



BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

THESIS' TITLE: English Teachers' Journals: From description to reflection and development in Mexican public basic education

A thesis submitted to the School of Languages

For the degree of

MAESTRÍA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

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Puebla, Pue.

December, 2015

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Acknowledgements

I am heartily thankful to my supervisor, Dra. Verónica Sánchez Hernández, whose encouragement, guidance and support from the initial to the final period of the development of my thesis enabled me to successfully accomplish one of my greatest goals in life.

I cannot finish without saying how grateful I am to my family which gives me a loving environment where to develop. Particular thanks to my parents, Miguel Angel Rojas Tello and Martha Rivera Castillo, to my brother Alan Rojas Rivera and my beloved partner in life Montserrat Salazar Pedraza. They have always supported and encouraged me to do my best in all matters of life. To them I dedicate this thesis.

Lastly, I offer my regards and blessings to all of those who supported me in any respect during the achievement of the project.

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Chapter I: Introduction

1. Introduction

In Mexico, educational reform movements are setting ambitious goals for students learning in the last decade. Even though English Language Teaching (ELT) in basic public education was implemented very recently in some of the states of Mexico including Puebla, changes in classroom practices demanded by the reform have been requiring the professionalization of English language teachers. According to Borko (2004) changes of this magnitude require a great deal of learning on the part of teachers and it is difficult to do without support and guidance.

Since the English language teaching program in Puebla is recent in comparison to other states in Mexico and the number of English teachers is quite large. Authorities have been implementing different working techniques to promote teachers' better performance in a more autonomous way. First, a group of teachers known as 'evaluators' was created to lead their colleagues' working process. The evaluator's responsibilities increase or change according to the ELT program's needs.

Some of the evaluators' duties are to receive and check the lesson plans of a group of six to ten ELT teachers. They also have to go to the teachers' schools to observe and evaluate the development of their lessons, and discuss the results of the evaluation or any challenging situation in their teaching context. Likewise DiPaola and Hoy (2008), Oliva and Pawlas (2001), Sullivan and Glanz (2000) and Zepeda (2012) state that supervisors monitor teachers formally or informally by visiting the teachers' classrooms. They also implement a set of planned activities to improve teaching practices such as frequent observation, analysis of the teaching learning process, and the assessment of teachers and

students outcomes. As a matter of fact, the kind of activities and responsibilities that evaluators develop in this specific ELT context make them play a role of a supervisor.

In addition to the evaluators' duties, authorities of this ELT program implemented an activity that would promote reflection among teachers. This activity consisted of a series of written reports which were called *bitacoras*. These written reports were also under the evaluators' supervision. Indeed, there is evidence in previous research that working with reflections can help improve teachers' practices. Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2010) referred to this reflective practice in the teaching field as "Reflective teaching". And they see it as a complex but substantial tool for student teachers and teachers which is useful for the understanding of their complex English language teaching contexts as well as the social conditions that influence their teaching.

Gallego (2014) carried out a research in which graduate teaching assistants were exposed to the reflective experience through written journals over a period of a year. It mainly examined the effects that these reflective journals had to promote training and professional development. A content analysis approach was implemented to identify shared concerns among the reflections, which according to Gallego (2014) consists of three stages identification, coding and categorization. One of the most relevant findings in this research was that participants raised their awareness of the purpose and the importance of being a reflective practitioner. Similarly, teachers of this program in basic education were not previously trained to write a reflective journal. Moreover, teachers were not ready to identify the implications, purpose and application of this reflective teaching technique.

Boman (2014) also researched training enhanced through reflective writing. She worked with 124 graduate students of a teaching assistant program over a two month

period. She implemented guided reflection in order to find out how interested participants were in professional development after having reflected. Professional development not only comes with experiences, there are many features that work together little by little during the teaching practices of each teacher. Craig, Kraft and Plessis (1998) clarify that teachers' professional development is more a process than an event, and it consists of changes over a period of time and through different stages. These stages are related to the learning process during their careers and the practice they have.

As mentioned above, the ELT program in Puebla was implemented in basic education in the year 2009, and it is a recent program compared to other states in Mexico. There are still a numbers of aspects to be carefully considered and planned, such as teacher development practices. Since professional growth is more complex and challenging to be accomplished alone, the guidance provided during this process by supervisors and mentors play a very important role. In this particular case, due to the fact that evaluators serve as guidance for English teachers, they must monitor the development of the written reports or *bitacoras* in a more reflective way.

Unfortunately, the reflection in the *bitacoras* has not been successfully achieved. The written reports are very descriptive with very little reflection or no reflection at all that could inform teachers' progress and growth. Therefore, as an evaluator of this ELT program, I became interested in identifying the key features of these *bitacoras* and implement an intervention in the form of action research to change teachers' conception about *bitacoras* and promote reflection in their journals.

1.1 Significance of the study

Previous research on reflective teaching has been mostly focused on the development of the lessons as well as the results and effects on students' learning development from the modifications made. When being a self-reflective practitioner, discipline and consistence are essential. Teachers' willingness may have a huge influence on the way teacher perceive reflection. This is the idea that mainly guided this research, looking for the perspectives that teachers have towards reflection and the purpose of the written journals called *bitacoras*, which may contribute to the researcher's professional development in his professional practice.

Considering Schön's (1983), Zeichner and Liston (2011), and Wallace's (1998) point of view, the importance of professional development relies on the value that is placed on experience, and in most jobs-descriptions, the expectations of improvement over a period of practice become true. Therefore, this research mainly explored how professional development is promoted by reflective teaching. In other words, reflecting on teaching experience helps teachers to improve their professional development by a better understanding of the processes of teaching taking into consideration what they reflect on and why they do it.

Nevertheless, to achieve the reflective teaching practice, it was necessary to implement a reflective teaching workshop. According to the action research design that framed this research, the workshop was a necessary intervention. Otherwise participant teachers would never be able to successfully complete reflective teaching without guidance. The action research design and the way it framed the research are explained in detail in the methodology chapter of this research.

1.2 The context of the research

In the last couple of years, there has been a growing interest in the implementation of teaching reflections in Mexican Basic Education. English teachers are required to write journals recording any issue that occurs in their classes but, there has not been any research about teachers' reactions to this type of reflections.

Richards (1994) states that a teacher “who has a more extensive knowledge and deeper awareness about the different components and dimensions of teaching is better prepared to make appropriate judgments and decisions in teaching (p.3).” Therefore, it is really important to know the effects that reflections are having on the participant teachers and how it affects professional development. In-service teachers may not be enthusiastic about it, or they may find it difficult to do because they have not had the proper training or guidance from their supervisors to reflect on their own practices. Furthermore, reflective practitioners do not realize that their experiences can help other English language teachers overcome difficult situations in their teaching contexts.

As previously stated, in this ELT institution teachers are asked to write a series of written reports which they call “*bitacoras*”. These written reports were the first source of data to be analyzed in order to identify if it was serving its purpose or not. Secondly an interview was applied to identify the purpose of the implementation of this teaching journal. After that, participants were required to follow steps of a guided account of teaching experiences recorded electronically. Consequently, participants gathered in a sharing group in order to see the implementation and usefulness of their reflective teaching practices. Finally participants' initial teaching journals were compared with their final teaching journals.

1.3 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this study is twofold. On the one hand, it aims at providing an overview of the importance of becoming a reflective teacher and the implications that it brings to professional development in a specific context. On the other hand, this research will explore the basis to provide adequate guidance when asking for a reflective paper. It may also serve to develop a syllabus for implementing a course or workshop in order to develop reflective teaching skills.

1.4 Research questions

This section presents the main concerns and focuses of this research represented by three research questions which are the point of departure and the leading inquiries for the accomplishment of this research.

RQ1 What are the most salient themes in teachers' *'bitacoras'* and reflective journals?

RQ2 Is there evidence of reflective practice in the *'bitacoras'* and reflective journals?

RQ3 How do teachers' respond to the guided reflective journals?

The following chapters present the different stages of the research. Chapter two discusses in more detail the context of the research in terms of the associated literature and theories. Chapter three presents the processes and instruments for gathering and analyzing data. And chapter four talks about the findings and results of the analysis. Finally chapter five gives conclusions of the research and further research options that arise from the results of the analysis of data.

Chapter II: Literature review

2. Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of previous research dealing with knowledge and specific scientific areas shared with this research. It presents and explains the theoretical framework and context of the research. Specific terms and concepts are explained in order to provide the reader with a complete image of the implications of professional development through reflective teaching, and the benefits that it brings to English language teachers.

2.1 Language Teacher Education

It is important for all teachers to continue learning in order to master their teaching practices. Getting a degree as an English language teacher does not guarantee that teaching lessons serve their purpose successfully. This means that knowledge acquired at school during their degree programs is not enough. Different teaching skills are developed through a variety of experiences faced in each language classroom. In other words, teacher education is a process that continues all time.

To Perraton (2010), teacher education serves diverse purposes based on two distinctions. The first one is between the initial teachers' education and the continuing professional development, and the second one is between pre-service and in-service practices. Perraton (2010) sees teacher education as the increase of teaching skills in order to have better results with students learning. These skills are normally oriented to supporting curriculum development, and allowing teachers to take new roles. Therefore, teachers have to keep updating their teaching and learning tools, activities, methods and

approaches but with specific purposes and clear understanding of what they are going to do.

Perraton (2010, p. 4) proposes four principle elements of teacher education: 1) Improving the general educational background of the trainee teacher, 2) increasing their knowledge and understanding of the subject they are to teach, 3) pedagogy and understanding of children and learning, and 4) the development of practical skills and competences. If teachers continue preparing themselves for teaching challenges and develop a balance among these elements consciously, eventually they grow professionally.

2.1.1 English teachers' professional development

Teacher Education eventually leads to teacher professional development. For any person who develops any kind of job, it is important to always provide the best service. Unfortunately, providing the best service is not an easy task. People need to go through a long process in order to increase their knowledge and improve or learn abilities in the subject matter. This process is called *professional development*. In ELT professional development goes beyond just knowing the language. Teachers need to reach an advanced level in the use of the four skills, speaking, reading, writing and listening. But more than that, they must learn, develop or modify different pedagogical aspects that may allow them obtain better results during their teaching practices. Guzkey (2000) states that professional development is an opportunity for teachers to debate and reflect about their practices in order to find and try out new ones always getting helpful insights.

To be more specific in this research teachers' professional development implies lifelong learning. Zhao (2013) clarifies the implications of professional development by

pointing out that in this area, teachers are seen as both the objects and subjects of change. In other words, teachers' professional development is the creation of opportunities for educators to discuss, think about, try out, and shape new practices. Professional development creates an environment that puts more value to the inquiry processes. These processes can be fostered by two kind of pedagogical aspects or experiences of professional development. These are formal experiences such as attending professional meetings, collegiate discussions, and cooperation in workshops, guiding novice teachers, and the informal experience which are reading professional books, magazines or watching videos.

Zhao (2013) suggests that professional development implies a long term process which focuses on systematizing planned opportunities and activities to promote the growth and development of teachers' profession. Another aspect of professional development is that teaching is not seen as an isolated practices owned personally by each teacher. Rather than that professional development is conceived as a collaborative process. According to Zhao (2013) teachers need to open their classrooms doors and analyze the teaching practice but also share them with their colleagues.

Similar to Zhao's (2013) categorization as formal and informal experiences of professional development, Bayar (2014) makes a distinction between two types of professional development activities. He calls them *traditional activities*, which are activities such as short workshops, conferences, and the *non-traditional activities* which are mentoring, coaching, and peer observation. These professional activities are closely related to the ones that are implemented in this ELT institution in Mexico because evaluators work with some of them at a certain level, for example mentoring and peer observation. Therefore, researching on reflective teaching and the way how professional

development is fostered through reflective journals, can be used for many different purposes such as the creation of different workshops or conferences looking at professional development through reflective teaching. As a consequence, mentors, coaching activities, peer observation and different components of professional development can be encouraged and benefited from this research.

2.1.2 Components of effective teachers' professional development

There is not a magic recipe that allows teachers to reach professional development. It consists of many components that work together and appear during different stages of the professional life. The impact they have on the teacher self-awareness and improvement provides professional development. Teachers' experiences, supervision, reflective teaching, journal writing, mentoring, group based learning, and self-learning, are some components of professional development and they are the principle ones for the development of this research.

Marilyn, Abbott, and Rossiter (2011, p. 206) classify components of professional development into four models which are the craft or mentoring model, which focuses on teamwork with a more experienced teacher who provides guidance for the development of lesson plans. They also carry out peer observations and implement reflective practice. The second professional development model is called *applied science or theory to practice*. This model includes activities such as “video training, discussion of objectives, teaching principles, modeling of the technique, analysis, application, and follow-up”, the third professional development model known as *inquiry or reflective practice* works with teachers and other researchers involved in all stages of the action research. Finally, there is

a fourth model that integrates the three models in one research context, where theory and practice work together to reach professional development.

The context of this research and the characteristics of the participants leads to the *craft or mentoring model*. Even though the researcher is applying mentoring techniques, he started as a supervisor. Therefore it is important define what a supervisor is in the English language teaching (ELT) and how they are moving from a supervisor role to a mentoring one.

2.2 Language teachers' training to become reflective practitioners

Reflective teaching plays an important role in professional development because it allows practitioners to improve their own teaching skills. Richards and Lockhart (1994, p. 1) state that in reflective teaching “teachers and students teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching”. Even more, teachers reflect about what happens in the classroom and through this practice, they can think about alternative techniques to achieve their goals.

Unfortunately, becoming a reflective practitioner is not something easy and not all people know how to do it. Scales (2013) points out that most people spend time thinking about what we do and the effects that our actions can have on others. Unfortunately not everyone always takes it a step further which implies reflecting on the actions, and making plans to do things differently. Scales (2013) adds that reflection in the professional setting is deliberate, purposeful, and structured. It should link theory and practice, promote

learning, it should cause change and development. In other words, practitioners should become reflective teachers.

As stated by Moon (2005) reflection comes as a mental process which people use to accomplish a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome. It is implemented to achieve better understanding of relatively problematic ideas. Reflection relies on processing and understanding knowledge and emotions that people already have. Therefore, a reflective practitioner is a person who looks at what he or she does analytically, and thinks of what went right or wrong during a certain activity. This practice consists of coming up with a possible solution to a phenomenon identified and testing that solution. After that, the practitioner needs to reflect on it once more. It is important to keep a record of these reflections and one way to do it is through writing journals. As described previously, there are procedures to follow in order to become a reflective practitioner but if they are learnt correctly, the implementation may allow teachers to use reflection as a really good instrument to foster professional development.

To help illustrate this, I am going to tell the story of a teacher as he goes through this reflective process. Alan was a teacher from elementary school level. He has got around 40 students in his English teaching class. As Scales (2013) says Alan was one of those people who used to spend time thinking about the things and activities he implemented in his English classes. He also took into consideration the effects of his actions on his students. He decided to go further and learn more about any technique that would help him understand better his thoughts. By the time he took such decision the process became deliberate for him. He had now a purpose. The reflective process in which he was going through became consciously which is one of the characteristics of reflective teaching.

Alan started writing down events, feelings, emotions and relevant things that happened during his lessons, but everything was messed up. He would never find a solution to his difficulties because he was not following the needed steps to complete the reflective cycle.

