Modelling the Process of Reflection in Pre-Service Teacher Education

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Abstract: The article traces the role of reflection in teacher education and explores the issue of the necessity of creating a system of developing students' reflective skills in the process of their university studies. The model of guided reflection employed at the Department of Foreign Philology at H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University is described in detail. The group of 30 students were observed during three academic years (2017-2020) and their performance, attitudes and behaviours were examined through different research methods, including qualitative and quantitative analysis of various documents (questionnaires, self-assessment lists, observation charts, reflective essays etc.) and interviews with participant focus groups. The article presents samples of activities used in pedagogy and methodology classes, and observations of students' behaviours while performing them. The collected data prove that by constant and sufficient scaffolding, interaction with the 'knowledgeable other', students manage to get accustomed to continuous reflection, are getting aware of the benefits of reflection, and are developing skills of reflective practitioners, which are crucial for their further professional and personal growth. The findings of the study can be applied by university teachers engaged in pre-service teacher education.

Keywords: *pre-service teacher education; in-action reflection; on-action reflection; pedagogical improvisation, skills of reflective practitioners.*

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, developing future teachers as reflective practitioners has been recognized as one of the cornerstones of both their education and further professional and personal development. Starting with the ideas of Dewey (1933) further developed by Schön (1983) and numerous followers (Griffin, 2003; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005; Larrivee, 2006; Liakopoulou, 2012; Yusko, 2004), reflection has been viewed as a powerful tool to understand the process of learning and teaching and to reframe one's practices. The teacher reflection has been considered a dominant activity for developing practical knowledge and linking it with educational theories in teacher training programs.

Brookfield (1995) summarizes the advantages of reflection mentioning, in particular, that it allows teachers to take informed actions, which cannot only be justified and later explained to others but also employed to guide actions in future. It also helps teachers to adjust and respond to issues and later reflect on those actions, becoming aware of the beliefs and assumptions that underpinned them. Another advantage is that it contributes to developing relevant and context specific teaching strategies and techniques thus expanding teachers' expertise.

Understanding reflection as fundamental to teacher development, Schön (1983) distinguished between *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. The former is 'thinking on one's feet' and improvising, dealing with puzzles and problems as they arise in teaching. In this kind of reflection, doing and thinking are complementary. It is on-the-spot analysis that helps with immediate actions and with further teaching, thus enabling the reflective practitioner to become more responsive and more resourceful. The latter kind of reflection is reflecting back, stepping back from the situation and consciously reviewing, analyzing and evaluating that past experience in order to connect it to a relevant theory, better understand it and improve teaching further on.

As it was suggested by Yanow and Tsoukas (2009, p. 1340), "…reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action form the two ends of a continuum of reflective practice". They both are aimed at not just solving a problem but at gaining a better insight, a new perspective that enhances and improves teachers' expertise. No wonder that Reid (2004) adds *reflection-for-action* to those two described above and claims that it is forward planning, based on preceding reflection. This form can and should be collaborative.

Bizyayeva (2004) emphasizes that reflection is of paramount importance in teacher education due to its research and heuristic nature. It performs the following functions: planning (projecting and modelling the activities of the educational process participants), organizational (finding the ways of productive collaboration), communicative (as one of the conditions of effective interaction), awareness-raising (developing person's awareness of the activity and interaction), motivational (determining activity orientation at a certain result), and correctional (introducing necessary changes in the interaction and the activity itself).

Marusynets (2014) claims that insufficient level of a teacher's reflective skills development makes one fully dependent on circumstances and outside impacts, a mere performer of the assigned tasks whose activities are gradually getting more and more stereotyped. On the contrary, teachers with well-developed reflective skills manifest critical thinking and deep learning, flexibility in finding solutions to various challenges, readiness to open dialogue and collaboration and personal responsibility for the decisions.

Much has been written about reflection-on-action and the ways it can be used as an integral part and a compulsory component of teacher education. In fact, it is considered as one of the most important 21st century teaching assumptions. For instance, Lyons (1998, p. 115) argues that the development of reflection is seen by many scholars as not just a change but "the evolution and integration of more complex ways (or processes) of engaging in a critical examination of one's teaching practices". Brookfield (1995) claims that without reflection, teachers may go on making poor decisions and bad judgments, planning and teaching on the basis of unexamined assumptions. Shandomo (2010, p. 101) believes that reflection "…blends learning through experiences with theoretical and technical learning to form new knowledge constructions and new behaviours or insights".

