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Collaborative Reflective Practice: Its Influence on Pre-service EFL Teachers' Emerging Professional Identities

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an action research study conducted to explore how to strengthen pre-service EFL teacher professional identities through reflective practice at a university in the north of Chile. A 10-week workshop was developed to introduce participants to reflective practice as they took their extended teaching practicum. Reflections were fostered through an approach that was structured, conversational and collaborative. Qualitative data about the 12 participants' perceptions of the workshop were gathered using a focus group discussion. The hybrid thematic analysis of their responses indicated that participants' emerging teacher professional identities were strengthened in three highly relevant ways: participants developed confidence in their ability to problem-solve, their appreciation of collaboration grew, and they became more aware of the need for teachers to change. The conclusions and implications drawn may be of use to teacher educators in other contexts who are considering how to foster professional identity through reflective practice in pre-service teachers.

Keywords: collaborative reflective practice; pre-service teacher identity; action research; pre-service teacher education

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Introduction

There is general agreement that teachers need to be reflective practitioners, and that reflective practice (RP) should be developed in teacher education (Beauchamp, 2014; Farrell, 2016a; Graham & Phelps, 2003; Mann & Walsh, 2013). In Chile, where this study was carried out, EFL teacher education programs tend to focus on improving linguistic proficiency and theoretical knowledge about second language learning and teaching (Martin & Rosas-Maldonado, 2019); RP is gradually being introduced (Barahona, 2016; Martin, 2016), and is now a requirement of national standards for teachers (Ministerio de Educación, 2014). However, whilst there are several ways in which RP can be fostered (Farrell, 2016b; Walsh & Mann, 2015), practical accounts of how RP can be nurtured effectively at the pre-service level remain scarce (Mann & Walsh, 2013; Wright, 2010). As some authors have pointed out, introducing RP at the pre-service level can be ineffective, or may even erode pre-service teachers' confidence (e.g. Akbari, 2007; Russell, 2013). Accounts of how to implement RP at the pre-service level are particularly scarce from South America in general (Farrell, 2016b), and Chile (Barahona, 2016).

In the Chilean EFL teacher education program where this study was conducted, students are required to reflect on their teaching practicum with more experienced teachers and via individual journal writing. The national context, our review of the literature, and previous experience of RP elsewhere led us to believe that we needed a more holistic approach involving peer collaboration. We piloted this approach in an optional workshop for students taking their first extended practicum. We evaluated the effect of the workshop through an action research framework, and present here a description and rationale for the RP model used, together with our findings and implications. We believe this paper may be of use to teacher educators seeking ways to foster RP and strengthen pre-service teachers' professional identities.

Literature Review

In this section, we explain why we chose to consider the influence of the workshop in terms of changes in the pre-service teachers' emerging professional identities. We then focus on the concept of RP and how we aimed to foster RP.

Teacher Identity

Research from philosophy and psychology during the last century has recognized identity as important, but difficult to define (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Korthagen, 2004). Identity can be conceptualized as “the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2013 in Norton, 2017, p. 81). Identity is rooted both in a person's self-concept and their social context; it is an ongoing process, performed rather than possessed, and constantly shaped by internal and external factors (Barkhuizen, 2017; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Korthagen, 2004; Norton, 2017; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005).

It is now widely recognized that becoming a good foreign language teacher involves developing a sense of teacher professional identity, which consists of more than acquiring knowledge about the L2, knowledge about how to teach it, or even appropriate beliefs, knowledge or attitudes (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010; Varghese et al., 2005). Rather, teacher identity is a ‘gestalt’ (Korthagen, 2004), a ‘whole’ that is more than simply the sum of these dimensions, and a “framework [for teachers] to construct their own ideas of ‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ their work and place in society”

(Sachs, 2005, in Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 178). From her review of the literature, Izadinia (2013) concludes that the most widely recognized dimensions of student teacher identity are “perceptions of their cognitive knowledge, sense of agency, self-awareness, voice, confidence and relationship with colleagues, pupils and parents” (p. 708). The development of this identity is “a profoundly individual and psychological matter because it concerns the self-image and other-image of particular teachers” (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 39), yet it is also fundamentally a social process since it is through discourse and interaction that identities can be understood, negotiated, and reformulated (Barkhuizen, 2017; Varghese et al., 2005).