A friend of Alan looked at his notes and suggested him to look for information about reflective practice. In the first place, Alan learnt that what he was doing was just one little step of reflecting practice. According to Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2010) there are three different levels of reflective teaching. The first one is concerned with *describing and reporting* events as well as *providing justifications* of the things that happen. This level is considered as descriptive and it is the lowest level of reflection. This is where Alan started. The second level is called *deliberate* and it consists of reevaluating the experiences. In this level, it is essential to implement prior knowledge to critically analyze a situation. In this stage, the reflective practitioner goes into a process of searching for meaning, coming to an understanding, and applying new knowledge. The third level is called *critical* and teachers at this level develop deeper abilities of learning and more importantly, they develop an ability to evaluate and or judge the value of the English language teaching existence. When Alan reached this level, he started writing and keeping a reflective journal which little by little help him to become a reflective practitioner. Alan's journal got more detailed after some period of practice.

2.2.1 Reflective journal writing

During any teaching lesson, things may not always go according to the lesson plan. There are cases in which teachers modify their activities or the order depending on their

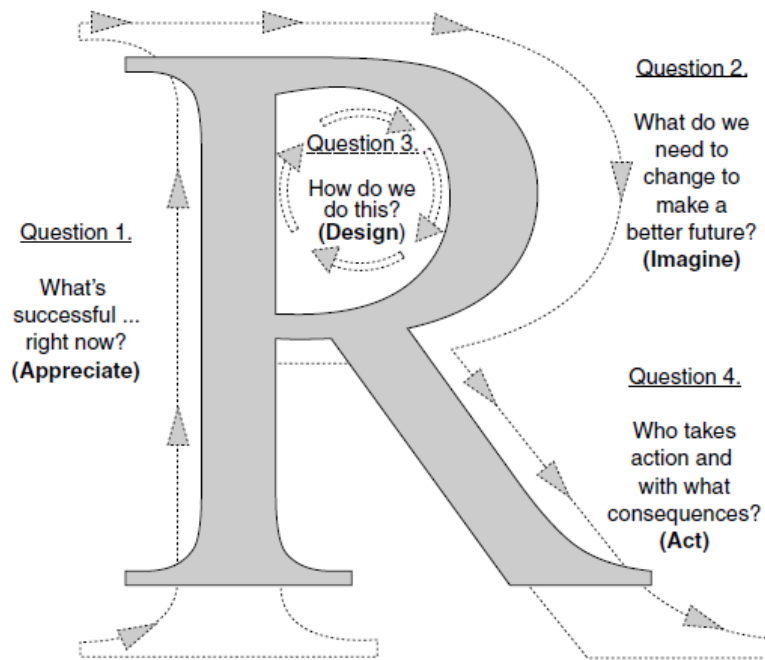
teaching context. For that reason, writing what happens and thinking about why these things happen help find patterns or identify specific situations that can be managed differently. Moreover, it could help identify things that teachers can avoid in future lesson plans. They can even develop a contingency plan in case something goes differently. Ho and Richards (1993) see journal writing as an opportunity for teachers to explore themselves and describe their teaching context and practice. In other words, a reflective journal is a written record of good or bad events during teaching time that is complemented with a proposal to solve problems or keep implementing certain techniques.

2.2.1.1 Steps for writing a reflective journal

When writing a reflective journal, it is important to follow an order which according to Ghaye (2011) basically consists of four steps. The first one is to appreciate and it has to do with describing the event. The second is to inform, in other words to give an interpretation of the events, the third is to confront which has to do with evaluating the experience or event, and the fourth is to reconstruct or plan how the information from the other three steps can be useful for the teaching practices or the program.

Ghaye (2011) assembled these four basic steps in a framework named “strengths-based reflective framework” (see Figure 2.1). Ghaye (2011) represents the framework with a big letter R and added four intentions and a guiding questions to each of the steps.

Figure 2.1 Strengths-based reflective framework (Ghaye, 2011)



Representing each of the steps of this reflective framework with questions means that each of the sections need to be reflected. In the first section, the reflective practitioner should understand his own and others' talents, limitations, identity, role and responsibilities. On the second step, the intention is to generate, control and implement knowledge. Record of this knowledge is important in this stage and it can be done through narratives, diaries, journals, logs or portfolios. The main intention is to document learning about what works well, and what needs to be changed. The third step has the intention to promote individual expertise and innovation to create collective wisdom in other words, criticality and creativity work together to answer the question how do we do this? Finally, the fourth step has the intention to make decisions and consider the consequences.

Ghaye (2011) points out the importance of documenting the decisions being made and the reasons for them because with these records reflective practitioners can know where they came from and how far they have moved. This framework shows the very basic

steps and intentions to write a reflection. It served as the roots to plan and develop a more complete reflective model which was used to guide teachers during the workshop and guided journal writing. Having learnt how to reflect and keep a record in reflective journals can help not just the reflective practitioner but, it can help supervisors in order to provide assistance on the development of the reflective teaching technique. This practice may lead to a professional growth.

2.3 Group-based learning in Teacher Education

Reflective teaching and journal writing can have different implementations to professionally develop one person or a group of people. Supervisors and mentors are usually in charge of a group of teachers that somehow share similar teaching contexts. Supervisors usually get together with supervisees and provide them with feedback. One way to enrich this feedback is to hear what other teachers say based on their reflective journals. Through sharing experiences many solutions or advices may arise that can be useful for every member of the group. Probably, it is useful for some teachers at the moment but for others it can be useful in the future. In group work, knowledge acquired through experiences can be expanded. Sometimes when sharing experiences people can even learn from themselves or realize something about their own life.

2.3.1 Supervision in the ELT context

There is an increasing interest in the supervision of English language teachers. In some teaching institutions, there are specific people that supervise the development of the English teacher lessons. Their role is to go into their classroom and observe one or several

classes. Then, they provide an evaluation or feedback to teachers in order to make them realize things they are doing good and things they are missing or doing wrong. For Bailey (2009, p.269) supervision is “a process of overseeing the ability of people to meet the goals of the organization in which they work.”

As previously mentioned, supervision is part of professional development because it is an improvement tool for both supervisor and supervisees. It is very difficult for any teacher to really know what happens in the entire classroom, especially in large groups. Being observed gives different perspectives of teachers’ practices and may let them identify key points that need to be taken care of in order to have a more successful teaching practice. When supervision works with a specific goal of improvement, DiPaola and Hoy (2008) named it as *formative supervision* which includes a set of activities planned with the purpose of improving teaching. In other words, teachers follow a systematic planning, and they are frequently observed and not just their teaching / learning process is analyzed but their students’ results, too.

Unfortunately, the supervisions’ feedback sometimes is not enough to solve most of the problems in the classroom. Consequently, reflective teaching could be an option for teachers to start observing themselves and learn from their own feedback every day.

2.3.2 Mentoring: learning from others

Considering the previous topics discussed in this chapter such as effective teachers’ professional development and group-based learning, it is important to look at the role of evaluators of this English teaching program. It has been said that professional development looks for teachers’ transformation, in this context a transformation of the role of evaluators

has been observed because of the different activities that are being required. Sometimes, evaluators are required to guide teachers and give them short workshops on how to develop their lesson plans. Then, the role of some evaluators has changed little by little according to the necessities of the group of teachers who they work with, from being supervisors to mentors, because they have provided teachers with guidance and support (Pitton, 2006).

In recent years, mentoring has been a trend topic in Teacher Education. Its main goal involves teachers' transformation. Consequently, it is necessary to provide teachers with enrich experiences that promote their professional development. By working with reflections and sharing them with a mentor, improvement of teachers' practices can be promoted. Pitton (2006, p. 1) defines mentoring as "an intentional pairing of an inexperienced person with an experienced partner to guide and nurture his or her development". In other words, mentoring is a relationship between teachers and mentor on a common desire of development. Mentor and teachers must share their goals and objectives. In the context of this research, a mentor program must be clearly established by designing an action research that would be implemented to help teachers arise their self-awareness of the characteristics of their *bitacoras* but most importantly the benefits it will provide them. Before continuing with the description of the relationship between mentors and mentees, it is important to describe the roles which a mentor can assume (Malderez & Bodóczy, 1999). Those roles are presented in the following table.

Table 2.1 Mentors' Roles and Functions (Malderez & Bodóczyk, 1999).

ROLE	FUNCTIONS
1 Model	- To inspire - To demonstrate
2 'Acculturator'	- To show mentees the ropes - To help mentee get used to the particular professional culture
3 Sponsor	- To 'open doors' - To introduce mentee to the 'right people' - To use their power (ability to make things happen) in the service of the mentee
4 Support	- To be there - To provide safe opportunities for the mentee to let off steam / release emotions - To act as a sounding board – for cathartic reasons
5 Educator	- To act as a sounding board – for articulation of ideas - To consciously create appropriate opportunities for the mentee - To achieve professional learning objectives

It is important for the mentor to know and take responsibility of his role because it is an essential part of the mentoring relationship. Mentors' duties are to guide their mentees and help them solve and overcome difficult situations. It is impossible for them to know everything about any issue that may arise in the classroom. Then, they can learn from their mentees' reflective journal. In such way, mentors would be able to provide reliable advice based on similar real life situations.

Parting from the idea that no teacher can solve all classroom problems alone, and that they develop professionally through live experiences it is very important to have a more experienced person or teacher who can give them a hand and guide them. For most English Language Teaching programs it is important to guide their teachers in order to have better teaching results. The goal implies that "practicing teachers are key to the transformation of schools and that in order for teachers to lead the reform efforts, they need

to be offered expanded and enriched professional development experiences” (Dilworth & Imig, 1995).

2.4 Teachers’ Self- Directed Learning (SDL)

Learning about oneself can come from different sources. Sometimes people do not realize things they do or why they do them until somebody tells them. Some other people are really good at expressing what they do wrong but they forget about the good things, and some others do the opposite. According to Hewitt (2001) when a person can take responsibility of his or her own life, becomes autonomous, independent and self-directed, learning is affected and it becomes optimal because the individual can use his or her own experience as a learning resource. Teachers’ self-learning has to do with the recognition and explanation of the good and bad characteristics, tactics, habits, attitudes or things teachers have or do during their teaching practices. Self-directed-learning also implies problem-solving by, adopting, modifying or removing teaching techniques that work or not for them in their specific teaching context. Teachers have to judge what they do, explain to themselves why they do it, and decide what they will do.

Furthermore, Knowles (1990) mentions the main elements of the SDL. The first one has to do with the identification of the individual’s own goals, learning resources, methods of learning and more important, the individual needs to be directly involved in the evaluation of his own learning. For English language teacher of this program in basic education learning from their own experiences can be very beneficial for their professional development. Therefore, reflective teaching plays a very important role in this research

because it is the tool that promotes the self-learning of teachers that participate in this research.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the concept of professional development in English language teaching, its different components, and how reflective teaching and journal writing can benefit not just practitioner but other members of the teaching community to encourage professional development. Some other similar cases were reviewed in which people learn from themselves, an obtained better results in their jobs. In this chapter most relevant concepts were explained in order to have a complete and accurate understanding of the research done.

Chapter III: Study Methodology

3. Introduction

To provide better guidance on the implementation of reflective teaching practices among ELT teachers from an elementary school English program, a qualitative process was implemented. It consisted of an action research cycle applied to identify how ELT teachers were dealing with the initial written reports, the previous preparation they had to develop reflective practice, their reaction towards a reflective teaching workshop and the development of guided reflective journals.

As mentioned before, teachers were exposed to a workshop and a series of guided written journal to reflect on their teaching practices. The information obtained from the workshop and the reflective journals were analyzed and compared to the information obtained from the previous written reports in the teachers' *bitacoras*. The main purpose of this analysis was to find out how teachers responded to the workshop experience and the guided reflective journals.

In light of this, the purpose of this chapter is to explain the study subjects, the data collection instruments, and the research design model that frames the study, the study subjects, the data collection instruments, and the data analysis procedures used for this research.

3.1 Research design model

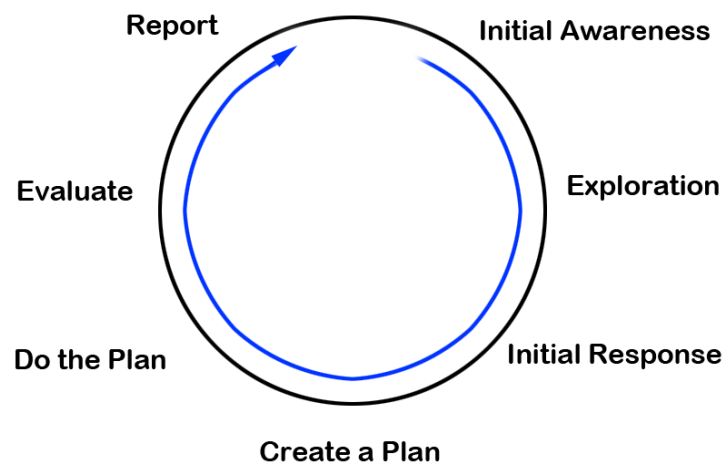
It is important to mention that this research not only sought to improve teachers' reflective practice. It also took me through a professional development process known as action research. As an intervention practice, a reflective teaching workshop was

implemented to develop teachers' reflective teaching skills. The effects of this action research were analyzed in order to explore the impact and application of the workshop and the reflective journal writing. This action research design is explained in the next section of this chapter.

3.1.1 The intervention: An action research approach

Burns (2005) and Griffiee (2012) display the research design model *Action Research Design* (ARD) which has two main purposes, the investigation of a specific classroom or teaching problem for renewal of the curriculum and/or the promotion of professional development. There are similar points of view about this research model such as Nunan's (1993) who sees it as an opportunity to promote teachers' professional development. Additionally, Wallace (1998), states that this research model is a way of reflecting because it is a systematically procedure of data collection. And the analysis of this everyday practice offers decisions for future practice. Figure 3.1 shows the ARD cycle and its different stages.

Figure 3.1 Action research design cycle (Burns, 2005)



First of all, it is important to make clear that in this ARD the essential subject of change was me. In order to have a better understanding of how this ARD worked in this this research, each stage of the cycle is explained below.

- **Initial awareness.** This first stage happened when teachers from this ELT program of elementary school were requested to write reports of their most significant moments of their teaching practices in a notebook known as *bitacora*. At that time, I was not only an English language teacher from this institution but I also performed the role of what was known as evaluator. Evaluators were people in charge of the teaching supervision of a group of teachers. Teacher started asking me lots of questions about the purpose and characteristics of the *bitacoras*. Unfortunately, as an evaluator, I was not ready to answer all teachers' questions and guide them properly through the implementation and writing of the *bitacoras*. This was the time when I became aware that there was a teaching problem that could not just be left out.
- **Exploration.** After getting in touch with all teachers' concerns regarding the writing of their *bitacoras*, I decided to learn more about this technique and the purposes that the written papers had as well as the impact that they were intended to have. So, I went to the coordinator of the program who was the one that requested these writings. He basically told me that his purpose was to make every teacher reflect on their teaching practice and identify the most meaningful events in their everyday teaching practice. Consequently, I became curious and wanted to know if teachers had received any training in the past about how to write a reflection or if they knew the purpose of this practice and the impact it could have in their professional development. I explored who the teachers were and the reflective teaching and learning level that they had through the application of a questionnaire. I also looked for their perspectives towards this

practice, the knowledge they had related to the importance, impact, characteristics, and purpose of their writings. As the teachers had never received any training on how and what to write, and after a school year working with the *bitacoras* without any guidance, this tool became just a requirement with no meaning for them. I kept learning about reflecting teaching and journal writing. Moreover, I learnt about how professional development can be fostered by implementing these techniques.

