Individual and Collective Reflective Journals and EFL Teachers' Professional Development and Identity Construction

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Abstract: The present study investigated whether individual or collective reflective journals could lead to teachers' professional development and professional identity (re)construction. To this end, 30 Iranian EFL teachers were selected through convenience sampling. The participants wrote pre-workshop reflective journals individually and collectively and attended a reflective consciousness-raising workshop for eight sessions. The participants were informed about the major tenets of reflection, professional development, and professional identity (re)construction in the workshop. Afterward, they wrote post-workshop reflective journals again individually and collectively. The participants sat follow-up interviews for the researchers to find out which kinds of journals better helped them develop professionally and (re)construct their professional identity. The findings showed that individual reflective journals and collective reflective journals contributed to teachers' professional development and professional identity (re)construction respectively. The findings might imply that stakeholders involved that is EFL education policymakers, curriculum developers, and syllabus designers hold interactive workshops for pre-service and in-service teachers on reflective journal writing which might lead to both EFL teachers' professional development and identity (re)construction. Moreover, it is recommended that the decision-makers and senior managers develop systematic checklists addressing those influential factors found in the present study to contribute to teachers' professional development and professional identity construction.

Keywords: Professional Development; Professional Identity (Re)construction; Individual Reflective Journals; Collective Reflective Journals; EFL Teachers.

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Introduction

The emergence of the post-method paradigm in (foreign) language education has led to important alterations in teacher education so much so that teachers have changed from being a mere conveyor of knowledge to a real decision maker (Abednia, 2012). As a result of this paradigm shift in education, teachers have become responsible for teaching events and are no longer required to obey what they are dictated (Abednia, 2009). Teachers consequently reflect upon what they did, are doing, and will do which correspond to reflection *on-*, *in-* and *for* action respectively. Reflecting back on the teaching actions, on the actions in progress, and on those likely to happen in the future equips teachers with reflective concepts so that they would be able to go beyond their initial impressions of their classes and penetrate into the deeper layers of their teaching.

However, such a reflective culture entails reflective conduct formation among educators and educationalists. Educational reconstruction towards a reflective system has made teachers consider themselves first rather than their students (Lefebvre et al., 2022), that is, they ponder upon their class-related actions which seem not to be as simple as they sound. Inviting reflection with all theories behind to classroom, thus, seems to bring about a new concept called reflective teaching which plays the role of examining the activities done in the classroom and making attempts to improve them (Akbari, 2007). Reflective teaching is, in fact, a product of reflective thinking (Kumaravadivelu, 1994), and "goes hand-in-hand with critical self-examination and reflection as a basis for decision making, planning, and action" (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 4).

A logical framework is provided by reflective teaching in order to enact teacher professional development activities. Reflective teaching puts professional responsibilities on individual teachers' shoulders through reflection- on, -in and -for action which might eventually result in self-directed autonomous teachers. It further aims at one of the important objectives of teacher professional development, that is, building knowledge among teachers via scrutinizing their own practices (Minott, 2010).

Reflective teaching has become a buzzword among teacher educators (Farrell, 1998) and many teacher-training programs fully embrace reflective practices (Mansvelder-Longayroux et al., 2007). In order to pursue such reflective education, a means of support is required. Some of the reflective means are of an individualistic nature such as reflective journals and others like reflective interviews and dialogues are of a collective nature (Collin & Karsenti, 2011). Due to the paucity of research on reflective practices in general and on the comparative impact of individual and collective reflective journals in EFL contexts especially as they relate to

professional development and identity (re)construction, the researchers decided to conduct the current study to fill the gap felt.

Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study

Education links the smallest unit of class to the broadest unit of a society (Pennycook, 2001). At the smallest and broadest levels, teachers engage in different activities such as social interaction wherein teachers' identity is constructed via their social involvement and their activity in language systems (Cross & Gearon, 2007). Also, at both levels, reflective teaching helps teachers improve in their profession (Lee, 2008) considering the pivotal role of identity in teachers' daily practices (Yuan, & Mak, 2018). By the same token, reflective teaching is the most influential way to develop expertise among novice teachers which denotes how important it is in professionalism (Schön, 1983).

Therefore, due to the apparent lack of sufficient studies on the impact of RJW in the related literature, the current study was conducted to investigate whether the reflection consciousness-raising interactive workshop had any possible contribution to the participants' professional development and professional identity construction. Therefore, it seems that the present study is significant because it seems to fill the gap between theory and practice of reflective teaching.