Over recent years, calls have been made for better understanding of how teacher education programs can contribute to the difficult process of strengthening teacher identities (Richards, 2017). However, few such studies have been conducted in Chile (Archanjo, Barahona, & Finardi, 2019). In the following section, we consider how RP may contribute to this task.

Reflective Practice

Contemporary conceptions of RP are founded on Dewey’s proposal of RP as a way of moving from one experience into another with a progression in learning (Jones & Jones, 2013; Rogers, 2002; Ruffinelli, 2017). Schön (1983), drawing on Dewey’s work, argued that professional growth could be brought about by deliberate, systematic reflection on practice. Farrell (2016b) has written extensively on RP in TESOL teacher education, and defines RP as a cognitive process that involves the systematic collection of data by teachers to enable them to make informed decisions about their practice. In other words, the purpose of RP is to help teachers develop their sense of agency, and a stronger professional identity (Beauchamp, 2014; Rogers, 2002).

The ways in which RP is carried out vary widely, and can encompass reflection on both teachers’ inner life and their external, observable work (Akbari, 2007; Farrell, 2015, 2016b). Farrell (2016b) published a useful framework for classifying these conceptions based on an analysis of 116 studies in which pre-service and in-service TESOL teachers reflected on their practice. According to the framework, teachers reflect on their practice at different levels in five main ways:

- Philosophy: the foundational perspectives and reasoning which guide a teacher’s thinking about teaching (similar to Pinar’s (1975) notion of *currere*). Reflection at this level involves teachers considering how their background (e.g. social class, family, religion, etc.) influences their perspectives on teaching and learning.
- Principles: a continuum of the teacher’s beliefs, assumptions and conceptions of how teaching and learning occur. A teacher may reflect on these by considering which maxims, images and metaphors of teaching he or she holds.
- Theory: refers to the teacher’s theory or theories of how linguistic knowledge and skills should be taught. These theories manifest in the choice of techniques, activities and methods a teacher plans to use, and so a teacher can reflect on their theory by examining their planning.
- Practice: a teacher’s observable behavior in the classroom. This may be reflected on through observations of the teacher’s and students’ actions, during or after the teaching episode, termed ‘reflection-in-action’ and ‘reflection-on-action’ respectively by Schön (1983).
- Beyond practice: refers to critical reflection, i.e., reflection to transform practices in a way that responds to the students’ and society’s needs. Reflection at this level entails examining the moral choices and judgments made in teaching.

The studies that Farrell analyzed provide strong evidence that RP can develop teachers' understanding of their practices at each of these levels. However, as Farrell (2016b) notes, whilst it makes intuitive sense that teachers should be encouraged to reflect at as many of these different levels as possible, few studies aim to foster reflection at more than one level or in more than one way.

Rationale for the RP Model Used

To help strengthen our students' emerging professional identities, we believed it was vital that students did not simply study the theory of RP (Beauchamp, 2014; Russell, 2013), but reflected on teaching practices in as holistic a manner as possible (Farrell, 2016b; Farrell, 2018; Rogers, 2002). We wanted to encourage students to play a central, agentic role in their reflective processes, but also recognized that RP is not intuitive, and so we sought to provide a step-by-step process to support the development of these skills (Beauchamp, 2014; Russell, 2013).

Another consideration was the modality in which students would reflect. In our program and several other pre-service contexts (Farrell, 2016b; Mann & Walsh, 2013; Ruffinelli, 2017), reflection is guided or directed by a more experienced teacher and involves the student writing about his or her reflections individually. While this format can indeed be useful (Burton, 2009; Farrell, 2016b), we wanted to avoid burdening participants with writing (Lee, 2007; Walsh & Mann, 2015; Yesilbursa, 2011). More importantly, we believed it was crucial to provide students with the opportunity to move beyond 'autobiographical self-reflection', and even beyond 'learning from colleagues', towards dialogic, collaboratively-constructed reflection and identity development, in line with Dewey's original formulation and current understandings of how professional identities develop (Mann & Walsh, 2013; Rogers, 2002; Varghese et al., 2005). We also perceived that collaboration could help students become aware of 'collective problems' and therefore reduce the stress of starting teaching (Kilgour, Northcote & Herman, 2015; Nguyen, 2013). Moreover, since collaboration has been widely recognized as highly valuable for the ongoing professional development of teachers (Avalos, 2011; Borko, 2004; Harlow & Cobb, 2014), we believe that teacher education programs should provide students with positive experiences of collaborative professional practice.