- **Initial response.** These two stages led me to the initial response stage. There is when I decided to know what exactly teachers were writing in their *bitacoras*, how they were doing it and more important I wanted to know if there was evidence of successful reflection in their written papers. Therefore, I decided to review the already existing written reports in the teachers' *bitacoras*. The results from the data obtained from the questionnaire and the analysis of the *bitacoras* is presented in detail in the following chapter. I want to point out that the teachers were not completing the reflective process successfully and most of the writings were very general therefore the *bitacoras* did not work.
- **Create a plan.** It was necessary to create a plan in order to promote professional development among teachers and complement their *bitacoras* with a more complete and organized teaching professional development technique. The creation of a plan is the fourth stage of the action research model. During this stage, a reflective teaching and journal writing workshop was designed. This intervention was important to provide teachers with all the necessary tools and knowledge to develop the reflective teaching and journal writing skills. Otherwise, participants of the workshop would not be able to write the series of reflective teaching journals.

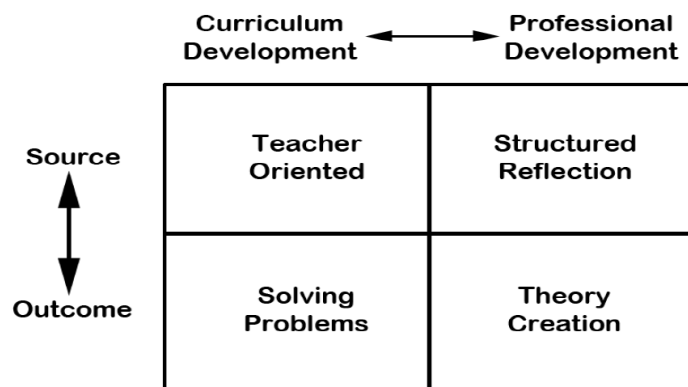
- **Do the plan.** In this stage of the ARD the workshop was actually implemented. During this workshop, participants worked enthusiastically and shared many of their teaching stories. Participants received detailed information of what professional development is, the different activities that can promote it and how reflective teaching and journal writing are triggers of their own professional development. Participants were also instructed to follow a reflective journal writing model and guided through the identification of each part of the model as well as the writing of their first reflective journal. Without this guidance participants would have ended just writing reports as they did in their *bitacoras*.
- **Evaluation.** In this stage, participants first shared one of their reflective journals with the rest of the participants and they received feedback and comments from the other teachers and me as moderator of the workshop. After that, participants completed two more reflective journals and I collected them to be analyzed looking for evidence of reflection and the management of the reflective cycle explained during the workshop.
- **Report.** This is the last stage of the ARD and consists of reporting the results from the analysis of the data obtained from each of the stages of the ARD. These results will be reported in the next chapter. To better illustrate these stages see Table 3.1

Table 3.1 Instrument sequences and description for each ARD stage.

Stage	Instrument	Description
Initial awareness	Teachers	Getting to know the problem. Registering all teachers concerns towards <i>bitacoras</i> writing
Exploration	<i>Bitacoras</i>	identify how and what teachers were doing with their <i>bitacoras</i>
Initial Response	Questionnaire	Learn about teachers' reflective training and background knowledge. Explain and justify the way in which the <i>bitacoras</i> were written.
Create a plan	Plan a workshop and writing guided journals	Provide teachers with the necessary training and knowledge to promote professional development through reflective teaching and journal writing.
Do the plan	Carry out the workshop	Instruct teachers on reflective teaching purposes and its impact on their professional development. Also used to guide teachers during the process to become reflective practitioners.
Evaluate	Focus group and final questionnaire	Evaluate and identify how useful the implementation of this practice was for the participant teaching practices and how it can be used to help others.
Report		Explain the results obtained from the analysis of the data gathered from the different stages of this ARD.

In the ARD there are some focal points that need to be mentioned and explained in order to better understand how they affect teachers' professional development. Figure 3.2 shows these focal points of the action research model and the relationship they share.

Figure 3.2 Focus points of the ARD (Griffie, 2012)



Griffee (2012) divides the focus points of the ARD into two main parts, the action part and the research part. The action part involves curriculum development elements which are teacher oriented and solving problems. The research part is the professional development, which implies structured reflection and theory creation. He also sees the teachers as the source of professional development, and the outcome as the solution to the problem faced by the teachers. This research model was appropriate for this research because I went through the different stages and guided the participants in the proces in order to complete the ARD cycle.

In Figure 3.2, *teacher oriented* would be the first step of the research methodology which implies gathering previous *bitacoras*, and the previous teachers reflective background knowledge. The *structured reflection* is the second stage of this research. In this stage, teachers were exposed to a guided writing proces of a reflective journal. The third stage is *theory creation*. In this stage, teacher answered a second questionnaire. Finally the fourth stage in which the outcomes arose was when teachers shared their reflective experiences in a focus group. These stages are explained in detail in the following sections of this research.

Markee (1996) presents six features of ARD, the first one is that participants carry the action research by themselves. For this specific research, teachers are directly involved in the process of guided reflection and identifying elements and effects of this practice in their professional lives. The second feature is that ARD can work with both qualitative and quantitative data which for this research is helpful because most of the data comes from the reflective journals and it is qualitative. The third feature states that the purpose of the research has to be related to a teacher behavioral and attitudinal change. The fourth feature mentions that there should not be generalizability. The fifth feature makes clear that ARD pursues to

improve teaching classroom practice. And finally, the sixth one looks for the development of teacher theory in other words the growth of knowledge towards a professional development teaching practice. These six features are accurate for the justification of this research because the implementation of reflective teaching leads to a professional development.

3.2 Study subjects

The main data source came from a group of English language teachers who had been previously exposed to a writing up of written reports that were supposed to serve as reflection in order to improve their teaching practices. As there was not a follow up procedure or any guidance to develop this practice, these written reports known as *bitacoras* turned out to be handed in just as requirements.

The first questionnaire implemented as the initial response of the action research was very useful to identify the characteristics of the participants. Table 3.2 illustrates some of the characteristics of the teachers that participated in this research.

Table 3.2 Teachers' factual information

Participants	Age range	Gender	Education level	School	Teaching level	ELT experience	Groups
P1.	25-30	Male	BA	UDAL	BE	3 years	12
P2.	25-30	Male	BA	BUAP	BE	3 years	8
P3.	25-30	Male	BA	BUAP	BE	5 years	8
P4.	30-40	Male	BA	BUAP	BE	3 years	8
P5.	30-40	Male	BA	BUAP	BE	3 years	8

Table 3.2 provides an overview of the kind of participants that this research had. To better understand this table look at these abbreviations.

- BA Bachelor's Degree
- UDAL Universidad de las Americas
- BUAP Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla
- BE Basic Education.

The information obtained was organized in the same way as in the questionnaire.

Factual information or section A of the questionnaire revealed the following information.

All participants that were selected and agreed on participating in this research are women.

Three of the participants are between the age of 25 to 30 years old, and two participants are between 30 to 40 years old. All participants live in the state of Puebla but there is only one (P3) who has lived in Puebla for only 13 years.

These 5 participants share the same level of education but not the same degree areas. P1 studied the Bachelor's degree (BA) named Languages (Education and translation) at Universidad de America Latina. While P.2, P.3, P4, and P.5 studied at the state university of Puebla, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. These participants degree was in modern languages in the area of English teaching.

Not all participants started learning the English language since the same educational level. P1 started at high school and continued learning it in the university. P2 and p5 studied English language not only in high school and university, but they have also taken some training courses. P3 and P4 just learnt the language at university.

Not all participants studied English to become English language teachers. P1 wanted to expand her culture by learning about English speaking cultures. Similarly, P2 wanted to learn about other cultures but her main purpose was to travel abroad just as P4. On the other hand, P3 and P5 really wanted to become English language teachers since the beginning of their careers.

All the participants have been teaching English for over a period of three years, P3 is the one who has been teaching for 5 years. Most of participants except for P2 work with 4th 5th and 6th grades and the average number of students in their classrooms is between 30 to 40 students. P2 works with lower grades 1st, 2nd and 3rd. All of their groups are mixed groups with male and female students. Finally, all participants provide each group with two and a half hours of English lessons per week.

All the participants continued learning English after they graduated from university. Some of them were actually taking English courses at a private institution to improve their language skills. It was important to know since when the participants started working as English language teachers because it may influence their reflective abilities as explained in previous chapters. Each individual is capable of recognizing phenomena but not everyone accomplishes reflection and growth. All of the participants have similar groups and teach 20 hours per week. But some of them just work with first, second, and third grade whereas others work with all grades in primary school from first to sixth grades.

The average number of students that P1 and P2 have in each group is between 30 to 40 students. P3, P4, and P5 have from 40 to 50 students in each classroom. Also P.1 teaches English to 12 groups from first grade to sixth grade while P2, P3, P4, and 5 provide English teaching lessons to 8 groups. All of the participants work in public primary schools in which both male and female students are accepted and take lessons together.

At the beginning, each teacher had to write at least one good or bad incident per day. It had to be something that had called the teachers 'attention during their teaching practice and related to it. Teachers were supposed to keep a record of these events in written form in a notebook or *bitacora*. They should have the notebook with them all time.

However this was not the case. There were no specifications or guidelines for the format, length or type of writing. Therefore, these written papers were made by following a free style format. As a result, each teacher wrote in a different way obtaining a set of written reports rather than complete reflections.

The written reports were meant to be used only by the teachers themselves, and had an impact on their teaching development. After half a year of the implementation, authorities of the English language teaching program asked for the written reports as requirement for teachers' payment. But they just put a tick on a list for teacher who showed their *bitacoras* by the specified time. Unfortunately, those *bitacoras* were never reviewed, analyzed or used in any further way.

3.3 Data collection

Yin (2011) proposes five main features of qualitative research, 1) studying the meaning of people's lives, 2) representing the way they understand the world, 3) explaining the context in which people find themselves, 4) providing and constructing useful insights to explain participants behavior, and finally number 5), which indicates that in qualitative research it is important to rely on multiple sources of data. Following this characteristics of qualitative research, this section presents the data collection instruments used in this research.

3.3.1 Initial *bitacoras*

The literal translation of *bitacora* in English would be a log book. But, this term has been used in this ELT context referring to a personal daily journal in which initially,

teachers only had written reports (see Appendix A). These papers already existed. Teachers were supposed to work for half a year on their reflections before this research was carried out. So this data source was collected personally. In order to justify the results and characteristics of these *bitacoras*, it was necessary to implement a questionnaire.

3.3.2 Questionnaire

Due to the fact that questionnaires are a very useful way to obtain information from people who share knowledge from a specific community, issue or fact, this tool was implemented in order to find out how much ELT teacher knew or were prepared to accomplish this journal writing task. Bird (2009) states that a questionnaire is a common and essential tool for gathering information from public knowledge and perception of natural events. The questionnaire (see Appendix B) implemented for this research was specifically designed to find out the awareness and preparation about journal writing purposes and implementation. The questionnaire also served to justify the tactic in which the teachers wrote their initial written reports in their *bitacoras*.

3.3.3 Intervention: workshop

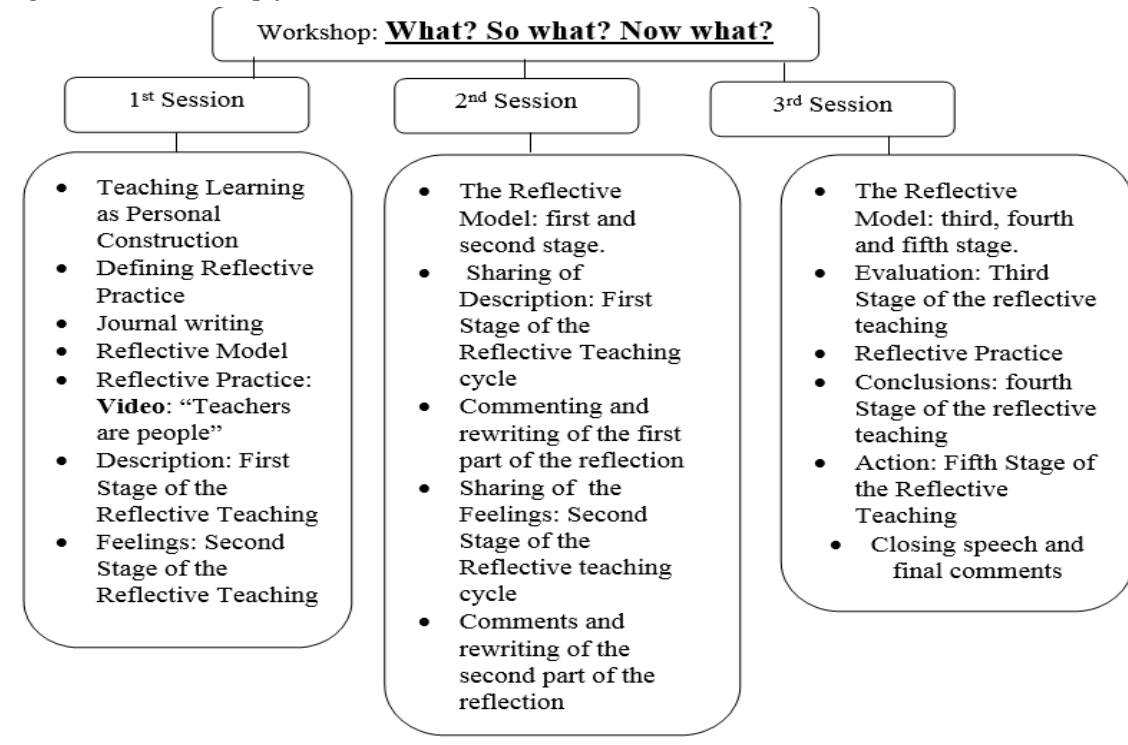
To avoid asking teachers to develop a reflective journal writing without any guidance, an intervention workshop was necessary. This intervention was the creation and implementation of the third and fourth stage of the ARD (see Table 3.1). The workshop was designed in such a way that participants could learn the central matters of professional development, reflective teaching and journal writing. The main purpose of this workshop was to provide the participants of this research with enough tools to be able to accomplish

the next step of the ARD plan which was exposing teachers to the experience of writing a well-organized reflective journal following a reflective model.

For this workshop the plan was developed and followed during the different sessions. The workshop was carried out during three sessions of three hours per day. The three sessions focused on a specific significant moment. The guiding question was what was a significant moment or situation for me as teacher?

The aim of the first session was to make participants learn and be able to describe the importance of professional development, and the characteristics of a written journal. The second session focused on making participants able to follow a model to represent one of their significant moments of their classroom in a written way. The third session focused on getting the participants use a reflective cycle to write a reflective journal. Also making participants able to gather detailed information from different events or issues in their teaching context as well as carrying out an analysis of such information by selecting, explaining and justifying the most effective solution to the classroom incidents were the intended learning outcomes. Figure 3.3 shows the important tasks developed during the sessions of the workshop.

Figure 3.3 Workshop features



The first session of the workshop was intended to provide participants with the most relevant concepts and its purposes as seen in the figure above. During the first session, the participants wrote some definitions of what professional development, reflective teaching and journal writing meant for them as well as the purposes of each concept. Then each participant received a binder with some literature regarding those concepts. Each one was explained to the participants pointing out the relationship that these concepts share and the impact that they can have in teachers’ professional development.

During the first session some examples of the different activities that promote professional development were shown to the participants. Also, procedures that foster reflective teaching and forms of teaching journals were shown and explained to the participants. As a warm up activity, a video served as trigger of the participants ‘teaching

experiences because the video showed many different problematic situations in the classroom or school, For example students´ bad behavior or parents being mad at teachers.

