pairs and small groups; (3) encouraging student-student interaction rather than student-teacher interaction. Those practices mentioned above are similar to practices suggested by Scrivener (2005) through which he believes reflective teachers can get more student interaction in class. In addition, the seven teachers were not able to have more interaction through; (1) building on what learners know; and (2) relating material to learners' life and interest. Such practices go under what Scrivener (2005) calls eliciting information from learners. He adds that reflective teachers usually start with what their learners know. (B) *Helping learners develop their own reflection skills* through allowing time for learners to listen, think, and process their answers and speak. This practice agrees with a reflective teaching practice Scrivener (2005) point to. In addition, the seven teachers were not used to: (1) encourage learners to make guesses and predictions; urging them to speak out their opinions; (2) encourage learners to identify the writer's opinion and the text's main idea and; (3) encourage learners to correct their own mistakes. In their book "Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classroom", Richards and Lockhart (1994), urge teachers to make sure they adopt the practices mentioned above throughout their reflective teaching journey. In addition, Sharp (2003) points out that teacher reflection and sensitivity to diverse learning styles will assist in creating equitable learning environments for all learners and help them develop their own self-reflection skills.

(B) *Encouraging a friendly relaxing motivating learning environment:* (1) Showing care for learners, their needs and opinions; (2) showing support and trust; (3) acting with integrity, openness and commitment; and (4) changing mood and space were not enough during the observation. In this context, Kattan (2008) suggests that RT makes teachers become able to show trust in their learners and share some responsibility with them. Generally, Building on the seven teachers' scores on the attitude scale questionnaire, various means were calculated and compared to actual practices the researcher observed in the classes of the seven teachers. The final results revealed that the seven teachers' scores on the items that assess how frequent they believe they





adopt while class conduct RT practices did match with their actual observed in-class practices. Where their answers on the items that assess how frequent they believe they adopt before class conduct and after class conduct RT practices were also did not match with their practices in real (built on the observation of class plans and reports analysis); in real, five out of the seven teachers had lesson plans for the observed classes. Two of the five teachers had plans in a table form including jotted notes on the class; (1) behavioural objectives, (2) teaching aids, (3) Tasks and activities, (4) assessment techniques, (5) procedures, and (7) ways of evaluation. Two teachers had plans of note taking forms their activities. Stout (1989) characterizes reflective teachers by being adaptive and flexible, he adds that reflective teachers' flexibility pertains to the ability to modify instruction according to individual learners' needs and specific learning circumstances. Teachers were not reflective totally efficient in (1) starting their lessons and tasks reflectively; (2) using reflective practices in ending their class sessions; (3) being adaptive and flexible, monitoring learners' needs and adjusting classroom activities accordingly and; (4) finding ways leading to creating authentic collaborative learning communities. In this content, Pollard (2002) suggests that reflective teachers are capable of managing their classroom efficiently, since reflection helps them gain certain abilities including being able to be within the class, overlap, pace and conduct the class as an orchestrator. Scrivener (2005) says that reflective teachers are able to vary roles they take while learners conduct their activities. Finally, Pollard (2002) points out those reflective teachers are able to introduce and interest learners in planned classes. In addition, their reflection can lead them to carrying careful well executed ending to class sessions. Including (1) objectives, (2) procedures, (3) evaluation methods, and (4) aids. The only detailed plan was submitted by Teacher D, her plan included (1) a class introduction, (2) revision methods, (3) new words, (4) activities, and (5) study questions. It is worth mentioning that submitted plans were unreliable and not adopted by the researcher for detailed analysis since four of the teachers submitted their plans after the conducted classes since they weren't ready before classes. Only one teacher had his plan ready before observed classes; however, it was a brief one plan for three sections of 10th grade. While two didn't submit any. In addition, only two teachers had lesson report which only included notes on what has been covered and what has been assigned. Building on what mentioned above, the seven teachers lack the type of reflective teaching Stanley (1998) points to as an ongoing examination of beliefs, and practices, their origins and their impacts on the teacher, the learners and the teaching-learning process as a whole.

### CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was assessing the practice of secondary school EFL teachers' professional development through reflective practice in Addis Ababa Secondary Schools. Examining the mixed methods findings provides an insight into how the survey participants may perceive the scale questions and end up rating their teaching positively.





Following the mixed methods approach served the purpose of this study by providing many details about the reflective practice among Addis Ababa Secondary School EFL in-service teachers. The findings of the study revealed that the population of the study believe they adopt before class conduct and while class conduct reflective teaching practices at high level, while they believe they adopt after class conduct reflective teaching practices at a medium level. In real, the in-depth group teachers held positive attitudes towards reflective teaching, and their classes were basically Teacher- centred, and rich of while class conduct reflective teaching practices The contradiction between the two strands of findings revealed a third dimension of how the teachers translate the reflective teaching skills into their practice. The teachers seem to have a misconnection between the teaching strategies they use and their theoretical and research bases. They lack the research-based knowledge they need as teachers. That results in distorted applications in their classroom and misunderstanding of the correct application of reflective teaching. The study population believed they use RT practices at a high level before and while class-conduct, while they practice RT at a medium level after class conduct. The study population believed they were highly reflective when it comes to planning for a class as a whole, they become less reflective when it comes to thinking of each activity as a unit, and they become least reflective when it comes to having alternative plans. The study population believed they highly adopt practices that encourage reflectivity among their learners. They believed they themselves were being reflective in-class at a medium level. While they believe that they were seldom guided by impulse in their classes. The study population believed they highly adopt technical RT practices. They thought they adopted personal RT practices at a medium level. While they think they seldom reflect with colleagues. It was also observed that the seven teachers who scored the highest have mostly high experience (above 10 years). However, one needs to remember that Experience is insufficient as a basis for development (Richards & Lockarts, 1994). High qualification seems to be in favour of high reflective teaching practices. Generally, the teachers' common view lies in seeing reflective teaching as a means of professional development although their actual practices have some limitations of reflective practice.

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