Not so much attention is paid to reflection-in-action, and there can be several reasons for that. First, it is often considered as something ephemeral, done intuitively, impulsively and often automatically. McNiff and Whitehead (2002) even go as far as say that it may not be an intellectual activity since it involves intrinsic knowledge. Second, it is viewed as a skill mostly associated with a relevant level of expert practice, so it takes some time to accumulate that experience and thus is connected with in-service professional development. Consider, for example, Schön's describing reflection-in-action as 'the core of professional artistry". Third, since students are not developmentally ready to engage in reflection-in-action,

they may follow the models suggested by their educators and methodological literature uncritically and reflective practice turns out to be superficial and imposed on the students instead of becoming their own wish and need.

A number of scholars express great concern as to the practical aspects of making reflective practice an essential part of pedagogical universities and teacher training colleges curricula. While recognising reflection as a powerful tool, it is difficult to know where to begin and how to provide that 'disciplined approach' as well as ensure the required commitment to learning from experience (Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck, 1994). Lyons (1998) notes that in spite of so many efforts of educators, the necessary level of reflection is often not achieved, and even experienced teachers experience difficulties in distinguishing between description, analysis and reflection. Cornford (2002, p. 231) writes about great confusion concerning the very concept of reflection and warns against uncritical adoption of reflective teaching approaches in teacher education since reflection may be treated as 'too all-embracing and wide-ranging to assist in researching and developing effective teacher education practices". The results of reflection assignments offered in the teacher education context are often disappointing as students' reflection may result in mere descriptions and not a critical evaluation of practices or re-framing of their understandings. (El-Dib, 2007; Lee, 2005; Mena, Sanchez, & Tillema, 2011). Elliot-Jones (2014) warns against assuming the meaning of reflection as self-evident. She mentions students' complaints about incessant writing of reflective papers on different topics while the students are not quite clear about the nature of reflection, what processes and actions it embraces, what results are expected and, most of all, how their teaching will improve. She goes on sharing her concerns about the lack of guidance and the tendency to separate reflection from students' learning how to teach and their teaching practices. It resonates with Russell's effort (2013, p. 80) to remind us, that "Whatever reflection and reflective practice are, they are not ends in themselves; hopefully they are means to the end of better teaching practices and better learning by students in schools".

We believe that teachers will never become reflective practitioners unless reflection is an integral part of teacher education. On the other hand, we totally agree with Cornford (2002, p. 231) when he insists that reflection as any cognitive skill needs "a solid foundation of technical teaching skills, which have been neglected in many reflective paradigms…". It resonates with the idea previously expressed by the scholar (1996) about needs of skill training programmes including modelling of the skills along with sufficient

practice and feedback. Cornford emphasizes that it refers to any desired skill, notwithstanding its nature: performance or cognitive.

The aim of the article is to suggest some ways of training reflective skills and share the experience of modelling the process of reflection in pre-service teacher education at H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv Pedagogical University. Our analysis addresses the following research questions:

1) What opportunities can and should be used for students to get accustomed to continuous reflection in their education?
2) In what ways can the process of reflection be modelled at a pedagogical university?
3) How do participants perceive our model of guided reflection and whether it coincides with research generated objective data?

Our working hypothesis is like this: continuous modelling of the process of reflection in pre-service teacher education allows for better developing students' reflective skills and raising their awareness of the necessity and benefits of reflection.

2. Context

This section presents the teaching context and explains the rationale for creating a system of developing students' reflective skills in the process of their university studies. We proceed from the following assumptions.

Since reflection is viewed as one of the main 21st century instruments for life-long learning and both personal and professional growth, educators should provide opportunities for continuous reflection in the pre-service teacher education. This can be done, first of all, while teaching and learning the so-called professionally orientated subjects of the university curricula. At the Department of Foreign Philology, these subjects embrace pedagogy, psychology, methods of teaching foreign languages, practical and theoretical courses in students' target foreign languages and literatures. In the article, we focus on pedagogy and the methods of teaching foreign languages and research the ways students' reflective skills are developed in in-class work and out-of-class activities.