Afterwards, a reflective model that was adapted from Ghaye´s (2011) initial strengths- based reflective framework, Burton, Quirke, Reichmann, and Peyton (2009) reflective writing typology, and complemented with Gibbs (1988) model of reflection was presented and explained to the participants. Characteristics of this reflective model are explained in detail in the next chapter as well as the effects of the video among participants. There are 5 different stages in this reflective model (see Figure 3.3) which were explained and used during the workshop to guide the participants to write their first reflective journal. The stages were explained, reviewed, written, shared, commented and rewritten. The participants wrote their reflections individually by following the significant moment explained during the workshop. Then participants shared their writings with the rest of the participants. Everyone commented depending on the characteristics of each section of the reflective model (see Figure 3.4) and then they complemented their writings with the missing information.

Figure 3.4 Reflective model (Gibbs, 1988)



By the end of the third session of the workshop, each participant already had a reflection completed. They took it home and read it again. Then all the reflections were sent to me via email in order to be analyzed. Two more reflections were assigned to the participants each one of the reflective journals focusing on different significant moments.

3.3.3.1 Guided journal

It was really important and useful to provide teachers with the necessary information and training to develop a guided journal. During the workshop, participants were taken through a sequential process. This step by step procedure provided them with a specific area for reflection which helped them realize the effects of reflective practices.

Burton *et al.* (2009) state the following basic departure questions leading teachers to write reflectively. The first one is what happened? The second one is how did it happen? The third one is why did it happen? And the fourth one is what does it mean?

Speaking about these four questions, Smyth (1992) recommends four movements that can help answering the four reflective questions mentioned above. *Describing* is the action that needs to take place in a reflection in the first place. This action suggests that it is important for teachers to review their actions in an organized manner trying to answer the question: how did it happen? The action of *informing* is accurate because in this stage, the teachers start to notice the different elements used from their teaching methodology and then highlighting their actions. The informing part is limited just to the interpretation of teachers' actions in regards to their teaching methodology.

After this action, there must be a *confronting* stage. In this stage, the reflective practitioner puts himself in a position in which he questions how did he become like that?

In other words, it's important to think about how the teachers' practices match with their beliefs about teaching. If they are doing the correct things or not, if they are really focusing on what they are supposed to, if they are putting enough effort as well as the consequences of their actions in their teaching contexts. Finally, the fourth action is to *reconstruct*. At this point, the reflective practitioner has a clear and better informed standpoint of the problem, issue or event that activated the reflection. Based on their professional goal, by now, teachers can be able to find actions that can be more effective and reliable to make a change in their teaching practices.

The follow up steps of the guided reflective journals where written down following these premises, the four questions and actions were the roots of the guided reflection.

3.3.4 Focus/sharing group

Yin (2011) points out that a focus group or sharing group is formed by a determined number of people who gathered together because they had previously been exposed to a common experience that promotes some common views. In that case, the focus group was implemented in this research to give validity to the data obtained from the questionnaires and guided reflective journals.

Burton, Quirke, Reichmann, and Kreeft, (2009) suggest that when writing there are processes which can happen consciously or unconsciously. Therefore, writers somehow must select and examine material at some level in order to decide what and how to write, evaluate, and reflect on. Burton *et al.*, (2009) also make clear that reflection stimulated by questioning is a continuous process. Going back and forward promotes improvement from managing easy questions to more complex ones. As one of the main purposes of this

research was to change ELT teachers' perspectives on the road to reflection, it was necessary to make the reflective process more conscious, in line with Burton *et al.*, (2009), a reflective writing typology was adapted to develop the guided reflective journals teachers were exposed to.

As mentioned before, this is a qualitative research study that focused on the importance, usefulness, and awareness of reflective teaching to give meaning to real life events. In other words, it implies the understanding of the purpose of a reflective journal and how ELT teachers can find solutions to most issues within themselves. To develop reflective teaching skills, it is important to first have a clear understanding of how useful this professional development technique is as well as how it can be better developed with guidance and follow up steps. With this in mind, the questionnaires, workshop and guided journals were implemented to promote reflective teaching uses and effects among participants. Later on, the focus group was created to even expand more the implications and implementation of reflective teaching.

In the focus group, as suggested by Yin (2011), there should be a moderator which in this research I served as moderator when having a conversation with the group. Once ELT teachers experienced guided reflective journal writing, it was essential to have a discussion aiming the feelings, emotions, moments of change, times of decision making, and perspective changes. There were some leading questions for the focus group designed to elicit thoughts on reflective practice rather than the changes in classroom activities or students' reactions to changes after having reflected. The focus group was implemented as a final step of this research to gather new incomes. The results are presented in the following chapter.

3.4 Data collection procedure

To give answers to the research questions that led this research, the initial *bitacoras* and questionnaires were implemented to find the most salient themes and how much evidence of reflective practice existed before being guided. In the second place, the purpose of the guided journal was to give teachers the opportunity to experience a more structured reflective writing experience through a well-planned intervention workshop. And then a final stage was a focus group which turned out to be very useful to evaluate all the stages followed as the ARD indicates, ten teachers in an ELT group that were under the supervision of one evaluator were the participants in this study. Following the record format of their performance in this ELT institution only five were selected because they had a complete and successful accomplishment of the requirements during the school year.

The most important criteria considered for the selection of the participants was the *bitacora* delivery record. The selected participants were contacted and informed about the research purpose and their role in it. They were also asked to submit their previous *bitacoras* to start with the analysis. They also agreed to take part in the research and follow the next steps. Afterwards, the initial questionnaire which I named as the reflective experience background questionnaire was emailed to provide them with specific instructions and submission date.

All the questionnaires with the participants' replies were collected by the same way through email. Eventually, the guided reflective journal writing process started. The first step consisted of an informative meeting to give all participants details of the different stages they were going through to have a more complete and well-focused reflective writing experience. As most of the communication and interaction between participants

and researcher was already through email, to facilitate the data gathering process the same means of communication was kept to obtain their reflective journals.

The data collection procedure followed in this research was divided into three stages. The stages were sequential and one relied on the previous one. To put in other words, it could not had been possible to encourage a reflective journal writing process without having identified firstly how skillful teachers were using this tool, and secondly instructing teachers on the importance, purpose and procedures to successfully implement this practice. Questionnaires did not just have the purpose of getting teachers' answers, but they were also meant to raise awareness of the significance of the teachers' reflections. This significance was used later in the focus group to increment and share new perceptions towards reflective teaching practice.

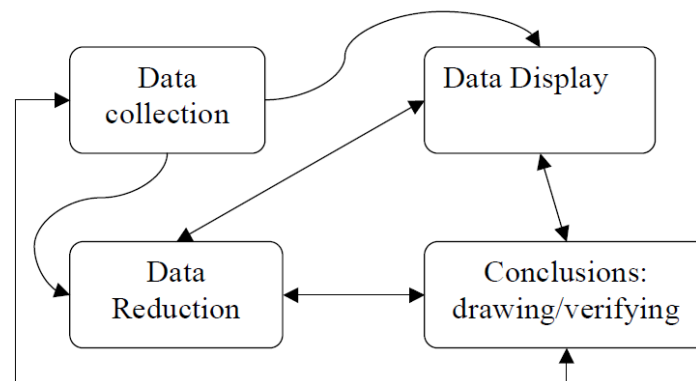
3.5 Data analysis

Hardy and Bryman (2004) make clear that in qualitative research, when working with text-based data, it is important to identify themes and concepts that contribute to our understanding of the phenomena. These theme and concepts need to be coded, compared, and contrasted with similar material from other sources. In this research, an interactive model was used in order to compare initial *bitacoras* and questionnaires with the guided journal reflections and the information from the focus group. The purpose was to find changes in the implementation of the practice and reactions towards the reflective journal writing and the intervention workshop.

3.5.1. Data Analysis: Interactive Model

The interactive data analysis model was used to frame the process implemented in this research to analyze the data. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), this data analysis model consists of four movements or activities for data collection and analysis, 1) Data collection, 2) Data reduction, 3) Data display, and 4) Conclusions: drawing or verifying. This model works in an interactive cyclical process as can be seen in Figure 3.5 below.

Figure 3.5 Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model (Miles & Huberman, 1994).



The data collection process was explained before in this chapter. Even though it is important to describe the data reduction process, data display forms, and how the conclusions were drawn.

3.5.2 Data reduction

As stated by Miles and Huberman (1994), reduction makes reference to a process of selection, focusing, simplification, abstraction, and transformation of the data. How the data can be reduced in qualitative research? Some actions can be writing summaries, coding data, finding some shared themes or grouping information.

For this research on reflective teaching practices, to reduce and display data, it was necessary to follow the next steps proposed by Powell and Renner (2003). Table 3.3 shows the steps that were followed in order to analyze data form the different questionnaires, *bitacoras* and journals applied through the Action Research Design stages.

Table 3.3 *Data analysis steps.*

INSTRUMENTS	TYPE OF ANALYSIS	DATA REDUCTION	DATA DISPLAY
Questionnaires	Content analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Get to know your data. 2. Focus the analysis. 3. Categorize information. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Identify patterns and connections within and between categories 5. Interpretation- Bringing it all together
<i>Bitacoras</i> and journals	Content analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Check your data. 2. Add id numbers. 3. Prepare data for analysis. 4. Mark key themes. 5. Define categories. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Cut and sort. 7. Make connections.

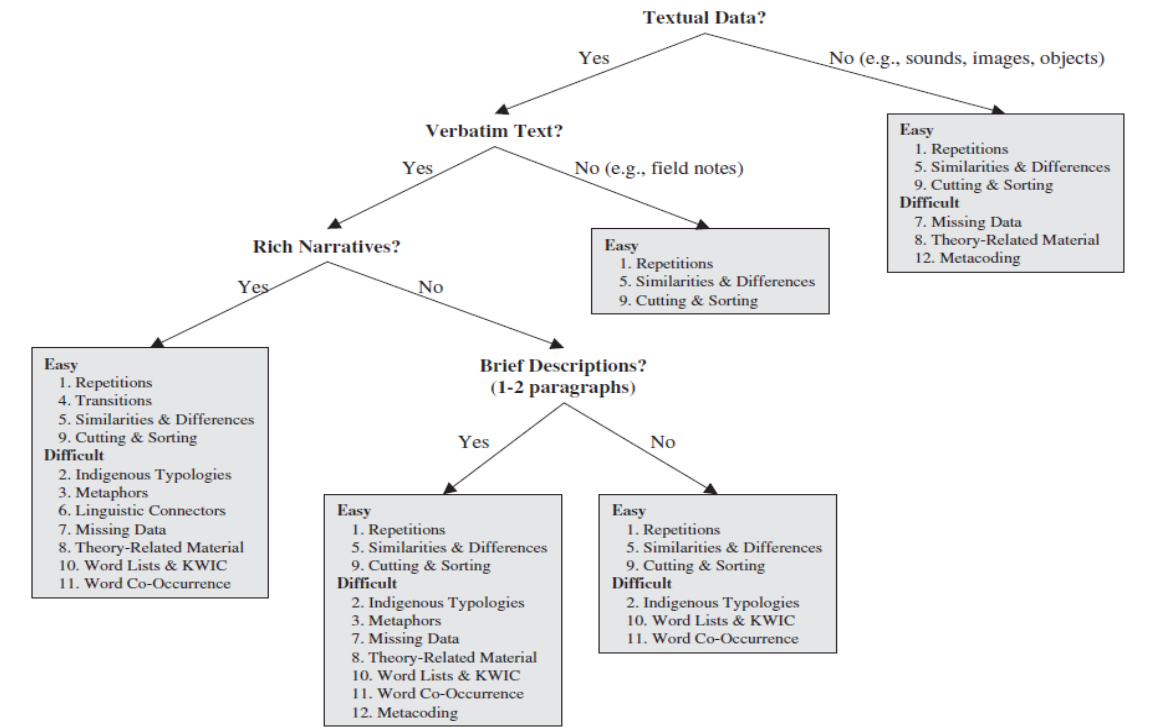
Additionally to the steps for the analysis of *bitacoras* and journals, Gery and Russell (2003) claimed three characteristics of themes in data. The first one is that themes are visible and therefore discoverable. They are manifested by expressions in the data. The second one is that the theme expressions are obvious to a specific culture and that most participants in that culture tend to agree with them. And the third one is the relationship that exists between the importance of any theme and how often it appears in the text.

They also describe twelve observational techniques that serve as a guide to look for themes in the data. These techniques are i) *Repetitions*, ii) *Indigenous Typologies* or *Categories*, iii) *Metaphors* and *Analogies*, iv) *Transitions*, v) *Similarities* and *Differences*,

vi) *Linguistic Connectors*, vii) *Missing Data*, viii) *Theory-Related Material*, ix) *Cutting and Sorting*, x) *Word List & KWIC*, xi) *Word Co-Occurrence* and xii) *Metacoding* Not all of these techniques were used in the analysis of the *bitacora* to find the most relevant themes.

The *repetition* technique was used to find topics that occurred and reoccurred. In other words, themes were first searched in each participant's *bitacora* separately from the others. The more the same concept occurred, the more likely it could become a theme. Then, the *similarities and differences* technique was used to find and compare units of data across the different participants also known as informants. What was basically seen was what kind of things were mentioned in two, three, and four or even in all participants' written entries. Gery and Russell (2003) also present a schema to select among the twelve theme identification techniques according to the kind of data that is being analyzed. It also shows what is easy and difficult to do when analyzing some data (see Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6 Flow chart for selecting groups of theme identification techniques (Gery & Russell, 2003, p. 102)



Considering that the *bitacoras* are just brief written reports of what teachers experienced in their classrooms or their teaching contexts, only three techniques were used to find the most relevant themes. *Repetitions* in each participant *bitacoras*, *similarities and differences* among all participants' *bitacoras*, and finally *cutting and sorting* were implemented to create the categories. It is important to keep in mind that these *bitacoras* were written without any guidance, therefore, and according to the schema the three techniques are the most appropriate and easy ones to work with this initial stage of this research.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented and justified the methodology and gathering data instruments used in this qualitative research to obtained and analyzed data. Findings from

the analysis of data are presented and discussed in the following chapter. Insights and moments of change are also explained.

Chapter IV: Findings

4. Introduction

Results obtained from the qualitative analysis which focused the researcher's attention on the initial concerns about reflective teaching practices are presented in this chapter. A discussion about the different positive and negative changes that participants experienced on the way to reflective teaching practice is also presented.

4.1 Research questions

In any research, especially in qualitative research, it is important to stay focused on the leading questions. Data can provide many different results and can be analyzed with different purposes and from different scientific perspectives. Getting sidetracked can cause misapplication and misinterpretation of the results. Hence, it is important to get back to the path by looking at the research questions and center the results of the analysis on answering them.

RQ1 What are the most salient themes in teachers' *'bitacoras'* and *reflective journals*?

RQ2 Is there evidence of reflective practice in the *'bitacoras'* and *reflective journals*?

RQ3 How do teachers' respond to the guided reflective journals?

4.2 Results

The results of this research are presented in a sequential mode as they were applied in the data gathering procedure. They share a relation and complement each other. In order to analyze and categorize the teachers' entries of the initial teachers' written reports, it was necessary to adapt and complement a reflective model. This reflective model was the same

model explained and used during the workshop and the guided reflective journal writing. As was previously stated, a strengths-based reflective framework proposed by Ghaye (2011) was the initial point to develop the reflective model. Even though Ghaye (2011) added questions to the stages of the framework it was still too basic for the purposes of this research. Therefore Burton, Quirke, Reichmann, and Peyton's (2009) reflective writing typology and Gibbs' (1988) model of reflection were used to complement and complete the model of reflection. Therefore, the results are divided into three main sections, i) the reflective learning initial knowledge and teachers non-guided reflective practices, ii) reflective journal writing workshop and development of guided reflective journals., and iii) new perspectives and insights.