For our workshop then, we followed a model of RP that would guide students to play a central, collaborative role in reflecting on their teaching practice at different levels. Given time constraints, we focused on the first four levels of RP described by Farrell (2016b): participants explored their philosophy of teaching, and then were introduced to a model of RP as a way of exploring their interconnected theories, principles and practices. At each of the following levels, students were asked to discuss and develop their reflections together:

- *Reflections on philosophy:* We began with an opportunity for autobiographical inquiry that would enable students to reflect on how their past experiences of education and future hopes and dreams shaped their identities as teachers. To this end, we used video to stimulate discussion and a reflective tool which is described in more detail in the Methodology.
- *Reflections on principles, theory and practice:* We chose to introduce students to reflection-on-action using the five-stage cycle proposed by Bartlett (1990) (see Figure 1). The cycle is linked to Dewey's original conception of RP (Rogers, 2002) and has distinct stages to scaffold reflection on principles, theory and practice. Furthermore, it can be implemented using different activities according to contextual needs (Gnawali, 2008).

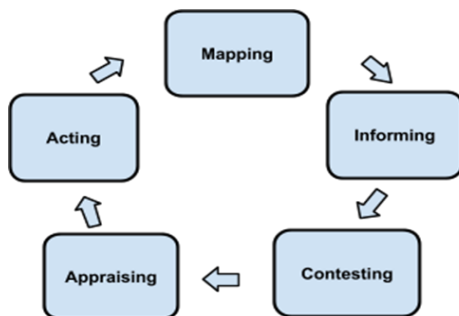


Figure 1. Stages of the Reflection-on-action Cycle (adapted from Bartlett, 1990).

The first stage, ‘mapping’, is based on Schön’s (1983) premise that learning to detect problems is as important as being able to find solutions. Practitioners form a detailed picture of their own teaching, or of another teacher’s teaching, by gathering concrete evidence, and then identify aspects of a ‘critical incident’ that puzzles them. In the second stage, ‘informing’, practitioners recount the critical incident to a third party, a “trusted person [or people] who asks provocative questions and [...] offers a critique of a person’s work as a friend” (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 49). In the ‘contesting’ stage, teachers reflect on beliefs that underlie their teaching actions during the incident. This process helps teachers recognize inconsistencies between their beliefs (or principles) and actions. In the fourth stage, ‘appraising’, practitioners think about alternate ways to teach and consider how to make their theories about teaching concrete, and then develop an ‘action plan’. Practitioners implement the action plan in the fifth stage, ‘acting’, and then reflect on the outcome. This final stage is particularly relevant as some studies (e.g., Beas, Gómez, Thomson & Carranza, 2004; Jones & Jones, 2013) have found that teachers may be enthusiastic about RP, but might not go on to make changes and reflect on these practices.

Research Question

As discussed, EFL teacher education needs to contribute to the development of strong professional identities. Practical accounts of more holistic, collaborative approaches to RP are scarce. Through exploring the influence of our workshop on the participants’ professional identities, we hoped to evaluate our proposed model, and provide insights about how our teacher education program, and others elsewhere, could be more effective. Our research question was therefore designed to be open-ended so that we could explore the influence of the workshop. It was guided by the following question:

How were the pre-service teachers’ professional identities influenced by a collaborative RP workshop?

Methodology

Because of the exploratory nature of our study, we adopted an action research approach: we implemented a course of action – the RP workshop – and gathered evidence to consider its influence and make possible further changes for future cycles (Burns, 2009). The following sections describe the implementation and how the data were collected and analyzed.

Context and participants

The participants were final year students of an undergraduate EFL teacher training program at a university in a small city in Chile. In the first four years, students take English language and cultural courses, and a single introductory course on education. By the end of the fourth year, students' English is expected to be at CEFRL B2 level. The RP workshop was run during their final year in parallel to their first teaching methodology course and extended practicum.