Research Questions

The following two research questions were thus addressed in the present study:

1. What kinds of reflective journals (i.e., those written individually or those written collectively) can lead to EFL teachers' professional development? How?

2. What kinds of reflective journals (i.e., those written individually or those written collectively) can lead to EFL teachers' identity (re)construction? How?

Literature Review

Reflective Journal Writing, Professional Identity (Re)Construction and Professional Development

For reflective journals, as a way of practicing reflective teaching, broad definitions have been offered. Farrell (2013), for instance, defines a reflective journal as "a problem-solving device, for reflecting on new teaching ideas, and as a means of legitimizing their own practice" (p. 466). In addition, Richards and Lockhart (1994) see a reflective journal as "a teacher's or a student teacher's written response to teaching event" (p. 7). Reflective journals are also

considered useful instruments from Lee's viewpoint (2008) for developing reflection since they allow teacher learners a space to reflect" (p. 321).

To gain the potential benefits of reflective journals, reflective culture should be developed among teachers and teacher educators. Teachers need to keep reflective journals, either individual or collective ones, the materialization of which seems to need consciousness-raising and training. Therefore, thinking back about (faulty) class activities and behaviors might possibly lead teachers to an improved condition compared to their previous ones. This is so because teachers think about potential and existing problems in addition to possible solutions (Schön, 1983). Through such reflectivity activities, teachers would be on the professional development path (Li et al., 2023).

The professional development path, wherein teachers work together for a long period to develop their knowledge and skills in their profession, includes planning, enacting, and revising their instructional practices (Lindvall et al., 2018). Numerous interactive cycles comprising introduction, understanding, and reflection on knowledge have been provided by professional development activities (Kubitskey, 2006). Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Teacher Professional Growth, as a cycle of change, comprises four primary areas, namely, the personal domain (i.e., teacher knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes), the external domain (i.e., an external source of information or stimulus), practice domain (i.e., professional experimentation) and consequence domain (i.e., salient outcomes). Such a professional development cycle engages teachers in different professional activities in order to catch up with the latest developments in their teaching profession.

A teacher who is involved in these professional development activities is a reflective person, whose attention is devoted to oneself as a teacher and to thinking over who they are in their profession (as a teacher) as well as their classroom activities and students' perceptions towards these activities (Tauer & Tate, 1998). This shows that all the attempts made by reflective teachers are directed at developing a new persona as a teacher, for the creation of which a considerable amount of time is required (Tauer & Tate, 1998) since developing professional identity is a gradual process influenced by diverse personal and professional factors. Teachers' newly constructed image denotes their professional role, that is, their professional identity. Teachers' professional identity refers to their perceptions of their roles in their profession (Beijaard et al., 2004), something they have with them during their professional lives.

In this sense, thinking back about (faulty) activities and class behaviors can possibly lead teachers to an improved condition compared to their previous ones. This development which

occurs in the teachers' profession is now called professional development in which teachers work together for a long period. A teacher who is involved in professional development activities should necessarily be a reflective one whose attention is devoted to oneself as a teacher and to who he or she is in his or her profession (as a teacher) as well as his/her classroom activities and students' perceptions towards these activities (Tauer & Tate, 1998). This shows that reflective teachers should make a great deal of effort to establish their identity through professional development activities.

A vast number of studies have been conducted with regard to the above-mentioned issues.

Ford (2016), for instance, explored British EFL teachers' process of reflection with 15 years of teaching experience in Japan. Ruth used taped monologue, which engaged her in reflection upon her classes. The findings indicated that the reflective practice increased Ruth's awareness of her teaching. Afterward, Ruth attended a follow-up interview about the reflective process, the results of which showed that reflective practice resulted in professional identity construction and professional development.

Yu (2018), in a qualitative study, investigated 150 Hong Kong school teachers' and principals' stories collected in the process of reflection. A three-hour workshop on reflection was also held. The required data were gathered through stories, journal entries, and follow-up interviews with 17 participants. The findings showed that due to the opportunities given to the teachers to reflect, the teachers showed more professional development. Moreover, the participants stated that they had understood themselves better and had made meanings of their own experiences after writing reflective stories.