In our belief, reflection should be first introduced and practiced as a whole-class activity. First, students benefit from the collaboration with the 'knowledgeable other' (in Vygotsky's (1978) terminology). University professors and mentor schoolteachers can serve as models of reflective practitioners and share their expertise in conversations with students. Naturally, to perform that role, teachers should be constantly engaged in reflecting their practices themselves and exploring their beliefs and values by

digging deeper into their teaching and, on the other hand, have good rapport with students for them not to be afraid to speak out and share their feelings and opinions. Second, while communicating with their peers, students get exposed to different points of view and learn how to stand their ground, how to be more tolerant and ready to compromise and come to a common decision. Third, working in collaboration, shy students gradually become more confident and less taciturn, thus a friendly atmosphere will be conducive to developing cognitive and communicative skills. Fourth, group conversations should be interspersed with individual questionnaires, tasks for focused observation and entries into reflective journals and writing reflective essays. We share the concerns of those scholars who think that reflection cannot be reduced to writing different reflective products as in this case students' ability to write in certain genres is mostly evaluated, not the quality of their reflection (Gelfuso, 2013). So working in groups should precede creative individual writing.

It has been a tradition in the Ukrainian educational system that for a long period of studies students usually had practically few opportunities to gain field experience. Teaching practice of bachelors was limited to one-week observation practice in the 2nd year of studies and the so-called 'active' teaching for 4-5 weeks in the 4th year. Since 2013, our university has been taking part in a joint project of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the British Council developing Core Curriculum in English Language Teaching methodology for Bachelor's level. It has been piloted at 13 universities in Ukraine, carefully monitored, and evaluated year on year. The final evaluation in 2019 (both external and internal) approved of the results of the pedagogical experiment, stating, in particular, that "Their [novice teachers] levels of professionalism and the depth to which they can analyse and discuss their own teaching and the teaching they observe are very impressive" (Core Curriculum…, 2020, p. 19). The results have been achieved by following several principles, including reflection as one of the foundations of the teaching process and carefully phased school experience (guided observation, teacher assistantship and observed teaching) during the whole extended course in teaching methods (Year 2 – Year 4). Moreover, proclaiming that language courses are to complement methodology courses, exemplifying good practice and illustrating the principles underlying the curriculum, we thus make use of a huge pool of learning experience gained by our students.

One of the crucial assumptions is our strong belief that an ability to reflect is not an inborn quality. We fully agree with S. Elliott-Jones (2014) when she writes that very few students enter the college with knowledge

how to reflect and understanding how it would enhance their teaching. Thus, one of the main tasks of university staff is to make the essence and benefits of reflection clear for students as well as provide on-going support for reflection. The model for guided reflection developed by Husu et al. (2008) and further specified in later publications (Leijen et al., 2014) served as the basis for introducing systemic changes into teacher education at our university.

We adhere to the opinion that reflection is a multi-layered process (Branscombe & Schneider, 2013), so we argue that its modelling demands including several steps: justifying the importance of reflection as part of shaping and reshaping one's teaching philosophy; introducing the notion of guided reflection and demonstrating how questionnaires and critical conversations can scaffold (Bean & Stevens, 2002) and promote the process of students' reflection; using the method of case study to analyse different situations from similar teaching contexts; discussing critical incidents using students' field notes; writing reflective essays and receiving collaborative feedback; keeping reflective journals as a part of students' methodological portfolio; using reflection data for further investigation while writing research papers (year paper and graduation paper). We are going to describe some of the steps that take place in pedagogy and methodology classes. We also intend to supply and analyse some data collected in the process of validating the model efficiency through participants' opinions surveys, observation charts and reflective essays.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Participants embraced 2-4 year H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University students of the Department of Foreign Philology in the years of 2017-2020 who studied English as their major and specialized in Secondary Education. To observe the continuity of the provided system of guided reflection and measure the dynamics of the students' reflective skills development, the same group of students was observed during three years (30 students), though some surveys also involved other students of the same Department.

It should be mentioned that the prolonged vertical character of the experiment made it irrelevant to have a formerly organized control group of learners, but the first questionnaire about the nature of reflection, skills needed for that and the role of reflection in teaching and learning was submitted to 30 other students of the department, who specialized in

English Philology and Translation and thus studied the so called "traditional" course of methodology that includes lectures and seminars. The same students were asked to answer the same questions again after their teaching practice in Year 4.

The table with the subjects' characteristics is given below.

Table 1 Participants' characteristics
Source: Authors' own conception

Characteristics	Number of participants
Total number of observed students	30
Studying English as their major	30
Studying French as their second foreign language	13
Studying Spanish as their second foreign language	17
Having Ukrainian as their native language	30
Female students	28
Male students	2
Top students (excellent grades)	4
Struggling students	6

Research instruments
The research data was obtained using the instruments below.