4.2.1 Initial *bitacoras* characteristics

It is important to start describing the characteristics of the teachers' *bitacoras*. The five *bitacoras* were written in small size paper notebooks some of them in spiral notebooks. The notebook size was more or less half of letter size paper. Why is it relevant? It is because even though the size of the notebook was already small, the teachers' written entries were surprisingly smaller. Each teacher started writing in September. They were supposed to continue writing until the end of the scholar year in July but not all of them accomplished it. Even having a long period of time to write, most of their written entries were no longer than two paragraphs with no more than 6 lines each.

Each participant *bitacora* was first analyzed in terms of length, and the information was categorized and counted in a table adapted from Burton, Quirke, Reichmann, and Peyton's (2009) reflective writing typology and complemented with Gibbs' (1988) model

of reflection. The writing typology is divided into five *types* guided by five *answering questions*. Each type has its own *comments*. Table 4.1 shows the typology characteristics.

Table 4.1 Reflective writing typology (Burton, Quirke, Reichmann, & Peyton, 2009)

Type	Guiding questions	Comments
1	What happens/happened?	Recording, expressing, “getting the story down”
2	How does/did it happen?	Commenting on, attempting to explain: e.g., by adding more detail or approaching the Type 1 story from another perspective or question.
3	Why does/did it happen? What does this mean outside the immediate context of action?	Theorizing on the story and reflection in Types 1 & 2, linking them to personal theories, e.g., of language, learning, and teaching
4	Are there earlier reflections credible /reasonable? Why? Why not? What do they mean know?	A subsequent written reflection in a developing sequence of reflective writing, in which writers continue to question and maybe involve others
5	Are the early reflections still credible/reasonable? Why? Why not? What do they mean now in the light of subsequent experience?	After longer intervals, writers use the developing spiral of reflection (which again may include other writers: e.g. as part of an interactive journal) to re-examine initial theorizing in the light of intervening events that may have changed their perspectives.

Similar to this reflective writing typology, Gibbs’ (1988) presents a reflective model which he divides it into five stages which are *description*, *feelings*, *evaluation*, *conclusions* and *action*. The following tables contain the questions that guide each stage. These questions were adapted from broth models to be used in this research in order to find written entries of each stage in the participants’ *bitacoras*. Table 4.2 illustrates the guiding questions for each of the stages of the reflective cycle.

Table 4.2 Guiding Questions for Reflection Cycle – Stages 1 and 2

Stage 1: Description	Stage 2: Feelings
When did it take place?	What did you feel before this situation took place?
Why was the participant there?	What did you feel while this situation took place?
Was there anybody else?	What do you think other people felt during this situation?
What was the situation?	What did you feel after the situation?
What did you do?	What do you think about the situation now?
What did other people do?	What do you think other people feel about the situation now?
What happened as a result?	

Each of the guiding questions are related to the purpose of each of the stages. And it is not necessary to answer all questions at once. Depending on the matter of reflections, reflective practitioners choose among all questions the most relevant for them. Table 4.3 illustrates the guiding questions for stages three, four and five of the reflective cycle.

Table 4.3 Guiding Questions for Reflection Cycle – Stages 3, 4, and 5.

Stage 3: Evaluation	Stage 4: Conclusions	Stage 5: Action
What was positive about this situation?	How could this have been a more positive experience for everyone involved?	What possible actions do you suggest?
What was negative?	If you were faced with the same situation again, what would you do differently?	What are you going to do about it?
What went well?		
What didn't go so well?	What skills do you need to develop, so that you can handle this type of situation better?	
What did you and other people do to contribute to the situation (either positively or negatively)?		

As observed in both Tables 4.2 and 4.3, the number of guiding questions increases or decreases depending on the stage of the reflective cycle. However having fewer questions makes the stage more complex and it requires more creativity and focused knowledge from the reflective practitioners to successfully complete the reflective cycle.

Table 4.4 presents the results of the *bitacoras* entries categorization according to the reflective model categories.

Table 4.4 Teachers' bitacoras entries.

Participants	Total data Entries	Description	Feelings	Evaluation	Conclusion	Action
P1	21	21	0	0	0	0
P2	87	87	2	0	0	0
P3	81	81	4	1		4
P4						
P5	20	20	4	20	1	0

Even though participants did not receive any training for the writing up of the *bitacoras*, they followed or created similar formats. All of them started their writings with the date at the top of the page or by the beginning of the entry. Thus, each date represents a new entry in the *bitacora* and they were counted and registered as shown in Table 4.4. Each entry was reviewed several times looking for examples of the different stages of the reflective model. Even though, teachers wrote very little and did not follow any of the stages of the reflective model, there were still moments in which they wrote records of one or two stages. Unfortunately, none of the participants completed any reflection with the five stages of the reflective model. Anyway, there was important information in the written reports of the *bitacoras*.

4.2.1.1 Most salient themes in *bitacoras*

To find themes in the teachers' *bitacoras* it was necessary to mark the text with different color pens and underline key phrases. Based on the Flow chart for selecting groups of theme identification techniques presented by Gery and Russell, (2003) the most

salient themes from the analysis of the written reports in the *bitacoras* are presented in the following table.

Table 4.5 Salient themes in teacher's bitacora 1

Participant 1 Themes	Theme samples
First time talking to the principal	I went to my school to talk to the principal and gave him the document “hoja de presentacion” to sign it out.
Greetings	I went to the classroom and say hi to my new fourth grade students I say hello to my fifth graders and asked them about their vacations I started singing a welcome song I sang the welcome song with my 1 st A and B and said hello in different ways such as hello, hi, good morning, what’s up and had students answer the greetings.
Routine exercises	I like to do the exercise routine with my 2 nd grade students because they are so enthusiastic.
Previous students’ knowledge	I did activities with my first grade students to keep checking their English knowledge.
Helpful games	The fifth grade students started telling me vocabulary they learnt last year with the game tic-tac-toe
Encouraging students	Group A felt stressed and only 5 students wanted to participate but I encouraged them to pass and they won a lollipop
Reinforcing activities	I started asking children for object in the classroom and thanked them so they heard the words thank you several times

The information obtained from the theme analysis of the *bitacoras* shows very important information about the most relevant concerns of each participant. As seen in Table 4.5 participant one gives more importance to the communication with the principal of the school, greeting students is important for her, and she applies different ways to say hello to them. Routine exercises in the classroom and including previous knowledge is essential for the development of her job. This information also shows that she is a dynamic teacher who likes implementing games in her teaching lessons.

Table 4.6 Salient themes in teacher's bitacora 2.

Participant 2 Themes	Theme samples
First time talking to the principal	I give my presentation sheet to the principal.
Establishing rules	The material must be with the full name and in a good presentation.
Useful material	I ask students for the material that we are going to use during the course
Problems with material	There was some students that didn't work during the class because they did not bring their material
Control and discipline	For third grades mainly in 3B there were some problems or difficulties to get the control about discipline. I had to speak in personal way with some students
Previous students' knowledge	I tried to make a little evaluation about speaking I applied the diagnostic exam for the first grades I applied the diagnostic exam for the second grades I applied the diagnostic exam for the third grades

The most salient themes from the *bitacora* of participant number two revealed that she is also concerned about talking to the principal of the school as participant one. For participant two the most relevant issues from her teaching environment have to do with the implementation of useful material and the negative implications that it can bring to the English lesson development. Also for this teacher, discipline is an issue that needs to be addressed. Therefore, establishing rules is also important for her. In Table 4.7 participant three presented more themes similar to the other participants.

Table 4.7 Salient themes in teacher's bitacora 3

Participant 3 Themes	Theme samples
First time talking to the principal	The first day I gave the "oficio de presentacion" to the principal
Establishing rules	I talked to the principal about some rules. I worked on the classroom rules because it is very important.
Greetings	Sixth graders practiced greetings even when they are in sixth grade there are basic things from English Language that they don't know.

Useful material	I worked with the material we are going to use as a notebook and a bilingual dictionary.
Students 'previous knowledge	Students and I played "Simon Says" in order to find out if students are familiarized with the vocabulary of the objects/things used in the classroom. I applied the diagnostic test in 4 th grades and 5 th grades A and B.
Helpful games	Students liked the hot potato game.

For participant three it is also very important to talk to the principal of the school and establish rules for her teaching lessons. Once the principal is aware of those rules, she implements them with her students. So far, each of the participants talks about the importance of greeting the students and promoting this habit among them.

Table 4.8 Salient themes in teacher's bitacora 4.

Participant 4 Themes	Theme samples
Helpful games	To present the unit I started with the vocabulary through a game In one of the activities where students were successful was in a hang man game, they showed interest and I took advantage of this to check some vocabulary
Students 'previous knowledge	I decided to monitor if students really remembered some of the units they saw in their last course; with these activities I evaluated if my students really had a meaningful learning.
Useful material	We were working with flashcards and some photocopies
Reinforcing activities	Another topic I tried to review with my students was "questions to ask for help" they checked and listened to a conversation where these kinds of questions were used. To reinforce what we worked, we used a memory game using greetings and farewells

When I was reading the reports it was difficult for me to find themes and name them by the beginning, but the more I read, the easier it became for me to categorize the information. In Table 4.8 participant four focused her reports more in her students and teaching practice. This could mean that for her the most significant element of her teaching

practices is the reinforcement of her students' previous knowledge through implementing helpful games and useful material such as flashcards and photocopies.

Table 4.9 Salient themes in teacher's bitacora 5

Participant 5 Themes	Theme samples
Setting up rules	Students are really young and they are waiting for an opportunity to make a mess so first of all I set up the rules and explained them very well
Successful teaching activities	It was a great idea to ask students to choose one animal and go to the front of the class to make the representation
Learning moments	By the beginning of the activity in the first group I chose a student randomly and he was afraid of performing the animal so I took her hand and pretended to be a frog and she followed me all over the classroom. I learn that if you as teacher are not afraid of the others laughs then you will act and model what you want your students to do. And students will react positively
Useful material	I asked students to bring newspapers and old magazines that they did not use anymore. Students had to look for all letters to write the words of a conversation, cut them and paste them.
Helpful games	Today some students were not paying attention to me because they were playing tic-tac-toe in their notebooks so I asked them to go to the board and take the markers. I started playing with them tic-tac-toe and making questions related to the lesson. Students were very happy but even more surprised that I could play too.

Participant five is also concerned about the importance of setting up rules with students. She also identified success in her teaching practices and pointed out learning moments. The importance of including different material seems to be essential for all these English language teacher of basic public education.

These theme tables were filled with information transcribed from the *bitacoras*, there were no modifications to the participants' entries. Despite the grammar mistakes, the information was transcribed exactly as it appears in the hand written *bitacoras*.

As teachers did not have any guidance for the development of these written reports in their *bitacoras* the length and details of each of the reports was very variable from one to another. Anyway, the information categorized is very useful because it represents the concerns and the most relevant issues of their teaching practices and context. This analysis demonstrates that participants have similar issues in their schools despite the fact that they do not work in the same school. The results from this analysis also revealed some information about how this ELT Program in Puebla is working. Teachers working in similar contexts have very similar issues or challenging situations. Therefore, reflective teaching through journal writing can be used to help other teachers working in other schools.

4.2.2 Reflective learning initial knowledge

The written reports in the teachers' *bitacoras* presented very short entries of the different stages of the reflective model therefore the *bitacoras* did not meet the characteristics of a reflection. A questionnaire was implemented in order to learn more about the participants' reflective teaching background. The information gathered from the questionnaires served to give explanation to the characteristics of the *bitacoras*. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) state that questionnaires can produce three types of data which are *factual, behavioral, and attitudinal*.

The questionnaire sections were analyzed in terms of their specific characteristics as follows. The first section of the questionnaire contained factual questions which were used to find out who the respondents were. This section elicited information on age, gender,

race, residential location, level of education, language learning history, teaching context, amount of time spent in L2 teaching environment.

The second section of the questionnaire was intended to find out what the respondents were doing or had done in the past concerning reflective writing, and frequency of the use of this professional development tool. Lastly the third set of questions concerned beliefs, attitudes, opinions and interests towards how the *bitacoras* writing practice was implemented and carried out. As each section of the questionnaire broadened the context of how this reflective practice started, and how it was carried out, its results are likewise displayed in the sections below.

4.2.2.1 Behavioral questions

Behavioral information was useful to know how much training, practice and knowledge teachers had before and while implementing the reflections. The information from this section of the questionnaire revealed that two of the participants received a training course in which reflection was proposed but not reviewed in detail. The other three participants had never received any training in reflective teaching. Consequently, participants did not know the different parts that a reflection implies.

Regarding the initial written reports (*bitacoras*), only one participant received specific instructions from her coordinator to develop this task. Even though most of them did not receive formal training, specifications and instruction of the purposes and procedures for writing their reflections in their *bitacoras*, they all had notions of the purpose of a reflection. Table 4.10 shows participants notions regarding the purpose of a *bitacora*.

Table 4.10 Participants' notions regarding the purpose of reflections.

Participants	Notions of purpose of reflections
P1	The purpose is to write what I do during my classes and if there is any problem in the classroom
P2	It is to think about what I do in my English classes and how my students react to the different activities that I implement.
P3	I think the purpose of it is to identify the things that we as teachers are doing good or bad in the classroom and how we can have our students learning the language better.
P4	I think the main purpose is to see the different problems we face every day and think about different ways to solve them.
P5	I am not sure but I think the main purpose is to record the activities that were useful and the ones that were useless in order to use them or not in the future.

Despite the fact that teachers never received formal instruction on how and why to write a *bitacora* or a reflection, their notions were right but not complete. Each of the participants' notions represents some of the stages of the reflective cycle but not all of them. For example in Table 4.10 Participant 1 and 2's notion are limited just to the recognition of phenomena and description of the event. According to the reflective model implemented for this research, Participant 1 is just in stage number one which is "description". Participant 3 goes a little further thinking about how she can have a better teaching but she is missing other stages of the reflective cycle such as the description of the events, reflecting on the feelings and explaining why her teaching practices are having good or bad results in her students' learning. Participant 4 notion has to do with stage number one and five of the reflective cycle because she talks only about identifying the phenomenon and creating a plan of action which is developed in order to solve classroom issues. Participant 4' notion is concerning only the description and action stages of the reflective model. Finally Participant 5' notions can be placed into the evaluation stage because she judges the different activities that she implements in her teaching lessons in order to implement them again or not.

4.2.2.2 Attitudinal questions

These questions provided very valuable insights that helped understand why the *bitacoras* were written more like narratives than reflections. Participants expressed how they felt when authorities requested the *bitacora*. Four of them saw it as extra work. They said that it was really hard to write because during the lesson there was not enough time to cover their planned activities. Participants also expressed their frustration at the beginning because they did not know how to do it and how large or short it should be. They felt they were under so much pressure from the coordination because there were many things to hand in such as lesson plans, projects with students, portfolio of evidences of teachers' work and also the *bitacora*. There was one participant who said that she felt very angry because she did not have so much time to write it and that she did not know how to do it. P2 was expecting to have a meeting in which the purpose, steps and specifications for writing the *bitacora* were explained in detail to the teachers but it never happened.

It is important to take into consideration how often participants wrote because writing reflections is not easy. As mentioned before, reflections take different steps and actions. Teachers did not take the necessary time to explain, reflect and decide on the basic steps of a reflection. Instead, participants just wrote very little or after really long periods of time. Table 4.2 show the frequency of the writings in the *bitacoras*.

Table 4.11 *Bitacoras' writing frequency*

Participant	Every day	Once a week	Seldom	Once a month
P1			✓	
P2		✓		
P3		✓		
P4				✓
P5			✓	

This information indicates that participants did not write in their *bitacoras* very often and the longer it took them to write the easier it was for them to forget all details of the events. As a result, the teacher written reports were not detailed.