In another study, Gutiérrez et al. (2019) explored how 12 Chilean pre-service EFL teachers' professional identities developed through reflective practice. A ten-week workshop was held to provide the participants with collaborative reflection. The data were collected through focus-group discussions and analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings demonstrated that pre-service teachers' professional identity was constructed through their confidence development in terms of their problem-solving ability, their enhanced acknowledgment of collaboration, and their raised awareness of the necessity to change.

Barber (2021) encouraged student teachers' reflective practice through reflective assignments designed for them during a course. The assignments were written regularly which contained a summary page of instructional points about reflectivity. The participants had to write within a range of topics including language skills, systems, and language cultures. The findings of the study showed that the participants reacted positively to the course. They

believed that the reflective practice course they attended was a valuable source of encouragement for being a reflective and critical teacher.

More recently, Farrell (2022) investigated three inexperienced novice teachers' emotional experiences during their twelve-week reflective group discussion and journal writing. The study adopted journal writing and interviews to elicit from the teachers the data required. The findings showed that the participants had a mixture of both positive and negative feelings about the course including enthusiasm, excitement, frustration, anger, and boredom. Similarly, Derinalp (2022) explored how six Indonesian novice EFL teachers perceived reflective practice in high schools within a qualitative study. Data were collected through interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The results showed that the participants considered reflective practice as a problem-solving skill and also as a means of teachers' professional development.

In a recent qualitative study, Yee et al. (2022) investigated the steps taken by the participants in their reflective practices. These steps were a six-stage reflective guideline. The participants were 20 teachers in Malaysia who were interviewed, observed, and asked to write reflective journals. The findings were looked into through content analysis which showed that most of the participant teachers possessed only the basic levels of reflection, that is, describing rather than the highest step of developing. In addition, teachers showed higher levels of reflection when they received feedback from their peers.

In a new study by Dehghani et al. (2023), a reflective journey by 185 Iranian EFL teachers was investigated closely in a descriptive survey to discover if such reflective practices affected EFL teachers' professional development. The findings suggested that experienced teachers seemed to be more critical reflective teachers than novice EFL teachers. The results achieved from the study might be due to the experienced teachers' on-the-job reflective trial and error. To put it simply, the participants of the study could have gone through a reflective path from a descriptive phase to a critical reflective practice.

The contributory role of reflection, reflective teaching, and reflective journal writing (RJW) in (foreign language) teacher professional development and professional identity (re)construction seems to be delved into so far although briefly. However, it seems to be unclear whether individual or collective reflective journals can better contribute to teachers' professional development and their professional identity (re)construction. Thus, the present study was designed to address the existing gap in the field on the topic.

Methodology

Participants

Thirty Iranian EFL teachers (8 males and 22 females) attended the current study. Their ages ranged from 24 to 30. They were selected based on convenience sampling from private language institutes in Iran. The highest academic degree obtained by 21 of the participants was BA and the rest (i.e., 9) were MA holders. Their English teaching experience ranged from three to nine years. They were all graduates of English Literature or Teaching English as a Foreign Language. The basic design type used in this qualitative study was exploratory in nature.

Design

The current study which is exploratory and qualitative in nature, utilized RJW, interviews including semi-structured and focus group ones, and a reflection consciousness-raising workshop.

Instruments

Reflective Journal Writing (RJW)

The framework and content of reflective journals (RJ) were adopted from Richards (1995) and Soodmand Afshar (2022) for their comprehensiveness and novelty respectively. Each part of the above-mentioned stages and contents was dealt with in the study by providing the participants with an illustrative example by the second researcher. The stages of the journals included the event itself, recollection of the event, and review and response to the event (Richards, 1995). In the first stage, there is the actual setting in which the event occurs. In the second stage (i.e., recollection of the event), the focus is on the act of teaching in particular. The third stage focuses on reviewing what happened in the class by asking questions. The content of the journals includes different aspects of the class such as class management issues, planning teaching, etc. The participants were asked to write both individual and collective journals. The collective journals were addressed and materialized in the form of focus-group interviews.

Focus Group Interviews

The researchers started with an introduction to the interview and assured the participants that what was stated by them in the interviews or written by them in their journals would be kept confidential and used only for the purpose of the present study. The participants in this collective part gathered together and started to reflect back on their classes (i.e., reflection on

action). They shared their ideas about the same skills and subskills they had taught in their classes. The participants acted according to the stages of the framework and contents of RJ introduced by Richards (1995) and Soodmand Afshar (2022) respectively. One of the participants accepted the responsibility for wrapping up the discussions and writing them down within the adopted framework and content guide. In addition, some of the participants expressed their views on the workshop and collective RJW. The focus group interview took almost an hour to be completed.

