Relationship between Burnout and Reflective Teaching among EFL Teachers

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Abstract
        During the course of the past few decades, teachers have increasingly become the center of attention in education, since their significant role in teaching contexts has been approved, and therefore their different aspects, such as reflective teaching and burnout have received great attention. This study investigated the relationship between teacher burnout, and reflective teaching among Iranian EFL teachers. To this end, 50 participants (25 males and 25 females) were selected through convenience sampling. The participants were administered Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators' Survey and Behzadpour Reflective Teaching Questionnaire. The data were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The results of the study revealed that there was a weak negative relationship between reflective teaching and burnout for male and female teachers and for both groups considered as a composite group of language teachers.

Keywords: Teacher burnout, reflective teaching, reflection, demographic, EFL teachers

Introduction
        Teachers have increasingly become the center of attention in education, since they have a major role in teaching contexts. Doing research on different variables related to English language teachers can be one of the best ways to improve their success in their job. Among the most important variables are reflective teaching and burnout.
        Reflective teaching has been a pivotal element in teaching field for more than 50 years. John Dewey (1933) who is considered to be a pioneer in the field of reflective teaching defines reflective teaching as the "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 9). According to Bartlett (1990), teachers will be reflective if they attempt to go beyond the routines of the classroom, ask "what and why" questions instead of "how to" questions Thus, the teachers who move towards autonomy and responsibility in their teaching can be considered as influential teachers. He points out that asking "what and why"questions give us a certain power over our teaching. We could claim that the degree of autonomy and responsibility we have in our work as teachers is determined by the level of control we can experience over our actions. In reflective on the above kind of questions we begin to exercise control and open up the possibility of transforming our everyday classroom life. (Bartlett, 1990, p.264, cited in Richards, 1991)
        As Zeichner and Liston (1996) put it, reflective teaching involves recognition, examination and thinking on beliefs, experiences, attitudes, knowledge, values, opportunities, and constraints provided by the social condition in which the teacher works. According to Akbari (2007), reflection "empowers teachers and places them on equal footing with their academic

counterparts" (p.3). He believed that reflection can enhance teachers' job satisfaction, development in their interpersonal relationship, and their self-efficacy.

According to Richards (1998), "Every teacher has a professional responsibility to reflect and evaluate about their practices. As a result of this approach, reflective teachers will be able to identify how to improve their professional activity in order to improve the quality of pupils' learning". Reflective teaching leads up teachers to think, to notice and analyze their own teaching method in order to think about their experiences and to relate theory and practice. (Qing, 2009)

Murphy (2001) states that reflective teaching aims at1) developing one's understanding of the teaching-learning process; 2) expanding one's repertoire of strategic options as a language teacher; and 3) increasing the quality of learning opportunities one is able to provide in language classrooms. Pollard (2002) argues that reflective teaching leads up to the professional growth and improvement. Richards and Nunan (1990) states that "experience alone is insufficient for professional growth, but that experience coupled with reflection can be a powerful impetus for teacher development" (p. 8).

Kang (2004) conducted a study to investigate teachers' learning through reflection activities in an in-service training program. The results showed that teachers can control their teaching action if they reflect on their teaching. The teachers participated in Kang's study stated that reflection assisted them to change their teaching practice.

A concept of relevance to reflective teaching is teacher burnout, which has grown in popularity over the last two decades. Maslach (1982) defined burnout as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind". (p. 3). Nowadays one can say that this phenomenon is one of the most critical problems the teachers in schools are encountering (Burke & Greenglass, 1995; Maslach & Pines, 2000). Due to the restructuring processes and rapid changes in education, a growing number of teachers must deal with the issues of stress and burnout. Teachers are especially exposed to burnout in an era of educational reform concentrating on continuous change, while demanding undue accountability through applying standards and assessment.

Although there are many factors contributing to burnout in a given situation, the essence of burnout is extreme stress over a period of time with several outcomes among which emotional exhaustion can be considered as the cornerstone of job burnout. According to Jackson, Schwab, and Schuler (1986), "In most uses, the term burnout refers to a state of emotional exhaustion caused by excessive psychological and emotional demands made on people helping people" (p. 630).High attrition, poor job performance, poor job satisfaction, and physical and mental health problems are consequences of burnout (Burke & Greenglass, 1995; Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986; Weisberg & Sagie, 1999).