1) Questionnaires with thematic axes on various aspects of reflection, starting with the clarification of students' understanding the notion of reflection, its types and needed skills, and followed by analysis of reflective activities employed in the educational process. The dedicated questionnaires contained mainly close-ended questions (9 of 10 per questionnaire) while the final question in each questionnaire was about students' comments, if any. Overall, there were 10 questionnaires, completed by students in Google Classrooms, 4 in academic year 2017-2018, 4 in the following year and 3 in 2019-2020. Besides, the very first questionnaire was answered by the participants again before their Bachelor's degree exams.

2) Observation charts of the students' verbal and non-verbal behaviour during critical conversations. Observation was performed by another researcher who did not participate in the conversation. The following aspects were observed: the degree of each student's participation, the degree of students' interaction, the ability to display initiative and ask clarifying questions, the

ability to provide examples from their learning experience and
their observations of school teaching practice, non-verbal
behaviour and face expressions resulting from inhibition, low
self-esteem, indifference etc.

3) Reflective essays that students' wrote as a part of their
methodological portfolio. Reflective essays were written as
envisaged by the Core Curriculum (assessment specifications) at
the end of each term. Additionally, some tasks performed during
methodology classes required writing reflective essays (as the one
described in 4.2). In total, there were 26 reflective essays written
by students and analysed by the researchers.

4) Self-assessment lists (2 of them during the classes of pedagogy
and 3 during those of methodology). In the self-assessment lists
students assessed their reflective skills or performance in a whole
class or group work on the 5-point scale.

All those documents were subject to both quantitative and
qualitative analysis. In addition, semi-structured interviews with the focus
group were organized twice a year. That group consisted of 5 students
selected at random out of the participants. Structured interviews were
conducted with each researcher as well. The interviews allowed an in-depth
direct response from various stakeholders clarifying students' and teachers'
feelings towards the organization of continuous modelling of reflection,
their awareness of the advantages of reflective practices, their constructive
criticism and suggestions for improvement.

3.2. Ethical issues

All participants gave their consent to use their personal data. Only
researchers had an immediate access to the collected data. Confidentiality
and anonymity were ensured. Members of the focus group agreed to take
part in the interviews.

4. Findings from pedagogy and methodology classes

4.1. The data from pedagogy classes

During the course of pedagogy, the students were systematically
informed about the nature of reflection, its types and benefits. The
information was provided in several lectures and tackled in several practical
classes.

For instance, when speaking at the lecture about planning in the
educational process, the focused was set on the principle of flexibility and

teacher's improvisation based on reflection-in-action. In the pedagogical context, improvisation promotes teachers' prompt finding the means of preventing and resolving any conflict situations in the educational process, creating favourable conditions for educational and cognitive activities. It also manifests and demonstrates teacher's erudition, creative potential, intuition, resourcefulness, teaching skills, etc. (Bashkir, 2014).

To develop future teachers' practical abilities to promptly make pedagogically expedient decisions in unforeseen situations using improvisation, and to identify common challenges that occur in solving pedagogical problems during the corresponding practical classes, students analysed different situations from the Ukrainian teaching context and tried to offer reasonable solutions. Following the principle of guided reflection, the procedure started with case studies, when students got acquainted with solutions to some problems described in other teachers' practices and expressed their opinion as to their effectiveness. Then they went on to choose one of the options suggested by the teacher (multiple choice activity), discuss them in group, and add students' own version, if any, followed by discussing and solving another set of similar situations on their own, and giving and receiving collaborative feedback.

The next step was playing role-games when students performed different social roles (student, teacher, parent, etc.) in imaginary conditions specially created by them. Collaboration when playing was developed through interaction, which reflected gradual transition from the maximum level of teacher's assistance in solving educational problems to the steady growth of students' proactivity in self-regulation.

Observers (classroom teacher and another researcher) noticed that students tried to use their analytical thinking and knowledge of other subjects (psychology, conflictology), demonstrated creativity and a sense of humour. Since the climate in class was conducive to interaction and collaboration, students were not afraid of making mistakes or defending their position.