Semi-structured Individual Interview

The participants attended an expert-viewed semi-structured interview for us to enquire about whether individual or collective reflective journals could contribute to professional development and professional identity construction. Each interview took, on average, 15 minutes.

Reflection Consciousness-Raising Interactive Workshop

At the very beginning of the first session of the workshop, an orientation towards the purposes of the study was arranged for all the participants. The workshop was held in both Persian and English and the materials were presented through PowerPoint slide presentations prepared by the researchers. Afterward, the fundamental principles and the theoretical framework of reflection and reflective teaching were addressed. Further, the reflective teaching instruments were introduced, clearly outlined, and elaborated.

Next, the instrument selected for the current study (i.e., RJW) was delineated. The RJW section was based on the framework proposed by Richards (1995). Also, the workshop focused on the *content* or what should be included in a reflective journal which was adopted from Soodmand Afshar (2022). Each part of the above-mentioned framework stages and contents was delved into by providing an illustrative example by the second researcher. Also, the stages and contents were emphasized to be taken into account by the participants in both the individual and collective journals. It is worth mentioning here that all the participants got involved in reflecting upon the workshop discussions during the workshop sessions.

Next, all the participants' first-round journals (which were written before the workshop was run) were given careful thought individually. Then, the first-round journals were analyzed and discussed through pair and group work activities. Following this, the participants developed one reflective journal interactively with the help of the researcher using the framework and content guide mentioned above to address the practical aspects of reflectivity.

Thereafter, the other sessions were allocated to the principles and definitions of teacher professional development and teacher identity construction. The participants, then, were asked to write an individual and a collective reflective journal immediately after the workshop. In addition, they were asked to write one more individual and collective reflective journal two weeks after the workshop came to an end. Subsequently, the researcher ran an eight-session interactive workshop on reflective journal writing, the fundamental principles of professional development, and professional identity construction.

Procedure

Having arranged the orientation speech at the beginning session of the workshop, the researchers got together with the participants to write their first collective reflective journal; some primary purposes of the study were presented to them and they filled out a form containing such demographic information as their name, gender, etc. (see Appendix A). Then, a plan was prepared by the researchers for all the sessions (see Appendix B) and was given to each participant before the workshop and after their first round of RJW and interview. Then, the participants attended the workshop.

After attending the workshop and writing journals, the participants sat an interview either face to face or by telephone to state which sort of journals led to their professional development and their professional identity construction. A friendly relationship, which seemed to be a positive contribution to the workshop, was developed among the teacher and the participants themselves so that they stated that they missed the event as it was finished. At the end of the workshop, each participant received an English novel from the researchers to partially compensate for their presence in the project and their sincere cooperation.

Data Analysis

The required data for the first and second research questions were collected by the reflective journals and analyzed through a grounded-theory approach inductive content analysis. The codes emerging from the data were subjected to descriptive statistics and frequency analysis. That is, first, in open coding, the participants' interview transcripts and reflective journals were read several times and the regular/ iterative patterns were highlighted. Next, in axial coding, similar categories were connected to each other to form categories that were more inclusive. Then, in selective coding, the central categories were identified and "quantitized" (Dörnyei, 2007) adopting frequency analysis.

Results and Discussion

The first research question investigated whether individual or collective reflective journals led to Iranian EFL teachers' professional development. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Participants' Responses on the Contributory Role of Individual and Collective RJs in Teachers' Professional Development

Response	F	P
Only individual journals were effective	20	66.66%
Only collective journals were effective	2	6.66%
Both individual and collective journals were effective	8	26.66%

Note. F=Frequency; P=Percentage

As shown in Table 1, 66.6, 26.6, and 6.6 percent of the participants believed that only individual journals, both kinds of journals, and only collective journals better contributed to the participants' professional development respectively. The second part of the question asked the interviewees to elaborate on how individual and/or collective RJs led to the teachers' professional development. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Participants' Responses on How RJW Contributed to their Professional Development

Response	F	P
RJs enhanced teachers' self-awareness	28	93.33
RJs made teachers free to talk and do whatever they considered suitable	24	80
RJs enhanced teachers' other-awareness (awareness of other teachers' teaching style and picking them up)	19	63.33
RJs developed better teacher-student rapport	18	60

Table 2 shows that almost all the participants considered teachers' enhanced self-awareness created through RJW, as an influential factor contributing to their professional development. Eighty percent of the participants believed that they were free enough to express their ideas through RJW, which consequently led to their professional development. Also, 63.3 percent and 60 percent of the participants maintained that their development of other-awareness

and establishment of better rapport with their students through RJW resulted in their professional development.