Reflective practice was first proposed by Farrell (1999). According to him, effective teaching takes place when teachers negotiate on the ground rules. Reflective practice allows teachers to discover their point of view, grow management skills, and reflects on the right effect of practice in classrooms and thus encourages teachers to reflect on how and why they teach in a special method. According to Munby & Russell (1990), the notion of reflective teaching was introduced to reduce burnout in the teaching career.

Javadi and Khatib (2014) studied the relationship between reflective teaching and teachers' burnout. Data were collected from 170 Iranian EFL teachers teaching at different Language institutes in Tehran. The participants received a five-point scale Likert –type questionnaire designed by Behzadpour (2007) and a 6-point Likert scale Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) .The qualitative data came from interviews with both genders in all

experience and age groups. The principle statistical procedures used for analyses of the data were Pearson-Product Moment and SPSS (version 16) program. Analyses of the achieved data confirmed that there is a significant negative relationship between teachers' reflection and their feeling of burnout. In other words, the more the teachers have reflection, the less they have feelings of burnout.

One way to look at the problems of English language teachers is doing more studies on different variables related to them. So, the present study was conducted to investigate the relationship between two aspects of English language teachers that are presented to be necessary in teachers' performance in classroom.

The main purpose of the present study was to recognize the relationship among EFL teachers' burnout and reflective teaching. More specifically, the following research questions were addressed in the present study.

Is there any relationship between teachers' burnout and reflective teaching?

Is there any relationship between teachers' burnout and reflective teaching with respect to gender?

Methodology

Participants

The participants of this study were 50 English teachers (25 males, 25 females) teaching at different proficiency levels in different institutes, Sadr, Pooyesh, and Jahad Daneshgahi English Language Institutes and Iran Language Institute (ILI) in Isfahan, Iran. Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic data of the participants.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

Demographic Variable		Frequency
Gender	Male	25
	Female	25
Degree	Diploma	1
	Non-English Degrees	6
	BA	16
	MA	27
Experience	Novice	8
	Moderately Experienced	12
	Experienced	30
Total		50

As seen in table 1, the majority of the teachers held an MA degree (27 teachers), whereas only one person held a diploma (1). Six teachers had certificates in fields of study other than English, and some (16) held a BA degree. However, in terms of teaching experience, the participants varied as novice (8), moderately experienced (12), and experienced 30) teachers. In this study, teachers having less than 2 years of experience were considered novice, while those having between 2 to 4 years of experience as moderately experienced, and those with more than 4 years of experience were considered as experienced teachers.

Materials

In order to investigate the relationship among burnout, emotional intelligence, and reflective teaching among EFL teachers, three types of questionnaires were used to collect the necessary data:

1) Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996)

2) Behzadpour's Reflective Teaching Questionnaire (2007)

Data collection procedures

Before beginning the data collection, the permission was received from the head of each institute. Later, the teachers were assured that their participation would be anonymous, confidential and voluntary. It was also explained that the results would consist of group data and the individual participants and institutes would not be identified.

● The required official permission was obtained from the institutions that cooperated with the research

● Clear instructions were given to teachers regarding the administration of the questionnaire.

● The content of the questionnaire was confirmed with participating teachers as not being harmful in any way.

All the teachers filled in the three reflective teaching, burnout, and emotional intelligence questionnaires, which were in English. Each questionnaire was administered to the same teachers in person by the researcher or through the supervisor of the institutes. General explanations based on the instructions of each questionnaire were given to the supervisors and teachers. In case a participant was more interested in the whole research process, more details of the study were provided to him/her. The participants took the questionnaires home, filled them in and submitted them to the researcher or the supervisor of the institutes within a week. It should be mentioned that 28 participants either answered the items in the questionnaires incompletely or left all the items unanswered.

Data analysis procedure

In analyzing the results, and to answer the research questions proposed for the purposes of this study, the obtained data were subjected to SPSS. The statistical test used in order to answer research questions was Pearson product moment correlation coefficient.

Results

The present study employed a correlational design to examine the relationships among EFL teachers' burnout, reflective teaching, and emotional intelligence.

The results of Pearson product moment correlation formula for the relationships among EFL Teachers ' Burnout and Reflective Teaching are displayed in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Results of Pearson Correlation for the Relationships between EFL Teachers' Burnout and Reflective Teaching

		Reflective Teaching	Burnout
Reflective Teaching	Pearson Correlation	1	-.162
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.261
	N	50	50
Burnout	Pearson Correlation	-.162	1

Sig.	(2-tailed)	.261	
N		50	50

The correlation between reflective teaching and burnout indicated a weak negative relationship because r turned out to be-.16. This weak negative relationship between reflective teaching and burnout was not statistically meaningful because the p value in front of Sig. (2-tailed) was larger than the level of significance (p = .26 > .05). Thus, it could be inferred that EFL teachers' reflective teaching level was not significantly correlated with the variable of teacher burnout.