All of the students taking their teaching practice were invited to participate in the workshop: eight were unable to join due to schedule conflicts. Our volunteer-based sample comprised twelve participants, eight females and four males, aged between 21 and 23 years old. Their previous experiences of learning English had been at public or subsidized public schools.

Reflective Practice Workshop

The workshop lasted 10 weeks, with weekly 90-minute sessions; whilst more time might have been desirable, we believed that this format was appropriate given our students' and own time constraints. Two of the authors, who had previously taught the students, acted as mentors. One of these teachers had prior experience of a structured RP program (*Learning Together to Advance our Practice*, District of Columbia Public Schools, 2016). The mentors met after each session to discuss progress and fine-tune planning for the following week. They strived to create an environment conducive to collaboration, for example by providing refreshments at the start of each session, establishing norms of confidentiality and non-judgmentalism, and using open-ended questions to stimulate reflection (Brookfield, 1997; Lee & Barnett, 1994). Each session was mainly discussion-based and conducted in English.

The practicum required students to be in a school for four hours per week for 12 weeks where they observed an EFL class, assisted the teacher, and finally taught it themselves. Table 1 provides an overview of the workshop.

Table 1
Workshop Overview

Week	Workshop activities
Induction Phase	
1	Welcoming session
2	Reflection on the challenges of being a teacher
3	Autobiographical reflection on teacher identities Introduction to Bartlett's RP cycle
4	Further explanation of Bartlett's RP cycle. Practice using an observation log to map a critical incident.
Application Phase I	
5	Stage 1: Mapping – participants log a critical incident from another teacher's lesson (before session). Stage 2: Informing – participants report incident to a small group.
6	Stage 3: Contesting – participants discuss possible beliefs underlying teacher's actions during incident. Stage 4: Appraising – participants and mentors suggest alternative ways to deal with incident and consider benefits of reflecting on a different teacher's class.
Application Phase II	
7	Stage 1: Mapping – participants log a critical incident from their own teaching (before session). Stage 2: Informing – participants report incident to a small group.
8	Stage 3: Contesting – participants discuss possible beliefs underlying their actions during incident.
9	Stage 4: Appraising – participants and mentors suggest alternative ways to teach during acting stage. Participants develop 'action plans' of strategies to try.
10	Stage 5: Acting – participants reflect on action plans implemented in their teaching (before session).

Induction Phase

This phase covered four sessions. In the first session, participants received general information and gave written informed consent to participate in our research. In the second session, they reflected on the challenges of being a teacher. We showed a video to introduce common challenges (see Appendix 1 for all video URLs), and then asked questions to stimulate discussion, such as, ‘What caught your attention from this video?’, and ‘What do you think about the statement, “We teachers fail on a daily basis”?’ In the third session, participants reflected on their identities as teachers and how these had been influenced by past experiences. To this end, they individually completed a reflective tool (adapted from Farrell, 2007) which comprised a tree diagram that students labeled with experiences from school as a language learner and from university as an adult learner. We discussed together how these experiences contributed to their current philosophies of teaching and desired future teacher identities. The concept of RP and Bartlett’s RP cycle were then introduced using PowerPoint.

In the last induction session, three videos showing real and simulated RP in UK and North American school contexts were used to illustrate RP. To prepare for the following stages, participants practiced using an observation log, similar to that described by Murphy (2014), to map a video of a first-grade reading class (the log can be found in Appendix 2). Before the next session, participants used the log to map an incident they found puzzling from one of the classes observed.

Application Phase I

In this phase participants gained experience with the first four stages of Bartlett’s cycle by reflecting on the class they were observing for their practicum. It consisted of two sessions (the fifth and sixth). During the fifth session (*informing*), each participant presented their logged incident to a small group who acted as critical friends. Each group then shared one of their group’s incidents with the whole group. During session 6, we revisited these incidents and asked questions to build awareness of the teaching beliefs, such as ‘What are some teaching beliefs that help us understand this incident?’. Sentence stems such as ‘Is it possible that the teacher assumed that...?’ were displayed to facilitate discussions (*contesting*). Participants were asked to suggest alternative action plans (*appraising*) for the incidents. Since the participants were not yet teaching, the acting stage was not implemented; it was, however, in Application Phase II.