The second research question explored what kind of journals, that is, individual or collective, better led to Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity construction. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. The Participants' Responses on the Contributory Role of Individual and Collective RJs in Teachers' Identity (Re)Construction

Response	F	P
Only individual journals were effective.	4	13.33
Only collective journals were effective.	23	76.66
Both individual and collective journals were effective.	3	10

Note: F= Frequency; P= Percentage

Table 3 illustrates that 76.6 percent of the participants reported that collective journals were more effective than their individual counterparts in teachers' professional identity (re)construction. In addition, 13.3 and 10 percent of them stated that individual and both kinds of reflective journals led to teachers' professional identity (re)construction respectively.

The participants were also asked to elaborate on *how* individual and/or collective reflective journals led to their professional identity (re)construction. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The Participants' Elaboration on How RJW Contributed to Their Professional Identity Construction

Response	F	P
Through self-assessment tools	27	90
Through professional development activities like collegial support	26	86.6
Through removing negative feelings	23	76.6
Through focusing on real 'who' with reflecting on, in, and for action	23	76.6
Through becoming problem solver	20	66.6
Through developing "I" and "we" aspects	20	66.6
Through enhancing awareness of my and others' style	19	63.33

As shown in Table 4, 90 percent assumed RJs as self-assessment tools, which were thought to be helpful for their professional identity (re)construction. The participants also believed that their identity was (re)constructed by such professional development activities as collegial support, by RJs making their negative feelings disappear, by RJs making them focus on real 'who' by reflecting *on, in,* and *for* action, by making them become problem solvers, by making them develop "I" and "we" aspects, and finally, by making them aware of my and others' style with 90, 86.6, 76.6, 76.6, 66.6, 66.6, and 63.3 percent respectively.

The findings of the first research question showed that most of the participants believed that individually-written RJs better led to their professional development. Careful thought about participants' past, present, and future class events and activities within an individual framework could be considered as a justification for our findings. That is, the participants felt free to express their views while they were writing their own journals individually without feeling pressure from colleagues, peers, etc. Derinalp's (2022) findings corroborate our results in this respect as the participants of the study consider reflective practice as a problem-solving strategy used by teachers to think back on what they did and share how they solved their problems. Given this, teachers might inevitably locate and rectify their faulty professional practices. This increases the probability of teachers reaching their full professional potential. That is, it can lead to their professional development.

Another reason for the contribution of individual RJs to the teachers' professional development might go to their achieving control over their feelings and emotions towards what happened in the teaching area. When teachers write and think individually, they ponder over their negative feelings and even their positive ones so that they can regulate their emotional states. As a result, they attempt to bring their feelings under control and develop professionally; an argument corroborated by Yoshihara et al.'s (2020) assertion that RJs are a possible cause of behavioral and emotional control on the side of teachers.

It could be argued here that teachers move forward through an emotional path in their professional lives wherein they could change their emotional route in order to avoid stress and frustration while reflecting upon their teaching practices in class. This conforms to Morris and King's (2018) reasoning that teachers' forbidden emotions and frustrations are dealt with through emotional regulation in a reflective framework called frustration journaling which includes situation *before,* situation *during, attention* (i.e., the possible consequences of ignoring the issue), *appraisal* (i.e., considering the situation from a different point of view), and *response*.

Moreover, the majority of the participants stated that RJW broadened their awareness of their profession. Yu's (2018), Donyaie and Soodmand Afshar's (2019), and Yoshihara et al.'s (2020) results corroborate our findings in this respect as they argue that giving teachers chances to reflect on their profession could lead to their professional development. A rather rational justification for this finding could be ascribed to the participants' scrupulous and close attention to what they do in their classes in addition to their detailed plans for their future classes with the help of their individual RJs. Such careful attention provides a road map for teachers to perform their teaching consciously without repeating their previous faults and problems.

In line with this reasoning, one of the participants stated,

When you yourself document something, it will last forever. This works for teaching too. Therefore, you can always go back and look at your strengths and weaknesses. It will make you aware of them and help improve your career development and your strengths [would] shine.