The results of the analysis for the relationships among male teachers' Burnout and Reflective Teaching are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3 . Results of Pearson Correlation for the Relationships between Male Teachers' Burnout and Reflective Teaching

		Reflective Teaching	Burnout
Reflective Teaching	Pearson Correlation	1	-.292
			.157
	Sig. (2-tailed) N	25	25
Burnout	Pearson Correlation	-.292 .157	1
	Sig. (2-tailed) N	25	25

The correlation between male teachers' reflective teaching and burnout was a weak negative one inasmuch as r equalled -.29. This weak negative relationship between male teachers' reflective teaching and burnout was not statistically significant since the p value in front of Sig. (2-tailed) was larger than the alpha level (p = .15 > .05). It could thus be concluded that male EFL teachers' reflective teaching was not significantly correlated with their burnout.

Table 4 below presents the results of the relationships among reflective teaching and burnout for female EFL teachers:

Table 4. Results of Pearson Correlation for the Relationships between Female Teachers' Burnout and Reflective Teaching.

		Reflective Teaching	Burnout
Reflective Teaching	Pearson Correlation	1	-.018
			.934
	Sig. (2-tailed) N	25	25
Burnout	Pearson Correlation	-.018 .934	1
	Sig. (2-tailed) N	25	25

Based on Table 4, the relationship between female teachers' reflective teaching and burnout was a weak negative one (r = -.01) which was not statistically significant (p =.93 > .05). This means that female EFL teachers' reflective teaching was not meaningfully correlated with their burnout.

Discussion and conclusion

Teachers have always been one of the most important pillars of education. The way they teach, their characteristics, their behavior towards their students and colleagues, and their performance in the classroom are among the many important teacher related issues in educational studies. As stated before, the main aim of this thesis was to consider whether there is a relationship between burnout and reflective teaching among Iranian EFL teachers.

In order to achieve these goals, two different questionnaires were employed, while each focused on one aspect of the teachers, that is, teacher reflection and burnout. It is worth mentioning that, the reliability and validity of all questionnaires were checked, prior to their administration. The obtained results indicated that EFL teachers' reflective teaching level was not significantly correlated with the variable of teacher burnout.

The results are in partial harmony with the research done by Javadi and Khatib (2014), who arrived at the conclusion that there is a significant negative relationship between teachers' reflection and their feeling of burnout, while the results of the current study shows that there is an insignificant week negative relationship between reflective teaching and burnout .

The results obtained from the Pearson Correlation showed an insignificant weak negative relationship among male teachers' burnout and reflective teaching(r=-.29, p = .15 > .05).

The relationship between female teachers' reflective teaching and burnout was a weak negative one(r = -.01) which was not statistically significant (p =.93 > .05).

The results of this study indicated generally that there was not a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers with regard to their reflecting teaching. The data found in the present study are consistent with those of a research study by Dolapcioglu (2007), Alp (2007), Sahin (2011), and Erguven (2011), as they stated that the variable of gender doesn't have any effects on the reflective thinking skills of class teachers, which highlights the absence of any significant difference. However, the results of this study are in line with what was found by Guvenc and Celik's (2012) who found no significant difference between reflective teaching and sex variable.

Asgari (2012) compared the effects of gender on Burnout of English teachers in Iran. She concluded that there is a significant difference between the male and female teachers. Comber and Cormack (2007) stated that gender did not affect on the level of burnout among teachers. This study however came up with findings that seem to be of great moment in reflective teaching, burnout research and teacher education research.

The results of the aforementioned analyses revealed that there was a weak relationship, a negative one, between reflective teaching and teacher burnout. To conclude, the results of this study can be useful for teacher educators and supervisors who work with teachers. The current study can add to the literature on reflective teaching and teacher burnout. Also, this study can further validate reflective teaching relationship to teachers' success in schools and their psychological well-being. This is highly important since the impact of teachers and the way they behave in their classrooms on students' lives, social development, and classroom performance is of great importance. This study provides another viewpoint in that its findings can be useful for predicting and even preventing burnout among teachers. The results can actually be useful for teacher educators and supervisors who work with teachers. Teacher educators can help teachers

to overcome their problems better by knowing how different teachers are and how these differences result in special performances among teachers. To recognize that if a teacher who is strong in one feature is not automatically strong or weak in another feature can also help teacher educators and supervisors to help teachers improve and to handle their classes more successfully.