At the final stage, the students were asked to make a list of qualities necessary for pedagogical improvisation, and they discussed it, coming to a common version. Then students were asked to reflect individually on the instances they had to employ those qualities while solving the situations and role-playing them. It was emphasised that concrete illustrative examples were to be given and the degree of manifesting a certain quality was self-evaluated on the five-point scale. Importantly, both the teacher and a co-researcher also made notes and used them while evaluating students' performance.

Among the identified set of teacher's professionally important qualities indicating pedagogical improvisation students singled out communication skills, creativity, thinking flexibility, intuition, instant reaction and imagination. According to the data obtained, not all students were able to supply relevant examples (4 of 30 failed) but the majority demonstrated their ability to use reflection-on-action; they could think back critically analysing their actions and feelings. The comparison of the self-evaluation results and teacher evaluation surprisingly showed that students were less confident of their ability to improvise in pedagogical situations and, overall, their marks on the 5-point scale were on average 1.7 points lower than those given by the researchers. Interestingly, when a similar questionnaire (self-assessment list) was offered to another group that did not participate in the research, their self-assessment marks showed the trend to be much higher than those of the teachers (average 4.8 against 2.8). Those students were often unaware that ability to think on your feet and improvise in challenging pedagogical situations is not just intuitive but involves a solid basis of knowledge and skills. Obviously, it is another proof of the necessity of systematic reflection and developing skills of both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.

4.2. The data from methodology classes

One of the procedures used in the guided reflection in methodology classes involved the so-called critical questions on some activities suggested in textbooks and done during university studies, observed in the school practice or during the process of microteaching. As established earlier, those critical conversations performed the scaffolding role and evolved from collaborative whole group tasks to working in small groups or pairs, and then to doing individual assignments with further collaborative feedback. Critical questions encouraged students to analyse the nature of the activity (receptive/reproductive, totally controlled/semi-controlled/communicative task, motivating/non-motivating, etc.) and the theory it relates to, its correspondence to the educational context, whether learners were clear about the purpose and procedure of the activity, whether enough support was provided and how the students could prove all that.

If it were an activity that students delivered as teachers during the microteaching phase, additional questions were discussed:

1. Would I use the activity again? What could I do differently to help learners learn more?
2. Did my assessment reflect learning or merely task completion?
3. What evidence do I have that learners are learning?

4. Which learners benefited/not benefited from the activity?
5. What were my feelings during the activity and after the lesson?
6. Was my classroom behaviour conducive to learning?
7. In what areas can I still improve as a professional?

Depending on the kind of activity and the teaching objectives, the number of issues discussed can vary, but the main idea is to provide guidelines for reflection-on-action and let students get involved in not just a description of activities and their feelings but in critical reflection. Another important aspect is that we tried to use several 'critical lenses' (Brookfield, 1995): self-lens, learner-lens, peer-lens and theory lens.

Similar to discussing pedagogical situations in pedagogy classes, there was a discussion of critical incidents (Griffin, 2003) in methodology classes. The difference was that instead of role-playing hypothetical situations or using the method of case study, students themselves selected those specific occurrences from their observed teaching, which they considered as significant points, either positive or negative, and proved that it was the incident when students' assumptions were challenged. Student's description of the event was followed by a group discussion aimed at clarifying the nature of the incident, the character of student's actions and learners' actions, aspects they found most helpful, puzzling and confusing, details they would like to avoid in future etc. Afterwards, the students were asked to write a one-page reflective essay describing the incident and what made it critical for them, their interpretation of the situation and their behaviour as well as different perspectives that could be taken on the incident, including the literature offered to solve students' problems.

The evaluation of submitted essays showed that since enough support was provided at the previous stages of guided reflection, most of the students (27 of 30) coped with individual assignments and managed to demonstrate their reflective skills in their written product. Their reflection was more thorough and profound and embraced analysing different views alongside their own position. Nevertheless, students still experienced difficulties trying to relate their experiences to the relevant theory (16 of 30), thus the gap between theory and practice has not been totally bridged yet.

4.3. Findings from submitted documents

The data collected through the questionnaires prove positive dynamics in the students' reflective skills development. The results of the first questionnaire (on the nature of reflection, its benefits and needed skills) varied slightly in the observed group and the group not involved in the

experiment (33% on average of the correct answers to close-ended questions in the observed group against 28% in the other group) and very few students from either group used the box for notes that was suggested as the 10th point in the questionnaire (2 students from the observed group and only 1 student from the other group). Moreover, the commentaries merely consisted of expressing the students' wishes to learn more about reflection. When the students answered the same questionnaire again at the end of their 4th year of studies, the difference between the results of the two groups was much more noticeable: 75% in the observed group against 39.3% of the other group.