Application Phase II

The students applied Bartlett’s cycle to their teaching during the practicum in this phase. Separate sessions were devoted to the stages of contesting, appraising and reflecting on the acting.

Students mapped an incident from one of the lessons they taught for their practicum using the observation log, and then informed their ‘critical friend’ (again, a small group of participants) in session 7. In this phase, a whole session (session 8) was given to the contesting stage to allow more thorough reflection on their underlying beliefs during the reported incidents, which was done first in small groups and then as a whole group. We used the same sentence prompts as in the previous phase. In session 9, participants developed ‘action plans’ to try in their classes (*appraising*). Students then implemented their action plans, and in the final session, reflected on them. In order to stimulate reflection, mentors asked questions such as ‘What were you hoping to accomplish?’, ‘What reasons guided your choice?’, and ‘Did it work?’.

Data collection and analysis

We collected data through a focus-group discussion as our participants were used to whole-group discussions together and we believed this method would enable them to expand on and counter each other's representations of their experiences (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). The focus group discussion was held by the two mentors with all of the participants at the end of the workshop sessions. Eight open-ended questions were displayed on a slide in Spanish and read aloud. The questions were primarily about students' impressions of RP and their evaluation of the workshop (see Appendix 3 for the questions in English). The participants were invited to answer in Spanish or English; they chose to do so in Spanish. The mentors allowed ample time for each question and did not intervene in the discussion which lasted approximately one hour.

The discussion was audio-recorded and transcribed, and then analyzed, commented on and revised by the third author who had not been present during the workshop. The analysis had a hybrid approach as it involved both a top-down deductive method – using the research aims and questions to guide the generation of an *ex-ante* code – and a bottom-up, inductive method – generating *ex-post* codes based on the examination of the data (Swain, 2018). The full transcript was read several times to gain familiarity with the content, seeking meanings and patterns in the responses. With regard to the *ex-ante* code, we wanted to analyze participants' perceptions of collaboration; *ex-post* codes were developed drawing on the data, using professional teacher identity as a frame through which to interpret the data. Once the transcript had been coded, it was read through several times to develop and revise the codes. The codes were collapsed into broader themes to structure the findings (Swain, 2018). Finally, the analysis was revised and commented on by the first two authors who had been the workshop mentors. After the analysis, the transcription extracts presented below were translated into English by one of the authors and checked by the other two (all three authors are Spanish-English bilinguals).

Findings

We begin by presenting two brief accounts of feedback that students received from teachers who supervised their practicum¹. These accounts do not respond to our research questions, but we include them because they were typical comments from our participants and provide a context for understanding the analysis that follows. The names given for students here and throughout are pseudonyms.

[My supervising teacher] said, "your voice is not okay, the kids were playing with scissors at the back, [you] never told them to adjust their ties properly, [you] never told them to line up before getting into the classroom, and the activity took you too long." [...] I did not have the time to think or reflect about what was going on because she only mentioned all the negative things I did. (Antonia)

It was very frustrating since the only feedback I received was on the evaluation sheet. Some of [my supervising teacher's] comments said, "more classroom management", but I never had a chance to sit down and talk with my practicum mentor as we did here in the workshop. (Fatima)

Antonia reports being given an overwhelming amount of negative feedback; Fatima, on the other hand, commented that she was given insufficient guidance. Both students felt disappointed and would have liked to discuss and reflect on their experiences.

With regard to the research question, we detected three main themes in the discussion data regarding how the students' teacher identity had grown as a result of participating in the workshop. The participants perceived that they could solve the problems they encountered when

teaching, that collaboration with their peers was valuable, and that being open to change was essential.

Becoming problem-solvers

Several participants commented on how the RP workshop was closely connected to their classroom practice and, in Gloria's words, "enabl[ed] us to really find a solution to our problems". Similarly, Jazmin said that, "RP trains us so we can improve as teachers and so our teaching practices do not fall into mere routines." As these comments indicate, the participants came to see taking responsibility for problem-solving as part of their role as teachers. They found different aspects of the cycle helpful for problem-solving. For example, Fernanda perceived the step-by-step structure of the cycle as fundamental:

We had this abstract idea that [RP] was thinking about what we had done and not that it was really a structured process in which we would take the data about what we do and how something worked in the classroom and then see the weak points in that and how to improve them [...] in order to apply them in practice.