4.2.2.3 Teachers' pre-reflective teaching perspectives.

After the questionnaire and before going into the reflective process, teachers were asked what their expectations of this reflecting project were. And they were provided with a free writing space. All participants reported in a short paragraph that they were expecting to learn the complete and concrete purpose of a reflection. Also they wanted to receive support during the process as well as feedback from their reflections. Some of them stated that at the very beginning of this project, they did not want to do it because they thought they were going to be asked to develop every day reflections without any guidance.

After they learnt what the project was about, participants expressed their interest in this reflective teaching practice despite the fact that they did not know how to do it correctly, they believed this reflective practice could be used as a learning tool to improve their teaching practices. In general, participants perceived this practice as an opportunity to grow as teachers.

4.3 Journal writing workshop and development of guided reflective journals.

This section of this research focuses on the most significant results from the workshop and the guided journals. It also concerns the changes of teachers' perspectives towards this reflective practice and journal writing.

During the workshop, teachers were guided step by step having as results some products during the sessions. Table 4.12 shows a comparison of the teachers' definitions of professional development, Table 4.13 reflective teaching and Table 4.14 journal writing before and after the workshop.

Table 4.12 Teachers' professional development definitions.

Professional Development	
Before	After
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As teachers, we improve what we are doing every day. • Learning through our experiences. • Looking for new strategies to get better results in the teaching learning process. • Develop your knowledge. • Use of strategies. • When a teacher develops a strategies using different experiences into the classroom. And he/she is able to manage his/her students' learning. • The teacher uses different tools to achieve his/her goals. • A way to improve your skills related to your profession. • Be updated with current researches about your field. • Promoting research about education. • Participating in learning community • Including the technology to create better teaching strategies • Looking for participation of stating general objectives related to education in the state. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the knowledge acquired through the experiences in the classroom. There are basis that we apply according to the students' needs, and we are able to change based on different situations and specific goals. • It is a process which involves developing new strategies and abilities to judge yourself to evaluate situations based on your previews experiences. • It is a long process which involves teachers taking new challenges and responsibilities. In this process the teachers learn more about their field and improve their teaching techniques or methods.

Table 4.12 shows a comparison of the definitions of professional development that teachers wrote before receiving any information about it and teachers' definitions after reviewing this topic in the workshop. As shown above, at the beginning of the workshop,

participants had many ideas but not a solid definition. On the other hand, the final definitions were more specific and straight to the purposes of professional development. Writing these final definitions took participants less time and they did not hesitate to write them. All these ideas and definitions were written by the participants in posters. Similar to this table, Table 4.13 presents definitions of reflective teaching before and after the workshop.

Table 4.13 Teachers' reflective teaching definitions.

Reflective teaching	
Before	After
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's analyzing the strategies and results in order to realize what's working and what should be modified to successfully achieve the goals. • When you realize something doesn't work with your students, as a consequence you re-plan your strategies to achieve the main goal. • Learning from the students results (diagnostic). • Analyzing the obstacles during the learning process. • Embracing good learning moments of students and good teaching practices. • Taking into consideration the curricular adaptation, learning environment and students context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a mental process that allows us to reflect on the results that we have every day through self-evaluation. Also it allows us to reorganize: strategies and activities to achieve the goals. • It is a structured process that has different ways to analyze the teaching experiences in specific contexts. This process follows specific steps that make teachers understand better the context and the students, also helps teacher to analyze evaluate, plan, modify and implement different teaching strategies • Reflective teaching is a professional development technique that gives us the opportunity to identify and describe our teaching experiences. It is also a way to evaluate and correct our teaching techniques in order to have better results in our teaching classroom.

Definitions of reflective teaching showed and confirmed that participants had some notions of the purposes of reflective teaching but they also were not able to write a complete and solid definition. By the end of the workshop, teachers' professional definition showed that they had learnt the purpose, importance and characteristics of reflective teaching. All

their initial ideas were condensed in very well structured definitions. Table 4.14 also presents definitions before and after instruction about teaching journals.

Table 4.14 Teachers' teaching journal definitions.

Teaching journal	
Before	After
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a tool in which we can write the things we do in our schools. • In these papers we can write the activities that we use for teaching English. • It is where we write the different problems that we have in our schools with the students, teachers parents and colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a source in which we can evaluate what we are applying in our classrooms and it is a record of all the information that you consider relevant. It is also developed in a written way in a notebook or in electronic devises. • It is a very useful tool for teachers' professional development because teachers can write all their experience in a very detailed way. Teachers have to follow specific steps and review the information in order to find what is correctly working in their classrooms and what is not working. • This tool helps teachers keep a record of the different changes that they have experienced in their schools. Keeping this record can be very beneficial for the teachers' professional development because they learn from themselves and reflect about what they did right and wrong during their teaching lessons.

As seen in Table 4.14, participants did not know much about teaching journal by the beginning of the workshop and their definitions were very poor. Even though, participants mention that teaching journal is a written paper where they write what they do. This is an essential characteristic of teaching journals. By the end of the workshop, participants' definitions were completed with more specific purposes of teaching journal and different ways of doing it. Participants also pointed out the importance of this tool in professional development.

Despite the fact that participants had not used reflective teaching and journal writing properly before the workshop and the fact that they were not aware of the effects

that these practices and tools could bring to their teachers' professional development, their initial definitions were not very different . First of all, it is important to point out that it took participants longer to write down their first definitions than what it was expected. Secondly, participants just wrote isolated sentences with very accurate arguments but they were not full and completed definitions. But by the end of the workshop, participants were able to write more concise definitions with specific purposes and characteristics of each of the concepts reviewed during the workshop. It took them less time to write their definitions than the initial ones.

Contrary to what participants did at the beginning of the workshop, by the end of it they were able to put all their ideas together and write a complete and brief but well supported definition of what professional development, reflective teaching and journal writing were. What is even more important from all of this is the fact that their new definitions were written based on the new knowledge that participants acquired during the workshop. It shows a change in the teachers' perspectives in regards of these three subjects professional development, reflective teaching and journal writing which guided this research.

[In order to confirm if there was an internalization of the characteristics and implementation features of each subject, the participants solved a scramble puzzle in which they had to match the concepts of professional development, reflective teaching and journal writing with paper stripes containing different characteristics of each concept.






Table 4.15 Matching concepts success.

	Professional development	Reflective teaching	Journal writing
Total of characteristics	13	8	9
Teachers 'correct matching	10	6	9
Teachers' incorrect matching	4	2	0
Percentages of success	76%	75%	100%

Table 4.15 shows the total number of characteristics stripes for each of the concepts that guided the workshop. All stripes were used for the scramble puzzle. Participants had some mistakes when matching the concepts but they were minor mistakes compared to the number of correct characteristics matched during this task. This table also shows the percentage of success that participants obtained. It is important to mention that all participants worked together during this activity to complete the puzzle.

Later on, during the workshop, participants received a reflective journal sample. They read the reflections at least three times and then participants identified and underlined each stage samples of the reflective cycle in the reflection provided by following the next color code for each of the stages.

Figure 4.1 Reflective cycle colors code.

Stage	Color code
1. Description	
2. Feelings	
3. Evaluation	
4. Conclusions	
5. Action	

The underlined reflections were very useful for the research and for the participants as well. When participants commented about what they had underlined and why the

underlined the information with specific colors, they justified their decisions. This task showed to participants themselves that they had learnt the characteristics of each stage and how they worked together to successfully write a reflection and learn from it in order to grow professionally. Table 4.16 shows some of the segments and the classification that teachers gave them according to the reflective cycle stages.

Table 4.16 Identified reflective samples.

Reflective Cycle	Underline examples
Stage 1: Description	I started teaching at this school this September, part time, as I am still on maternity leave. I have spent three weeks here so far so have been able to get acquainted with the atmosphere and pupils a bit.
Stage 2: Feelings	In the other classes, everything has been going pretty well so far but in 6AB I have been struggling from the very beginning.
Stage 3: Evaluation	I find this really annoying as it takes me a pretty long time to get to the class I teach and it is physically quite demanding!!
Stage 4: Conclusions	Fortunately, there should be a new language classroom ready at the end of September so I won't have to move so often and far but will have my own classroom right next to my office.
Stage 5: Actions	Luckily I have enough extra materials at home, we will see if it will be possible to buy something later on.

It is important to mention that participants were very enthusiastic during this activity. The underlined reflections of all participants were compared and commented so that each participant could explain why they classified the information in the way they did. The results show that participants had learnt the different stages of the reflective cycle successfully and that they were ready to continue writing and completing their first reflection for their reflective journal.

Once participants knew all features of the reflective cycle and journal writing, they were exposed to a series of three written reflections. Each reflective writing had a specific focus subject or domain which I called *teaching significant moments*. As seen in Table

4.17, the same *significant moments applies* for all participants in each of the three reflections.

Table 4.17 Reflective significant moments for guided reflections.

Reflection	Significant moment
R1	Significant moment/situation in the classroom for me as teacher
R2	Significant moment/situation with the school context
R3	Significant moment/situation with colleges, parents, workers or any other person that interacts with you in the school.

These three domains came up from the initial narratives that teachers wrote in their *bitacoras*. These three domains provided the reflective practitioners with a wide set of options to reflect about but also kept them inside of a frame of reference. Having the reflections guided by these domains was very useful for the discussion in which reflections were used to help other teachers during the focus group.

4.4. Most salient themes in reflective journal

The guided reflections in the reflective journals were analyzed similarly to the initial *bitacoras*. The most salient themes in the reflective journals were identified by following the flow chart for theme identification techniques proposed by Gery and Russell (2003). This time the analysis also focused on the three basic techniques which are repetition, similarities and differences, and cutting and sorting.

This time the information gathered was easier to classify because it was categorized according to the Burton, Quirke, Reichmann, and Peyton's (2009) reflective writing typology. As these written journals were guided reflections, the salient themes in each participant reflection were categorized and exemplified in separated tables (see

appendix C). Secondly, each participant theme table was compared with the other participants' tables to get the most salient themes by most of the reflective practitioners. In order to know what the most salient themes among these English teachers reflections were, Table 4.18 displays the most salient themes from all the teachers' reflections regarding the first domain which is a "Significant moment/situation in the classroom for me as teacher."

Table 4.18 Most salient themes in reflection 1.

Themes	No. of Journals	Sampling entries
• Students' bad attitude.	5	• I realized one of my best students was playing and distracting his team during the activity, but his attitude was aggressive, it was very odd because he's a hard- working student.
• Head teacher support.	4	• The head teacher supported me, telling them they would not have a break the rest of this month because they were playing and not paying attention in my class.
• ELT teacher support to children.	4	• I decided to take him out of the classroom and ask him what was happening. I talked to him about his situation and tried to support him. After a while, we came back to the classroom. Omar tried to work in a better way.
• Students' family problems	4	• He told me he had a family problem and that he didn't know who he wanted to live with because his parents were separated.

From among all the identified themes from the first teachers' reflection, students' bad attitude was the most recurrent one. As it can be seen in Table 4.18, entries related to this theme appeared in five reflections. It means that all teachers are more concerned about this issue in their classrooms. More importantly, this issue is presented in similar ways in all the five schools where teachers work.

Another important theme is "*head teacher support*". Head teachers in these public elementary school context are known as teachers who are in charge of the teaching and learning process of all the other subjects. Head teachers spend most of the time with the

students and keep records of all the student grades from all subjects except English and some other special subjects such as P.E or Arts. ELT teachers normally share the classroom with the head teachers. In this specific context, the support from head teachers to ELT is very important and it is one of the major concerns of most of the participants of this research. As Table 4.18 shows, themes such as head teacher support, *ELT teachers support to children*, and students' family problems appeared in four reflections. It means that for this teacher, supporting students by talking to them and providing them with advice is a technique that gives the good results.

Providing students with support, *students' family problems* is a theme that interferes a lot with the English teaching lessons and teacher are very concerned about it. That is why ELT teachers talk and help their students rather than just ignore them. In Table 4.19 the most salient themes from the second reflection are presented and it is very interesting to know what the concerns of teachers are regarding "Significant moment/situation with the school context"

Table 4.19 Most salient themes in reflection 2.

Themes	No. of Journals	Sampling entries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing classroom 	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A problem came when a person of the "educación inicial" program started working in the teacher's room, she also took her material to keep it there, but she moved mine. My school is small and it is impossible that I have my own classroom for the English classes, I try to adapt myself.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A place for English class material 	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I realized I needed a place where to leave them because in the classrooms I could hardly put my bag on the table.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interferences 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The situation was that students from the different groups were going for breakfast at different schedules and it was a big

		problem because sometimes there were going out during my class time.
No respect to English teacher/class/ material	2	• The teacher didn't care that I was teaching. After the situation I was upset.
• Importance of communication	2	• Now, I think that it wasn't as bad as I had thought. It was just lack of communication among the school community.

In this second reflection, there were more identified themes because the teachers' entries in their reflections were longer, more specific, and more detailed. As Table 4.19 shows, sharing a classroom has become the most important issue among participants. In this ELT program teachers go from classroom to classroom teaching English to the different groups they are in charge of. In their reflections teachers explained their problematic situations that have arisen from this issue. This issue turned even more complicated because some of the teachers did not even have a little space where to put or leave their teaching materials.

Apart from sharing the classroom, there are constant "interferences". Each teacher has different extra activities, for instance, one of the participants explained that in her school students have breakfast at different times depending on the group. It turned out to be a problem because the English lessons were interrupted several times. In other school parents go into the classroom to talk to the head teacher and they make so much noise that it interrupts the English lesson or distracts the students. Even though it is not the same kind of interruptions, teacher emphasized this issue in their reflections because it shows lack of respect. "Not respect to the English class" and the "important of communication" were two more important themes identified in the teacher reflections. In Table 4.20, there are some similar themes identified in reflection number but these were focused to a "Significant

moment/situation with colleges, parents, workers or any other person that interacts with you in the school.”

Table 4.20 Most salient themes in reflection 3.

Themes	No. of Journals	Sampling entries
• Importance of communication	4	• Then, I decided to talk to the teacher to ask her as a favor work quietly or maybe in a different place outside the classroom but her reaction was negative.
• No head teachers support	3	• ...her reaction was negative. She told me that she was accustomed to work in that way and she couldn't work in any other place.
• Change of head teachers' perspective	2	• ...she realized my job was good and during one Christmas recital that I organized she came up to me and told “I like your job”. Up to now I work with her group and she only smiles at me and sometimes makes positive comments about the students or the class.
• Interferences	2	• ...the head teacher used to work with students and talk with parents which were interfering in my lessons.
• Schedule issues	2	• ...this teacher commented she disagreed with the number of hours of English class that her students had.
• Other teachers support	2	• On my first day I met the other English teacher, who was very kind with me. For the next week I met the rest of the teachers, they were welcomed me really nice, for me is hard have a conversation with people that I don't know, they did it easy to me.

Table 4.20 shows an increase in the number of themes identified in the third reflection. These teachers became better reflective practitioners through the practice. Their reflections were longer and more detailed. They covered all stages of the reflective model (see Appendix D). Themes from the third reflection show that the most important issue for this teacher is “the importance of communication”, these theme appeared in four of the reflections. Unfortunately, sometimes talking to other people does not change their

perspectives. Teacher reacted negatively to the ELT teachers request and they did not support them.

“Lack of head teachers’ support” is an important theme, three participants talked about this issue in their reflections. It demanded a major effort for them to show that their job was good. The third most important theme is “Change of head teachers’ perspective. Teachers expressed that some head teachers did not like them at the beginning but little by little ELT teachers gained respect and made head teachers change their perspectives towards their ELT practices. This kind of experiences can be very beneficial for other teacher in similar situations.