Likewise, Barber (2021) believes that reflective practice including RJW can make teachers consider all aspects of their teaching and that such practices have a long-term effect on their professional lives. Supporting this, one of the participants stated,

There was enough room for us to write and record anything [that] happened, anything [which] might happen in our class and even in our mind.… You know all [these] happen without being judged by other teachers. When the judge is yourself, you would become keenly aware of what you are doing. This helped me enormously to improve my teaching.

The excerpt above indicates that the participants' enhanced awareness of themselves and their freedom to talk with the help of individual RJs seem to have contributed to their professional development. This line of reasoning is aligned with the assertions of Ford (2016) and those of Yee et al. (2022) who authenticated that the participants have freedom when they write RJs which brings about self-awareness. This is because reflective teachers focus on multifarious aspects of their teaching so that they become aware of their current states in addition to their future roles in their profession including such different aspects as their relationship with their learners.

Another factor about the advantages of individual RJs mentioned by the participants was the development of good rapport between teachers and students. This might be because students might have given feedback directly or indirectly to their teachers' behavior and actions in the class which might have been overlooked by teachers at first. However, after receiving

feedback from their students, their positive and negative professional points and practices would have become more noticeable.

In support of the argument here, Derinalp (2022) also sees reflective practice as a means of developing good rapport with students since teachers assess themselves in an objective way through reflective activities considering their relationship with their students and how they communicate with them. In support of this finding, one of the participants stated that,

I had not had a really good relationship with my students... something that helps you develop gradually. I mean a good relationship with learners elevates you in your career...like an elevator. When I took a look at my classes, I got to know that it could have been better. I made it and now I feel better. My learners help me know my strengths and weaknesses ... .

The findings of the second research question indicated that mainly collective RJs led to their professional identity (re)construction. This might be associated with the group interactions taking place among the participants who felt sympathy for each other. One of the beneficial factors for the participants' professional identity (re)construction was that their negative feelings disappeared during the process of collective journal writing. This is partly in accordance with Ford's (2016) and Gutiérrez et al.'s (2019) conclusion that journal writing shaped or enhanced teachers' professional identity. In line with this, one of the participants echoed,

.... When I was writing journals alone, I got negative feelings as I constantly thought about my weaknesses. On the contrary, when I was with my colleagues' writing journals, all those negative feelings disappeared. My friends shared their weaknesses and how they felt negatively in, before or after their classes. These nasty feelings block the full understanding of ourselves as teachers. I thought we had a lot of things in common in our classes, I didn't feel alone. I started to know myself in that position, and my job better than ever before.

This excerpt above shows that collective journals gave the participants good feelings since they came to know that other teachers' teaching was problematic like theirs.

Supporting this, Gutiérrez et al. (2019) maintain that collaboration enables teachers to realize that other colleagues confront the same problems; thus, they get emotional support from their colleagues which might finally lead them to think that they are not alone and helpless in their career. By the same token, Yee et al. (2022) maintain that reflective practice results in teachers' emotional self-awareness during which they become well aware of their feelings. This could be because reflective teachers follow a continuous reflective cycle in which they

are inevitably involved in emotional issues. This cycle gives vent to teachers' feelings in their reflective journals so that their negative feelings appear first, but finally disappear both in individual and collective RJs.

Additionally, through collaborative journal writing, teachers can become aware of their own teaching techniques and get to know more about their qualifications as compared to those of other teachers. If they find a teaching technique effective or useful, they will adopt that in their own classes. This is in line with what our participants referred to as another advantage of RJs with regard to identity (re)construction, that is, becoming aware of your own and your colleagues' teaching style and of both positive and negative points. Our findings here can be supported by those of Gutiérrez et al. (2019) and Ford (2016). Ford (2016) asserts that involvement in reflective processes seems to be helpful for teachers to "assess, question, and re-evaluate not only their teaching principles but also their personal values and belief systems, as well as future directions" (p. 4). It seems like a problem-solving iterative route for teachers which eventually makes them solvers of their professional problems.