Other participants came to see that in order to resolve their critical incidents, they first needed to reflect on the nature of those incidents:

Before, with whatever problem I had in the classroom, I would say, "Something went wrong, I have to avoid that next time" and then not think about where the problem came from [...] You don't realize [the importance of] these things [...] and I think this was one of the most relevant aspects for me. (Leonidas)

Likewise, Eduardo commented, "I think that what most helped me from the workshop was that it helped me to theorize and define a problem." Some participants stated that this type of reflection was stimulated by collecting and analyzing data:

What I found most helpful was the observation log [...] where we could label what happened in the classroom because often there are problems that occur, but we don't know what they are about, so knowing which category they fall into makes it easier to solve them. (Antonia)

Other participants emphasized that externalizing critical incidents brought clarity. Gloria said: "For example, you believe you have a problem with classroom management, but then when you talk about it, you realize it wasn't actually about this and instead it was another thing, and then your focus becomes clearer." Similarly, Fernanda found the group discussions "useful" because "we were able to talk about the problems [and] digest them"; the discussions facilitated the deconstruction and understanding of their critical incidents. Fernanda went on to mention that the discussions also enabled students to "find solutions to our problems", a perception that was shared by several others. Leonidas, for example, noted how discussions gave these participants, who had relatively little teaching experience, more ideas to draw on: "Exchang[ing] experiences [...] helps us to reach conclusions more quickly and analyze ideas more effectively."

The awareness that they could resolve their problems enabled the participants to feel more confident about teaching, partly because they no longer felt overwhelmed by their challenges:

I think this [knowledge of RP] is important because if we don't have this knowledge, we will carry on getting frustrated and feeling that we are lost in our problems and that we are never going to find a solution. (Gloria)

Fausto commented that teachers do not have to resolve problems the first time around; he saw that it is possible to keep trying: "[I]f an idea that we have developed in the RP cycle doesn't work out, we can erase it, and try again following the steps of the cycle."

Although the vast majority of comments related to problem-solving indicated that the students felt more confident, there were a few comments from students who also recognized their limitations. For example, Gloria noted that “sometimes just talking about it and becoming aware [...] doesn’t necessarily mean that it [the action plan] is going to work”. Similarly, Leonidas commented that, “we lack a frame of reference to know which things could be more or less useful. To us, everything seems useful.”

To sum up, students commented that being able to analyze and address their own problems through collaborative discussion, and having a clear structure to follow for this process, enabled them to identify, understand and resolve the difficulties they faced. With regard to the process, many participants commented that RP should be introduced before starting their practicum to allow more time for understanding the concept of RP, and to free up time during the teaching practice to apply it. Students also stated it would have been helpful “to explore more problems or examples in depth” (Diego). Some commented that they would have liked to consider examples of RP being carried out from more familiar contexts. In Carmen’s words, “We should have considered something from the Chilean context maybe, or some kind of modelling that was more personalized.”

Valuing professional collaboration

As discussed, collaboration was critical in helping participants see themselves as problem-solvers. Other emotional benefits emerged too as participants discussed how talking and recognizing common challenges increased confidence and reduced stress. For example, Bernardita viewed the workshop as a place to receive “emotional support” from peers and where participants could “relax”. Carmen recognized that:

It was a safety zone because I could feel that I had a chance to talk about the problems that I was experiencing in the classroom and not to feel intimidated about getting a failing grade. Being able to talk about your problems without being judged, receiving appropriate feedback, receiving advice [...] that has helped me a lot.

Fatima also indicated that having a voice helped build confidence: “In most [other] workshops, there’s a voice that leads, and the rest follow and do, but here [...] we all make up the workshop, and that’s why it works. It’s not just [the mentors] leading it.”

The students also found collaboration beneficial because it enabled them to recognize that others were facing similar challenges. As Carmen said, it “helps you think and reflect that everyone gets frustrated and that we all go through the same experience”. Daniela remarked that this awareness of shared difficulties liberated her in the classroom:

When you make a mistake in the classroom you feel nervous and ashamed, and, oh no, what are the children or the teacher going to say? Now we are experiencing it from a different point of view, that we all go through this and we can all learn from our mistakes.