“Schedule issues” and “Other teachers’ support” are relevant subjects in the teacher reflections because some head teachers did not agree with the assigned time of two hours and a half for each group per week of ELT lessons. But some other teachers were comfortable with the time, so it created controversy among head teachers.

It is really interesting to learn about the teaching context of the participants and the most relevant things for them by the time they did the reflections. As mentioned before the procedure for teachers was to choose by themselves what to reflect on. They were guided by the teaching significant moments. Framing the reflections with the significant moments made easier the classification of the data and the interpretation of the results.

These most salient themes found in these guided reflections were the ones used to guide the discussion in the sharing group to see how well the reflective practice can be used not just for learning and growing professionally but also to provide others with advice based on real experiences.

4.4.1 Reactions towards a guided reflective journal

Initially, participants had bad feelings towards writing a reflection some of them were reluctant to do it but as seen in the first questionnaires replies, this perspective was influenced by the lack of training or guidance for developing a reflective practice. After participants were explained the importance of this practice and the impact that it could have in their professional development, as well as the series of reflections that they wrote during the workshop, their perspectives towards this practice changed. To know what, how, and why their perceptions changed, a focused group was created and guided by a short questionnaire.

4.4.1.1 Teachers' new values and beliefs (focus group)

Based on the first questionnaires results, it can be said that the teachers had an overall bad feeling towards this practice, and they presented themselves reluctant to do it. Going into a more organized reflective process with specific goals and external guidance must have changed the participants' perspectives. And it was very important to know what their new values and beliefs were and why they changed in such ways.

Consequently a focus group was implemented. Why to use a focus group? Because according to Richard and Casey (2000), focus groups are special type of groups implemented to gather information from members of a very specific target audience. In this case the audience are the ELT teacher that participated in this research. Richard and Casey (2000) also explain that a focus group has specific characteristics. The first one is that it should be composed of six to twelve participants which for this research, the same

teachers that participated in the workshop participated in the focus group. There were a total of 6 participants including me as moderator of the focus group.

The second characteristic is that participants should be similar in one or more ways. The teachers that participated shared a lot of similarities as explained in previous sections of the research. Firstly, they teach English at the same educational level. They worked with the *bitacoras* for a certain period of time, they all received the workshop to develop reflective teaching and journal writing skills, and finally they all wrote the same amount of reflections for this research.

The third characteristic is that participants of the workshop should be guided through a facilitated discussion. For this research the focus group was guided by the following questions.

Table 4.21 *Focus group guiding questions*

1. - How did you find the information about reflective teaching and workshop? Why?				
Not useful	A little useful	Somewhat useful	Quite useful	Very useful
<hr/>				
2. - After you experienced reflection in journal writing, do you think the process was? Why?				
a) too easy	b) just right	c) too difficult		
3. - What was most useful about implementing reflective teaching through journal writing?				
4. - What was least useful about implementing reflective teaching through journal writing?				
5. - What were the strengths of the workshop and reflective journal writing process? Why?				
6. - What were the weaknesses of the workshop and reflective journal writing process? Why?				
7. - What things do you consider that were useless or that can be omitted? Why?				
8. - What can you suggest to improve this practice?				
10. - How do you think reflective practice can help other people? Give an example				

The fourth characteristic has to do with a clear defined topic that guided the workshop. The main topic was how useful the workshop and the reflective practices were. This guided the focus group obtaining the results showed in Table 4.22 in concordance to

the questions that guided the workshop. The gathering of this information is the fifth characteristic of a focus group according to Richard and Casey (2000).

Mots of participants' answers were positive towards the implementation of the reflective teaching and journal writing. All of the participants agreed on how useful the workshop was for them. They said it was very useful because they realized the importance of the reflective practice and how it can be develop in an organized way.

To answer question number two of the focus group, participants mentioned that developing a reflective journal is not an easy practice but it becomes easier when there is guidance. Having someone who guides them during the process is what makes this practice easy. Therefore by the beginning of the research they though that this was going to be something complicated and very demanding.

What participants found more useful about reflective teaching through journal writing was the reflective cycle and the guiding questions adapted from Ghaye's (2011) initial strengths- based reflective framework, Burton, Quirke, Reichmann, and Peyton (2009) reflective writing typology, and complemented with Gibbs (1988) reflective model. The participant mentioned that each section is not easy to accomplish but by following the stages and answering the questions their reflections were very different from what they wrote in their *bitacoras*.

According to the teachers that participated in this research, everything was very useful for them. They pointed out that all these information was new for them. They did not know how to develop this practice before therefore that all materials and information used during the workshop was very relevant for them. One of the participants during the third session of the workshop mentioned that in her school there was a problem with some

students and that the principal of the school asked all teachers that work with this students to write a kind of report in which they had to describe the students’ behavior, learning process, grades, attitudes. The different activities or techniques that teachers use to work with these students, and a plan of action.

At first, Participant three did not know how to write it but she found reflective journal writing appropriate for the development of the written paper. She shared this experience during the focus group. Participants started identifying the strengths of the reflective journal practice since the first session of the workshop. Table 4.22 shows the workshop and reflective journal strengths and weaknesses identified by the teachers.

Table 4. 22 Strengths and weaknesses of workshop and journal writing.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Workshop	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The workshop was very well organized. •The topics reviewed during the workshop are very relevant for our working environment. •The workshop was very dynamic and made reflective practice look easy even though it is not. •The information was very clear and easy to manage. •The video presented during the workshop helps a lot to think about the different problems that we have in our school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •This workshop should be implemented since the beginning of the scholar year. •Every teacher should take this workshop. But there is not enough space for to do it. •Willingness to participate in the workshop can be a problem. Some teachers would just attend if they are required to do it.
Reflective journal writing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the strengths of this practices is that becomes easier after having the appropriate training. Every English teacher should participate in the workshop because it was very well organized and all the information reviewed is very important for our professional development. 	<p>It could be, probably the lack of time to do the reflections. It is very common that English teachers don’t have a classroom for themselves or an office in their school and probably finding a place to write the reflections could be one of the things that limits this practice.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reflective journal serves a record of what that happens in the school and the actions taken. It can be used to evaluate the progress that we as teachers are having and also the progress of the students. • Keeping a reflective journal is very useful to remember what exactly happened in any situation and the actions that teachers take. These reflections can help to write a report whenever it is needed. • It is easy to do by following the reflective cycle. 	<p>Commitment to carry out this practice because sometimes we as teachers do not take the necessary time to reflect on the things we do until somebody ask us to do it.</p> <p>To include this practice as part of our daily activities</p> <p>Willingness to develop the reflections and being organized are essential for this reflective activity.</p>
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The participants were able to identify more strengths in this workshop and reflective journal writing than weaknesses. As presented in the previous table, the workshop provided useful materials. It was very well organized and even more important, it provided guidance to the participants and made them change their perspectives from negative to positive towards reflective teaching and journal writing. The weaknesses of the workshop had to do with the implementation of the workshop in this ELT program rather than the process, material, and activities implemented during the session.

Similarly, participants found more strengths than weaknesses in the reflective journal writing process. They emphasized the importance of the guidance provided and the usefulness of this professional development technique. There were very little weaknesses regarding lack of time to develop the reflective practice and willingness to do it.

The focus group was designed in a way in which participants first evaluated how much they had learnt and reach through this series of reflective practices. Through the first section of the focus group, participants also reflected and provided feedback to themselves by realizing how much they improved, learnt or developed through the reflective journal writing. The focus group was mainly used to know the new participants' concerns, beliefs,

attitudes, opinions or interests towards the reflective journal writing practice which was implemented and carried out during and after the workshop.

4.5 Helping outsiders

By hearing the term *reflective teaching*, the idea of reflecting for myself and just helping myself was the first thing that came to my mind before carrying out this research. The same thing happened to the teachers that participated during the process to become reflective practitioners. Nevertheless, this reflective journal writing did not just help practitioners. The results of this practice can be used to help others to overcome difficult situations. By the end of the focus group, teachers reflective practitioners were able to describe a situation better and easier, express and share feelings, evaluate the situation, come up with conclusions, and design and action plan but more than that, they were able to help each other by comparing, contrasting and commenting each participant reflection. This was confirmed and discussed during the focus groups session as mentioned before, one of the strengths remarked by teachers is the fact that each of them had similar challenging or demanding situations in their teaching contexts. After implementing the reflective teaching practice they identified what, how, when and why certain things happened in their schools and it provided them with the experience and knowledge to give advice to other teachers.

4.6 Conclusion

As previously mentioned, the purpose of this chapter was to present the results of the analysis of the different data gathered in a manner that contributes to answer the

research questions that are the major interest of the research. The research and analysis was carried out in three main stages, the pre-reflective experience, the ne reflective experience, and the post reflective experience. Results were compared and analyzed to find what participants were missing in order to become better reflective practitioners and grow professionally. The significance of the results, the limitations of the research, and suggestions to expand it are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter V: Conclusions

5. Introduction

Many important and interesting outcomes were gotten from this research project and presented in the previous chapter but it is important to present the significance and essence of these results and that is exactly what I am doing in this chapter. I am presenting the purpose of the results obtained, the limitations of this research and giving some recommendations to continue working on other areas related to my research. Here I am also presenting my own reflection of my experience to accomplishing this thesis project.

5.1 Findings and their significance

For this English teaching community, journal writing was a technique implemented in its very basic steps. The English language teachers did not have the opportunity to expand it and master their reflective skills through journal writing. This research was born from the idea of learning and teaching how to find solutions to teaching matters within the teachers themselves. In other words, it was to implement a reflective teaching procedure which would provide teachers with the opportunity to identify and describe singularities in their teaching context, explain their emotions, evaluate the citations, determine conclusions, and come up with action plans. Initially, the research purpose was twofold. In the first place, it would instruct teachers on how to implement reflective writing by themselves, and secondly, the research would provide the basis to design a workshop or a course syllabus to teach reflective learning.

Findings of this research turned out to be even more significant because they can be used to help others. Not only English language teachers can benefit, but also teachers of any other subjects could implement reflective learning and journal writing.

5.2 Answers to the research questions

With regards to the first research question the purpose of it was to look for the most salient themes in participants' previous journals known as *bitacoras*. The analysis carried out revealed very interesting information. First of all I would like to point out that even when participants were not trained before to write in a journal, they followed some similar patterns and structures. In terms of format all of them created narratives which is a very useful and it is in fact the initial stage of the reflective process. Concerning Johnson and Golombek's (2002) characteristic of stories in teachers' narratives, these initial journals presented at a very basic level the journey of how they knew and what they knew from their teaching environments. The most relevant subjects presented in the *bitacoras* had to do with

- Importance of the communication between the principal and the English language teachers.
- Most relevant activities in the classroom:
 - Greeting each other
 - Establishing rules and following routine exercises
 - Identifying students previous English knowledge
 - Useful material
 - Helpful games and activities for the classroom

There were some other themes in the participants' *bitacoras* which were presented in chapter four. From them, these were the most frequently presented and shared by all participants. As it can be seen, participants placed remarkable importance on the communication with their principles. But even more, the attention was focused on their teaching practices and students' reactions to them. Almost all entries spoke about teaching activities, and strategies, students' knowledge useful material, and reviewing activities.

Even though participants were not limited to writing about specific topics or teaching domains, and from the extensive reflective options that they could have, the participants decided to talk about these issues which stated that the most relevant teaching domain for them is their classroom teaching practices.

5.3 Research aims

The most important aims of this research were to identify what teachers initially wrote in their journals known as *bitacoras*. This information was important to know because it represents the subject matter that initially caught teachers' attention in their teaching context. Accordingly, why and how they carried out this journal writing practice was important because it gave the basis to start the guided reflection journal writing. The next step was to provide teachers with the opportunity to actually practice the reflective journal writing but with specific goals and understanding of its purpose. Consequently knowing how teachers would respond to a guided reflection process and the most relevant focuses of their reflections was another important goal of this research. This information was very helpful to understand and compare their context looking for similarities and differences that could be used to help others.

5.3.1 Aims accomplished

This research was divided into three main stages. The first one had to do with knowing what, how, and why the teachers initially did with their previous journals (*bitacoras*). For that, I analyzed their *bitacoras*, classified the information and implemented a questionnaire. The second stage was to provide teachers with enough reflective teaching practice through journal writing. And for the third stage I implemented a focus group. Despite the fact that it was a long process and there was much information to analyze all aims were successfully accomplished. The analysis provided the initial most salient themes in the *bitacoras*; the guided reflections serve their purpose, and the final focus group showed the teachers reactions towards this practice as well as the most salient themes of interest for teachers.

5.4 The reflective account

As this research was mainly focused on the implementation of an action research which followed a reflective model, I followed the same stages to write my reflection.

Stage 1. Description of the research

As explained in previous chapters, this research was born from the initial journal practice in which teachers and evaluators of this English language programs were exposed to. This practice started a year ago and was interrupted when the current school year started. As an evaluator I got very interested in knowing and learning more about this practice because my role was to help other teachers to develop it. As I received many questions of why and how these journals should be written, and I did not know how to guide them, I decided to find out what was going on at that time.

The first thing I needed to know was how and what exactly the teachers were writing their *bitacoras*. So I selected a group of 5 teachers to participate in the research, I talked to them explaining the purpose and stages of the research. Teachers agreed to participate, and this is how the research started.

Stage 2: Feelings

Before starting the research I was afraid of working with some other people. Initially I thought that teachers would not want to participate because they would see it as extra work. These feeling changed when I talked to my thesis director who encouraged me to do it and find people who really wanted to grow professionally. Consequently I thought about the teachers who were really hard workers and talked to them about the project. What a surprise; they were really willing to do it and I felt really excited because I had found my participants. One of them even told me “yes I want to do it because reflective teaching is something beneficial for all of us and I don’t know how to do it”. I still remember these words and the push they gave me to continue researching.

I think the participants felt my support and interest in developing a professional development technique among them and they were happy to be taken into consideration for this research. Many stages of the research were very frustrating but very rewarding too. There was frustration only because of the time in which the project needed to be completed. As the most important part of the project was to gather the teachers’ reflections, I needed participants to be working and if I had not accomplished it before vacations I would not have finished it on time.

Initially, I was thinking about implementing a workshop but after the research was done. During the different stages of the research the necessity to train participants was

noticed in order to have a real change in them. In other words I had to provide them with enough theory and practice to let them internalize new knowledge about professional development, reflective teaching and journal writing. Until then I was excited but not sure about having enough knowledge and being able to share it with others. So I talked to the coordinator of the English teaching program about the workshop to get permission to carry it out. The coordinator got so interested that he participated in the workshop. After talking to him I got nervous and I did not know how to feel. I was happy because I had support and people were interested about coming to my workshop but I was also very worried about not being well prepared.

During the workshop there were some complications such as technical problems with the computer and projector. But the situation was under control and I was very well prepared to carry out the workshop without these tools so I had a plan B which helped calm me. Then the participants and the coordinator were very collaborative and enthusiastic during the workshop

Stage 3: Evaluation

I think there were more positive things than negative ones when carrying out this research. I personally found this research very helpful for many reasons. One of them is that through this research I grew professionally because I learnt a lot about the different concepts managed in the research. I am able now to write a well-designed reflective journal and learn from myself. Somehow I see this practice as a way of teaching myself different ways to overcome teaching issues. What is good about this research is the fact that it can be applied to any teacher of any subject. Reflective teaching is a limitless technique that

can be applied in any context. It can also be implemented by the practitioners themselves or in groups as we did in the workshop.

Having implemented a relevant teaching workshop was a great challenge for me and was something unselected that emerged from the research itself. The workshop helped me understand better the concepts, interrelate professional development, reflective teaching and journal writing. I was able to construct knowledge and share it with my colleagues.