Observations charts of critical conversations also managed to demonstrate positive tendencies in the participants' verbal and non-verbal behaviour: participation of each student in the discussion became more active, gradually increasing from 27% to 86.5% on average, more students displayed initiative (from 30% to 76.7%), and it was connected not only with asking clarifying questions but also with mentioning new aspects of the problem or some previously ignored data. Practically all students developed the ability to supply illustrating examples to various theoretical issues (93.3%) and their non-verbal behaviour testified to more self-confidence and less indifference.

5. Discussion

The interviews conducted with the focus group proved students' positive perception of the guided reflection procedure. Gradual transition from collaborative process to pair and individual assignments provided sufficient scaffolding and made students' reflection more focused, profound and critical. Some students mentioned that group discussions and detailed questionnaires helped them to perceive things from different perspectives and generate new ideas. They also emphasized that communication with university teachers and their peers made the students more confident and eager to reflect.

When asked about the scope of support in guided reflection, students were not unanimous. One of them preferred more assistance and experienced difficulties coping with the individual written assignment, another one thought that sometimes guiding was excessive and students could work on their own earlier than it was envisaged. The rest of the focus group students expressed their satisfaction with the quality and quantity of scaffolding. In our opinion, students' answers proved again that groups are practically never homogeneous and individual differences are to be taken into account in any teaching problem. The question if any students could

skip some steps in the process of guided reflection and if any other students should be offered to go through some additional steps, remains open for further exploration.

Among those points that were most significant for them in the suggested procedure, the students mentioned different critical lenses, the notion of critical incidents, reflection on their actions and behaviour during the activities under reflection and gradual move from their own feelings analysis to impact-related analysis. The latter idea resonates with the observations of Husu et al. (2008) and Leijen et al. (2014) that students move from self-related concerns towards task-related and impact-related reflection. One student pointed out the importance of the attempts to penetrate into learners' minds trying to see everything from the learners' standpoint and their outcomes.

Interviews with university teachers engaged in the research showed that when leading students through all the steps of guided reflection, teachers also benefited from the process as they had to be a role model of a reflective practitioner all the time and felt that their own reflective skills improved from constant focused observation.

Besides, it was a test of the level of their teaching skills and their adherence to learner-centred approach. For instance, at first it was difficult for the teachers to begin not where they were but where their students were and make necessary allowances, eliciting responses instead of promptly providing the answers.

By observing group discussions and assessing students' written reflective assignments, teachers managed to collect a considerable volume of useful and interesting data for prospective examination and reflection-for-action.

6. Conclusion

In spite of the fact that numerous programs of teacher education declare reflection as one of their underpinning principles, reflective practice often remains either declared but not fully realized or perceived by the students as something alien to the process of teaching and learning and imposed on students. More often than not, reflection is viewed as a quality students are already equipped with and are to demonstrate while performing various reflective assignments.

Our research proves that reflection should be an integral and compulsory component of most professionally orientated courses, and students should be provided with ample opportunities to reflect on their

own learning, on schoolteachers' practices during their observation practice and on their performance during microteaching at the university and schoolchildren teaching. University teachers and school mentors should manifest proper reflective skills themselves to serve as role model reflective practitioners.

To be most efficient, the process of developing students' reflective skills should, in our opinion, be scaffolded with a sufficient guidelines, questionnaires, self-assessment checklists and move from collaborative activities to individual tasks. Through interaction with 'the knowledgeable other' learners gradually become attuned to the reflection process, acquire necessary skills and get confidence to reflect on their own.

The interviews with the participants and research generated objective data proved that introduction of the suggested system led to the improved quality of students' reflection, namely, it contributed to more profound critical analysis, to better, though not sufficient yet, relating teaching practices to relevant theories and changing the focus of reflection to the impact on the learning process.

The researchers are fully aware of the fact that reflection is not a linear process and it combines both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Thus, students, as future teachers, are to become familiar with both of them in order to constantly explore their own values and assumptions, generate new ideas and manifest flexibility in their teaching practices being ready to improvise, if necessary.

Limitations of the study are connected with a number of participants and the prevailing online teaching mode that was introduced in the spring term of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We realize that under different conditions and with a bigger number of students results may differ and further investigation is needed to enhance the credibility of the obtained results.

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