Collaboration had the effect of enabling participants to move on from negative feelings when their teaching did not go as they expected, enabling them to feel happier and more confident about their professional identities.

By the end of the workshop, there was also evidence of some participants seeing in-service teaching “as a job that can be done in community” (Bernardita), and therefore seeing collaboration as a part of their future teacher identities. Eduardo, for instance, remarked on wanting to use RP in the future:

It is not a process of one, it is a process of a group. Wherever we are going to work in the future, we are going to have this and we are going to develop this idea and we are going to do something about it because it is really useful, so I think it is a really good thing for me but not just for me, for the school and the kids too.

Open to change

The participants became more aware that learning to teach better requires becoming more open to self-criticism and change. Carmen stated that “we’ve seen that self-criticism isn’t just useful for teachers, but any type of profession,” and Eduardo admitted that: “I realized that I had to be more adaptable because there were things that I didn’t want to change and finally the need and seeing the others made me understand that it was important.”

One aspect of teaching that participants recognized as changing as a result of the workshop was their teaching beliefs. Gloria described the participants as empowered decision-makers:

Here you realize that when your classmates say, “This was useful for me” [...] that it is good, but also you can modify it with your own perspective or with your own style and [...] if you show your own style, you feel comfortable, and the students perceive that, and that way you can interact better with the students.

Bernardita also saw the participants as active constructors of their beliefs. She expected that, as a result of their RP experiences, they would remain open to change in the future:

I think that RP has helped us to build our teaching beliefs [...] I think they will keep changing according to [...] the context in which we find ourselves.

One set of beliefs that changed was that of classroom management, a topic that often surfaced in discussions. Daniela, for instance, described seeing classroom management in a more balanced manner:

One of the things we most talked about was the need to have the children in silence in class. Not letting them speak doesn’t help with their learning. Also, it doesn’t help acting like a dictator. You have to be flexible, but at the same time you can’t let things ‘run wild’.

Another area of teaching beliefs that changed was to do with the importance of emotions. Fatima recounted:

RP is extremely useful [...] because as teachers we are not taught to control our emotions. We tend to reflect our emotions in the classroom [...] and frustration is one of the first things we have to face in the classroom [...] We’ve had to learn to control our emotions and face our frustrations.

Similarly, Antonia commented that RP “helps us to be more aware of our emotions and those of our students, that there is an educational environment in which they are learning, and we need to reflect and see beyond just knowledge.”

These students moved towards understanding that, as teachers, they needed self-knowledge, to be self-critical, and, when necessary, to change. This awareness could have been perceived negatively, but it was seen, for example, as “useful” (Carmen), “important” (Eduardo) and helping the participants to “face teaching” (Daniela). Antonia connected learning to see mistakes positively, and openness to change, with increased self-esteem:

[RP] helps a lot in the area of self-esteem as a teacher because [...] you really do get frustrated, you really do feel that you have to be perfect from the first day and that you can’t make any mistakes and the children are going to

blame you, but it's not like that. You can make mistakes and the good thing about [RP] is that it teaches us to learn from those mistakes and see them as opportunities for change or improvement as a teacher, and that increases self-esteem.

In summary, the workshop shaped the participants' teacher identities by helping them become more aware of their ability to improve their practice, the value of collaboration and the need to be self-critical. When they were asked whether RP should be incorporated into the program, participants were unanimous in their assent.

Discussion and Conclusion

This action research study was conducted in an EFL teacher education program where students received feedback on their teaching from more experienced teachers and were expected to reflect on their practice through writing. We explored how pre-service teachers' emerging professional identities were shaped through a workshop which provided structured opportunities for a more integral version of RP that was based on peer collaboration. Some authors have expressed concerns that RP at a pre-service level can be ineffective if inappropriately scaffolded, or might even damage students' confidence (Akbari, 2007; Mann & Walsh, 2015; Russell, 2013). However, from their responses to the workshop, it was evident that the participants in this study developed stronger professional teacher identities: their comments reflect changes in the ways in which they saw their roles, and understood how to be and how to act as teachers (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). They were empowered by their developing awareness that they could define, deconstruct and resolve problems; they had had positive perceptions of collaboration; and they became more open to change. These changes are akin to developing a stronger sense of agency and willingness to working with colleagues, highly important facets of teacher professional identity (Archanjo et al., 2019; Borko, 2004; Izadinia, 2013; Korthagen, 2004; Pennington & Richards, 2016).