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Appendix A: Reflective Teaching Questionnaire

Gender: Female☐   ☐Male   Teaching Experience (years):   age:
Degree: No Degree   ☐ BA in English   ☐MA in English   ☐PhD in English
Degree in Other Fields of Study (please specify):

No	Items	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I write about my teaching experiences in a diary or a notebook.					
2	I have a file where I keep my accounts of my teaching for reviewing purposes.					
3	I talk about my classroom experiences with my colleagues and seek their advice /feedback.					
4	After each lesson, I write about the accomplishments/failures of that lesson or I talk about the lesson to a colleague.					
5	I discuss practical/theoretical issues with my colleagues.					
6	I observe other teachers' classrooms to learn about their efficient practices.					
7	I ask my peers to observe my teaching and comment on my teaching performance.					
8	I think of using/introducing new teaching techniques in my classes.					
9	I read books/articles related to effective teaching to improve my classroom performance					
10	I participate in workshops/conferences related to teaching/learning issues.					
11	I think of writing articles based on my classroom experiences.					
12	I look at journal articles or search the internet to see what the recent developments in my profession are.					
13	I carry out small scale research activities in my classes to become better informed of learning/ teaching processes.					
14	I think of classroom events as potential research topics and think of finding a method or investigating them					
15	I think about my students' emotional responses to my instructions.					
16	When a student is having an emotional problem or is neglected by his/her peers, I try to spend more time with him/her.					
17	Before and after teaching, I think about aspects of lesson my students liked/disliked.					
18	I ask my students to write/talk about their perceptions of my classes and the things they liked/disliked about it.					
19	I talk to my students to learn about their learning styles and preferences.					
20	I talk to my students to learn about their family backgrounds, hobbies, interests and abilities.					

21	I ask my students whether they like a teaching task or not.					
22	As a teacher, I think about my teaching philosophy and the way it is affecting my teaching.					
23	I think of the ways my biography or background affects the way I define myself as a teacher.					
24	I think of the meaning or significance of my job as a teacher.					
25	I try to find out which aspects of my teaching provide me with a sense of satisfaction.					
26	I think about my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher.					
27	I think of the positive/negative role models I have had as a student and the way they have affected me in my practice.					
28	I think of inconsistencies and contradictions that occur in my classroom practice.					
29	I think about instances of social injustice in my own surroundings and try to discuss them in my classes.					
30	I think of ways to enable my students to change their social lives in fighting poverty, discrimination, and gender bias.					
31	In my teaching, I include less-discussed topics, such as old age, AIDS, discrimination against women and minorities, and poverty.					
32	I think about the political aspects of my teaching and the way I may affect my students' political views.					
33	I think of ways through which I can promote tolerance and democracy in my classes and in the society in general.					
34	I think about the ways gender, social class, and race influence my students' achievements.					
35	I think of outside social events that can influence my teaching inside the class.					
36	I think of my job as showing care and sympathy to others.					
37	I regard myself as a role model for my students and as a result try to act as a moral example.					
38	I believe in the concept of justice and try to show it in my classroom practice.					
39	I talk about my moral standards and values to my students.					
40	I establish a clear set of rules for my students to follow in terms of their classroom attendance and the way they will be evaluated at the end of the course.					
41	I provide equal opportunities for all my students in the class regardless of their capabilities.					
42	I have a clear set of general class rules and what constitutes acceptable behavior for my students to follow.					

Please check the box that best expresses your current teaching situation in the above table.

Appendix B: Burnout

How Often
0 – 6 Statements:

1. _____ I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. _____ I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. _____ I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. _____ I can easily understand how my students feel about things.
5. _____ I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects

6. _____ Working with people all day is really a strain on me.
7. _____ I deal very effectively with the problems of my students.
8. _____ I feel burned out from my work.
9. _____ I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.
10. _____ I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.
11. _____ I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
12. _____ I feel very energetic.
13. _____ I feel frustrated by my job.
14. _____ I feel I'm working too hard on my job.
15. _____ I don't really care what happens to some students.
16. _____ working with people directly puts too much stress on me.
17. _____ I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students.
18. _____ I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students.
19. _____ I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
20. _____ I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.
21. _____ In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
22. _____ I feel students blame me for some of their probe.