Negative aspects of this research are very few. There were some problems and delays gathering the questionnaire data, contacting all participants and setting the appropriate date in which participants did not have any problem with their school's activities. In order to avoid these kinds of problem I personally talked to the authorities of this English language teaching program and asked for permission to gather all participants and provide them with enough training to develop the reflective journal writing correctly.

Stage 4: Conclusions

I believe that the more we practice the more we master skills so in order to make this research more productive I think it would be a good idea to start with the workshop before lessons at school start and then participants would be able to implement this reflective practice since the beginning. Having more time would allow practitioner to taste their action plans and reflect about them.

Stage 5: Action

There was a time in which the research needed action to develop reflective strategies among participants. As mentioned before implementing the workshop was part of a consequent plan created from the research. The results from the analysis of the

bitacoras and the initial questionnaire pointed out a necessity to implement a reflective workshop. This was an action that allowed me to take the research even further. After completing this research I realized that it has a huge impact on teachers' professional development and it is important to foster this practice. This is one of my future goals to implement complete courses expanding the use of reflective teaching through journal writing. And these practices can be implemented with undergraduate students, novice teachers, and experienced teachers.

5.5 Limitations of the research

Carrying out this research was not an easy mission. As there were many kinds of data gathered, the analysis process took longer than it was estimated at the beginning. For instance professional development, reflective practice, and journal writing are huge theoretical areas. Mastering each one of them is a real challenge and then teaching someone else what, how, and why these theories should be learnt and implemented was not an easy task.

One of the initial limitations of this research was to gather all the *bitacoras* of participants. Participants stopped writing their journals and forgot about their notebooks. When they were asked to participate they were very interested but one of their replies was that they needed some time to find their *bitacoras*. There were even two participants who had to be left out because they did not have their *bitacoras* anymore. It was not at all bad, in fact it is a significant situation which demonstrates the importance they gave to their initial *bitacoras*.

During the different stages of the research there were some other obstacles to overcome. For instance, by the time participants were asked to answer the initial questionnaire, they were too busy carrying out their mandatory duties at their school that they forgot about it. And the schedule for handing in the questionnaire had to be changed. This situation caused a delay in the estimated time for gathering all data.

5.6 Suggestions for further research

To expand or complement this project, I suggest implementing a supervision model and looking at the way feedback enhances professional lives then implementing the reflective journal writing simultaneously in order to find out how supervision can be improved.

Also another area that can be expanded is looking at how the action plans of the participants from this research are actually implemented, identifying their advantages and disadvantages through the continuous implementation of the reflective journal writing.

Teacher journal writing can be expanded and implemented in different teaching context focusing in a wide variety of domains. As suggestion for further research, it could be the implementation of the reflective model followed in this research but in private teaching institutions. The information obtained can be compared with the information obtained from the public context.

Another good idea to implement this reflective model came out during the implemented workshop in this research. One of the participants stated that she needed to write a report of an incident from her school and she did not know how to do it or where to start writing. By the end of the workshop she explained how useful the information

provided was it for her because she was actually using it to write down her report. Then reflective journal can also be used as records and evidences of the daily teacher-student lives. Gathering this information can be very useful to support your arguments and provide enough evidence of the actions and decisions teachers take. Or even the information can be used to defend teachers themselves in complicated situations.

Looking at how under graduate students react to reflective teaching practices is also an interesting area. Exploring how their learning process is affected with and without this practice. Looking at it individually or collaboratively and its implications can be a great tool to be provided since early stages to become a teacher.

5.7 Final thoughts

This research focused on a specific area of professional development which is reflection teaching through journal writing. The implementation of this practice could not have been done without understanding the context in which this activity was going to be implemented. Therefore it is important to start with previous work to learn more about the participants' background knowledge in order to correctly establish goals and steps. One specific characteristic of the research is that it can be expanded as suggested in the further research section of this chapter but also it can be complemented or it can be used to complement other researches related to professional development.

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Appendix A

Teacher's sample of the initial written reports.

September 9th, 2013.

I applied the diagnostic test in 4th grades and 5th grades A and B. I haven't worked with these kids from 4th grades so, they are new for me.

September 10th, 2013

I applied the diagnostic test on 5th grade C and Sixth grades. Also, I started to work on classroom rules on fifth grades A and B.

September 11th, 2013

I worked on the classroom rules because it is very important to establish the rules since the beginning to avoid misunderstandings. I realized that my groups are very large.

Appendix B

Reflective writing Background Questionnaire

1

Reflective writing background

This questionnaire was designed to find out a few things about yourself and your previous experience with reflective writing. Please answer the questions truthfully. There are no right or wrong answers.

(Please fill in the relevant box or write your answers)

Section A.																	
Participant's full name: _____																	
1.- Are you... 25-30 <input type="checkbox"/> years old 30-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 40-50 <input type="checkbox"/>	2.- Sex Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>																
4.- Where do you live? Puebla _____ Other _____	5.- How long have you lived there?																
6.- Level of education High school <input type="checkbox"/> University <input type="checkbox"/> Masters <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/>	7.- If you attended to university, where did you attend? _____ 8.- What was your major? _____																
9.- Where did you learn English? <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px; border-collapse: collapse; width: 150px;"> <tr><td>High school</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Trade school</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Correspondence</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Night school</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Training seminars</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Business school</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>University</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Any other</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> </table>	High school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Night school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Training seminars	<input type="checkbox"/>	Business school	<input type="checkbox"/>	University	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other	<input type="checkbox"/>	10. - Please explain: what was your purpose of learning English?
High school	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Trade school	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Night school	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Training seminars	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Business school	<input type="checkbox"/>																
University	<input type="checkbox"/>																
Any other	<input type="checkbox"/>																
11.- For how long have you been studying and learning English?	12.- Since when did you started working as an English language teacher?																
13.- How many groups do you provide English lessons to? 14.- What grades are they?	15. - What is the average number of students you have in each group? <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px; border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px;"> <tr><td>10-20</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>20-30</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>30-40</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>40-50</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> </table>	10-20	<input type="checkbox"/>	20-30	<input type="checkbox"/>	30-40	<input type="checkbox"/>	40-50	<input type="checkbox"/>								
10-20	<input type="checkbox"/>																
20-30	<input type="checkbox"/>																
30-40	<input type="checkbox"/>																
40-50	<input type="checkbox"/>																
16.- What kind of group do you have	17.- How much time do you spend with each group?																

Adapted from Dornye & Taguchi's questionnaires in Second Language Research: construction, administration and processing. (2010)

Male students ___ Female students ___
Mixed groups

Section B.

18. - Have you ever received any reflection teaching course? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, please provide details

19. - Have you ever been trained to write a *bitácora*? Yes ___ No ___

20. - If yes please explain where, how and when you received this training.

21. - Did you receive specific instructions of how to write the *bitácora*?
Yes ___ No ___

22. - Do you know what is the purpose of writing a *bitácora*?
Yes ___ No ___
If yes please write it down

23. - Do you know what are the parts of a reflection?
Yes ___ No ___

24. - If your answer was yes, explain the main part of a reflection.

Section C.

25. - How did you feel when authorities asked you for a written *bitácora*?

26. - How often did you write in your *bitácora*?

27. - Do you think the *bitácora* helped you improve your teaching practices?
Yes ___ No ___

28. - If your answer was yes please explain how or give example.

29.- Do you think the *bitácora* became just a requirement rather than a learning tool?

Yes No

Appendix C

Salient Themes in Teacher's Reflective journal 1, P1.

Participant 1 Themes	Theme samples
Team work activities	I provided to my students material and assigned everyone a team they should work with.
Students' bad attitude	I realized one of my best students was playing and distracting his team during the activity But his attitude was aggressive, it was very odd because he's a hard- working student.
Head teacher help	The head teacher heard those students' comments and told Omar that she was going to call his parents
Students' Family problem	He told me he had a family problem and that he didn't know who he wanted to live with because his parents were separated.
Teacher support to children	I decided to take him out of the classroom and ask him what was happening I talked to him about his situation and tried to support him. After a while, we came back to the classroom. Omar tried to work in a better way.

Salient Themes in Teacher's Reflective journal 1, P2.

Participant 2 Themes	Theme samples
Teaching participants	There were the head teacher, students and me.
Head teacher help	When I said the name of one of the students, the rest of them said that he and other ones were outside of the classroom. For that reason, the head teacher went to look for them around the school.
Teacher support to children	When they came back to the classroom I talked with them in order to know what had happened.
Students' bad attitude	They said that they decided to be outside the classroom because they wanted to continue playing and they did not care about the English class.
Not support from parents	The parents didn't appear. Until now, they have not gone to the school to talk with the head teacher or me.

Salient Themes in Teacher's Reflective journal 1, P3.

Participant 3 Themes	Theme samples
Teaching participants	We were there the head teacher, the whole group and me.
Students' bad attitude	I was giving my class when suddenly a student stood up, opened the door and ran out the classroom.
Head teacher help	The head teacher just observed the situation but he didn't make comments or something.
Teacher support to children	I found him and I asked him in a friendly way to come back to the class. At the end of the class I talked to him regarding to the situation.
First time working with the group	It was the first time I was working with the group so I didn't have enough information about them.

Salient Themes in Teacher's Reflective journal 1, P4.

Participant 4 Themes	Theme samples
Teaching participants	The head teacher supported me My student were working with some activities I applied
Students' bad attitude	A group of four students were doing something not related to the class, they were playing with their tablets. They showed a bad attitude.
Head teacher help	The head teacher supported me, telling them they would not have a break the rest of this month because they were playing and not paying attention in my class.
Not support from parents	One of these students has serious problems in his familiar environment
Bad influence from friends	He incites the other three to have a bad attitude.

Salient Themes in Teacher's Reflective journal 1, P5.

Participant 5 Themes	Theme samples
Students' excitement	after the break naturally the students are excited they want to play more
Students' bad attitude	Usually there is a typical trouble boy, Julio was shouting, playing. Laughing and distracting his classmates. He was still laughing and anxious, I whispered him, calm down! He continued laughing and the rest of the group laughed too.
Not support from parents	I realized that I have to find out the familiar situation of this student.
Teacher support to children	Talking to him having a closer relationship with him. I'll ask him if he has suffered bullying.

Salient Themes in Teacher's Reflective journal 2, P1.

Participant 1 Themes	Theme samples
Principle's support	When I arrived to school 4 years ago, I introduced myself with the principal and I thought he was going to show me the school but he didn't, he just told me 'welcome to our school, introduce yourself with the teachers and set together the schedule
A classroom for English lessons	I was interested in knowing whether I had a classroom or place where to teach my lessons or not,
Sharing classroom	the school was very small and they hadn't a space for English lessons, so I attended my classes in the classrooms
A place to put the teaching material	I realized I needed a place where to leave them because in the classrooms I could hardly put my bag on the table.
Living away became an issue	I decided to take it to my home and when I had to work with that material I carried it into the school, but after a few days I noticed it wasn't a good idea because I live really far away from school and it was difficult for me to do it every day.
Not being respected by other workers of the school	The person who is in charge of the cleaning told me I could leave my cardboards, books, flashcards, etc. on one table which was supposed to be in the media room and I of course did it. It worked just for a couple of months, later the cleaning lady put a bottle of coffee and sugar, tea bags, spoons and a coffee machine on the same table.

Appendix D

Teacher reflective journal sample

. DATE: May 2015

TEACHER'S DOMAIN: Significant situation with teachers that interact with me in the school

Stage 1. Description

This situation happened last September 2014 in the first Professional Development Day (Consejo Técnico Escolar) when the principal asked each teacher share their experiences and progress with the students during that month. A teacher of 5th grade commented about the problems in her group; but the trouble situation for me came up when this teacher commented she disagreed with the number of hours her students had the English class; she said the English classes were good for her students, but she needed more time to cover the syllabus of other subjects such as Math or Spanish, where her students had learning problems.

I commented I had to cover this number of hours and my schedule was done according to the computer and sport classes; in that moment other teachers suggested they wanted more English classes for their students if the 5th grade teacher didn't want all my classes for her group. As a result, after the comments done by teachers the principal said the 5th grade teacher and I should talk to reach an agreement about the English hours, and he said it would be a good idea, cover other groups as it had been suggested.

Stage 2. Feelings

This situation happened at the begging of this course so I was relax, but when the situation arose I felt a little bit confused because I didn't imagine the teacher disagreed with the English hours. I have a good relationship with most of teachers in my school; I think that is why they were disconcerted by the teacher's comment.

After this situation I was worried because I thought I would have to change the schedule with that group and I will probably have less time to work with them.

Now I think this situation helped me to know in my school most of teachers are satisfied with my work with the students, I think that because they reacted positively to the comments.

Stage 3. Evaluation

The positive point in this situation was the way other teachers talked about my job and how they proposed a possible solution if the 5h grade teacher disagreed with the number of hours for her group; but the negative was the polemic created between teachers for the hours that children should have the English classes, I think this polemic bothered a bit the teacher.

Before this situation, the principal proposed once again the hours of my classes for other groups and I said it would be a good solution although that group would not advance so much as the other one.

Stage 4. Conclusions

I consider this situation would have been more positive if the teacher and I had spoken before the meeting (Professional Development Day) because we would have reached an agreement with the schedules and I would have reorganized my days with other groups; I think in this way, we would have avoided an inconvenient moment for both.

If I faced the same situation as I mentioned, I would try to reach an agreement with teachers before I set the schedules and days of classes. I think I need to improve this part, take into account the organization with teachers and their groups before I plan my schedules or even with activities.

Stage 5. Action

In this case I was punctual to start and finish the classes with that 5th grade group, in order the teacher uses better her time and she could cover all her program.

In future situations, I will take into account the teachers' time to plan better my schedules and days of classes.

Appendix E
Workshop key concepts

GUIDED REFLECTION

Please read carefully the information below. This information is to provide you with the definition and purpose of *reflective teaching and journal writing* which is what you are going to be doing after you read this information.

Reflective teaching

Reflective teaching is a process in which teachers think over their own teaching practices. Richards (2007) explains that reflective teaching is an approach to promote teachers professional development. This approach involves a process which starts with the instructors (teachers) themselves and their teaching practices. It looks for a better understanding of the teachers' teaching practices by exploring what teachers do and why they do it. In other words, teachers analyze how something was taught and how their teaching practice could be improved, modified or changed in order to obtain better results. Richards (2007) also points out that reflective teaching involves self-examination and reflection which leads to decision making, planning and action.

In reflective teaching there are different ways to capture the thoughts of the different events or teaching experiences that teachers experiences in their specific context. Richards refers to these ways as procedures which are teaching journals, lessons reports, surveys and questionnaires, audio and video recordings, observation, and action research.

For this research I am only focusing in reflective teaching through journal writing based on Jack Richards, a specialist in second language learning and teaching. It is important for you to know what it is, and its purposes.

A journal is a teacher's or a student teacher's written response to teaching events.

Keeping a journal serves two purposes:

1. Events and ideas are recorded for the purpose of later reflection.
2. The process of writing itself helps trigger insights about teaching.

Writing in this sense serves as a discovery process. (2007, p.7)

In *journal writing* there are many different topics that can be explored for example, teachers can write about personal reactions to things that happen in their classrooms or in their schools. Discussions about different problems or issues that occur during their lessons or school events. Teachers can also write about ideas to improve their teaching context and future plans. Even though, teachers can write about everything that happens in the classroom, school or teaching context, it is important to focus and follow specific steps in order to accomplish a successful reflection.

In the next page, you will start with the first reflection, you will find a guided reflection format with specific instructions. Please follow the instructions and complete the written reflection.

Richards J. C. & Lockhart C. (2007). *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. New York; Cambridge University Press.