From the students' comments, our own experiences of the workshop, and the literature, we draw several implications for incorporating RP into our program that we believe may be of use to other teacher educators. First, encompassing different levels of reflection – such as philosophy, principles, theory and actual classroom practice as in this study – is likely to promote identity change more effectively (Rogers, 2002; Farrell, 2016b). Second, students need time to understand how to reflect (Russell, 2013). Videos, and especially local ones, can be helpful to demonstrate what RP involves. Students can begin to build reflective skills through observing other teacher's practice before reflecting on their own practice. Third, whilst it will be necessary at times to direct students' attention to aspects of their classroom practice to work on, they also need to be encouraged to recognize and reflect on aspects that are significant to them (Beauchamp, 2014). Fourth, pre-service teachers need the experience of collecting evidence about their practice in manageable ways. Peer observation and filming teaching are undoubtedly useful (Mann & Walsh, 2013), but simple methods, such as the observation log used here, can also be effective and are easy to implement (Murphy, 2014). Fifth, there needs to be a balance between helping students learn to solve problems through peer collaboration and through drawing on the academic literature and the understanding of more experienced teachers (Jones & Jones, 2013; Martin, 2016). Sixth, conversational, collaborative reflection with peers is essential for identity growth and emotional support (Harlow & Cobb, 2014; Nguyen, 2013; Rogers, 2002; Timoštuk and Ugaste, 2010). Finally, reflection should be a positive, meaningful experience, and not a 'chore' (Mann & Walsh, 2013). This can be ensured by covering some of the previous points here. In our case, the fact that the workshop was not evaluated was probably also pertinent. When RP is incorporated into a program, care needs to be taken for evaluation not to stifle those practices.

This study has a number of methodological limitations. The data were collected from a single cycle of the workshop, and the long-term effect on participants' practice is unknown. The focus

group discussion was conducted by the mentors, and participants may have felt obliged to provide positive responses. We also recognize that identity change is complex, ongoing and often conflicted (e.g. as in Varghese et al., 2005), and that the conclusions drawn here from a single focus group are simplistic.

We present this paper then in the belief that it provides a glimpse of how collaborative RP could be implemented in teacher education programs to strengthen students' emerging professional identities. It may be that our experience can encourage teacher educators in Chile and other contexts to evaluate changes to their programs by considering the influence they may have on participants' professional teacher identities.

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Appendix 1

Video Clips URLs

- “RP can be habit-forming”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Uppj877HFA>

- “The reflective educator”:

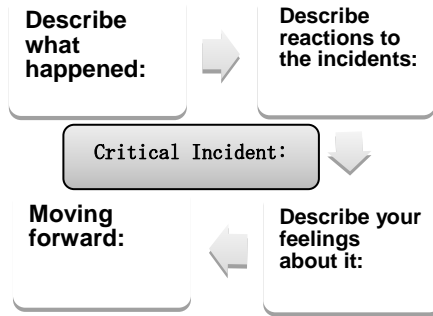
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cqu4Q5-aQug&t=1s>,

- “Teacher reflective practice”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0glFJMYv1JY&t=16s>.

Appendix 2

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE WORKSHOP
OBSERVATION LOG (SCHOOL)
(adapted from Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2012)



Appendix 3

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Do you think the concept of Reflective Practice (RP) has changed throughout this workshop? How? Can you compare the ideas you had before the workshop with the ones you have now?
2. Do you think future teachers should be trained in how to do RP?
3. What connections can you make between RP and teaching beliefs?
4. In your opinion, do you think the process of RP can feasibly be carried out during the Practicum courses?
5. How do you think RP can improve teaching? Explain.
6. What did you find most helpful?
7. What did you find least helpful?
8. Were there any aspects you would change?

¹ These comments were taken from audio-recordings of the workshop sessions (with consent from the participants). Unfortunately, there was no scope to analyze these extensive contents for this research. It is worth noting that in Chile, school teachers supervising extended teaching practicums often do not receive preparation for this role