"Becoming a problem solver" based on what participants stated is another plus of RJs in helping teachers construct their professional identity. When a problem arises in the class, teachers might anticipate it beforehand, and think it over at the same time and even after the class. This puts teachers in a reflective process of developing their identity in their profession. In line with this, Gutiérrez et al. (2019) stated that being a problem solver, having a collaborative spirit, and being informed are possible causes of enhancing teachers' professional identity. In support of this line of reasoning, Yoshihara et al. (2020) maintain that when facing unexpected problems and challenges in the class, teachers spot the inconsistencies between what they think and what they do in practice. As a result, they need to pursue reflection to create a degree of coherence between the problems raised and the solutions provided. This coherence and consistency will be maintained if there is a collaborative reflectivity to see different aspects of the same issue. In agreement with this finding, one of the participants in her interview stated,

... Definitely, I thought about my teaching before, but such a comprehensive reflective framework worked because it included every simple thing about our teaching. I got to know my real self in teaching through considering past, present, and future events ... you know, I focus on what is important what is not, and what I have to ignore to be that real teacher.... .

A plausible reason for this finding might be related to colleagues' presence and their emotional support for their peers which is authenticated by Gutiérrez et al. (2019) who hold

that being involved in collaborative reflections makes teachers open to change and helps them (re)construct their professional identity and boost its various aspects. As mentioned elsewhere in the current study, collaborative reflection could result in teachers' movement from negative to positive feelings and a state of sympathy with other teachers. To us, this sympathy might lead to scaffolding and mediated learning in which teachers hold each other's hand to go beyond the current professional state; a reasoning which is in accordance with Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD. This argumentation is in line with Yee et al.'s (2022) assertion that peer feedback (i.e., collective reflection) makes reflective teaching more analytic, supporting critical thinking.

Conclusion, pedagogical implications, and limitations

As the findings of the current study indicated, individual RJs have grabbed more attention for teachers' professional development compared to their collective counterparts. This might be due to the personal nature of this type of RJ as it leaves the person with his/her real self-questioning and pondering what he/she does in his/her teaching life. This individual reflective journey makes the person aware of his/her weaknesses and takes him/her away from them towards his/her strengths. On the other hand, collective RJs were referred to more than their individual counterparts for teachers' professional identity (re)construction. This might be associated with teachers' meaning-making through collaborative practice. In this sense, they start their reflective journey from points of disagreement and end it in a point of agreement. In other words, they express their views and listen to others' views so that they can question their own assumptions and they work on it to see who they are in a teacher's position. To sum up, reflective practices such as RJs have become an inseparable part of teacher education (Farrell, 2013) since their enormous benefits for professional teacher education have been proven.

The study might have some implications. Firstly, the stakeholders involved, that is, EFL education policymakers, curriculum developers, and syllabus designers are suggested to hold interactive workshops for pre-service and in-service teachers on reflective journal writing which, as the findings of the current study revealed, can lead to both EFL teachers' professional development and identity (re)construction.

Moreover, it is recommended that the decision-makers and senior managers develop systematic checklists addressing those influential factors found in the present study to contribute to teachers' professional development and professional identity construction. In addition, they should make them fill out the checklist frequently to promote their reflectivity, and their professional development and identity (re)construction as a result.

It is worth mentioning here that the current study, like many other studies, was not free from some limitations. One of the limitations was the fact that teachers who reflected upon their activities might have lost their confidence in voicing their ideas about the progress of their classes. In other words, teachers who become obsessed with what they do in their classes will become rather doubtful about their progress or even their decisions. Furthermore, exposing them to reflectivity is likely to be challenging simply because they have become accustomed to an educational system in which scant attention is paid to such important issues as reflection. Participants of the current study were unequal concerning the number of female and male participants (22 females and 8 males) which might have influenced the results.

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Appendices:

Appendix A

Reflection consciousness-raising workshop participants' form (July-Agust-2018)
Name: _____ (Choose a nickname). Teaching Experience: _____. Gender: _____. Degree: _____.

Appendix B

Reflection Consciousness-Raising Workshop Overview	
1. Orientation-Reflection Background	1 hour
2. Reflective Teaching	1 hour
3. Different Instruments for Reflective Teaching	1 hour
4. RJW: Framework and Content	1 hour
5. First-round RJW Analysis	1 hour
6. Writing a Reflective Journal Sample	1 hour
7. Fundamental Principles of Teacher Professional Development	1 hour
8. Fundamental Principles of Teacher Professional Identity	1 hour

Appendix C

1. Which type of reflective journals (i.e., those written individually or those written collectively) could better lead to your professional development? How? Please elaborate.

2. Which type of reflective journals (i.e., those written individually or those written collectively) could better lead to your professional identity (re)construction? How? Please elaborate.

AREL