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REFLECTIVE practices of educators in a masters' program in Egypt: a case study

Mayada Samy Elsayed

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The American University in Cairo

Graduate School of Education

REFLECTIVE PRACTICES OF EDUCATORS IN A MASTERS' PROGRAM IN EGYPT: A CASE STUDY

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of International & Comparative Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in Comparative & International Education

By Mayada Samy Emam

Under the supervision of Dr. Mustafa Toprak

May 2019

Acknowledgment

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Abstract

        This paper aims at exploring reflective practices in a Masters' Program in a private university in Egypt through graduate students' perspectives of reflective practices. The research examines the graduates' perception of reflective practices as a tool for enhancement of their learning. Moreover, the study explores how the enrolled graduate students approach reflective practices in terms of comprehension, language, and expression. A mixed methodology is followed where a ten-minute Likert type survey is administered to graduate students in a private Education Masters' Program in Egypt in the quantitative phase. In the qualitative phase, the participants were voluntarily interviewed to share their personal experiences regarding learning through a reflective process. The findings show the usage of the reflective practices within the program as a tool of learning for the students and a tool for assessing and updating the course material. Moreover, the results reveal that reflective practice is a subjective form of learning; therefore, there should be a language (agreed code of understanding) between the professors and the students that they agree on so that they can assess how far they are grasping the content of the course. Additionally, the findings highlight the significance of the instructor's guidance in a reflective practice whether through rubrics or through the assignments' description and instructions. The paper presents some practical implications and recommendations for future research.

Keywords: reflective practice, educators, graduate school, mixed-method study

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

"In practice, reflective practice is often seen as the bedrock of professional identity" (Finlay, 2008, p. 2). This quotation shows that practitioners can enhance their professional identity through reflective practices. The researcher develops interest in this topic based on two levels: the learning level as a graduate student who joined a masters' program in liberal arts in a graduate school in a private university in Egypt, and the professional level as a teacher for Academic English Skills for the past seven years.

First, on the graduate level, writing reflections is experienced in various ways; however, all of them were used as assessment tools (graded assignments). Some of these reflections are considered as a part of the classroom participation grade to be submitted weekly reflecting on each class outcomes separately; other reflective assignments are in the midterm paper format that usually covers 25% from the coursework grade where master's students are asked to reflect on at least six articles out of the course readings; or the professors in other courses would ask the students to submit one final summative reflection for 10% of the coursework grade. Every time a reflection is written regardless of its type, the researcher realizes how her perception as a graduate student of the assignment differs when she first starts it and when she ends it. Based on the experience of the researcher as a student in the Egyptian educational system, she notices that she used to start reluctantly writing reflections down for the sake of getting grades. Then, the whole approach towards the assignment changes when she starts putting effort into her mental process of reflection: from a state of being reluctant and only writing it for getting a good grade to a state of a flow of thoughtfulness and torrent of ideas that helps her reach logical connection of the course's main concepts and outcomes. Moreover, it is assumed that these reflections—known as reflective practice in the literature (reference/s)—help in shaping a better understanding of the learning process development as educators and as lifelong learners in general.

Second, on the professional level, all the courses that the researcher teach as an instructor for English for Academic skills for university students merely aim at enhancing

the students' academic skills to be able to have a comprehensible academic life. However, none of the courses which are taught has for the past seven years involved reflective practice; neither formally as an assessment tool, nor informally as an evaluation tool for the course. Lacking this reflective practice involvement, along with the students' questions regarding why they are learning academic skills in English and what the final purpose of studying academic English is, has drawn the attention to how important it is for the students to reflect upon their learning no matter what the type of the reflection is and how it is conducted.

1.2 Reflection in Psychology

During the researcher's secondary school education, an Introduction to Psychology has been studied. Within this course the term 'Introspection' was introduced for the first time. After joining a master's' program in liberal arts in a private university in Egypt, a new term has been introduced: 'Reflection' through submitting reflective journals for each class. Both terms: 'Introspection' and 'Reflection' were confusing, so there appeared the need to explore whether the terms are different or whether they share the same aim and definition.

In fact, 'Introspection' and 'Reflection' are two different terms in psychology. According to Oden (2016), when human beings experience the most transformative moments in their lives they look backwards, which is 'Reflection', and they look inward, which is 'Introspection'. On the one hand, this agrees with how Boring (1953) defines 'Introspection', when he says that it is the state of looking into our minds and reporting what we discover there. On the other hand, Schultz and Schultz (2012) state that John Locke was one of the pioneers of modern psychology who agreed with Aristotle that the human mind acquires knowledge through experience. They state that Locke asserted how experience comes from sensation and reflection. Moreover, they explain how ideas that derive from sensation are simply sense impressions and these sense impressions operate on the mind and the mind operates on them backwards, reflecting on them to form ideas. Schultz and Schultz (2012) elaborate saying that since sensations appear first, the mental and cognitive function of reflection as a source of ideas depend on sensory experience, because the ideas produced by the mind's reflection are based on the impressions already

experienced through the senses. They add that while reflecting, the human mind recalls past sensory impressions and combines them to form abstractions and other deep ideas. From this point it is realized that introspection is a deep and personal form of reflection. Hence, when a person reflects, s/he examines the facts found in the surrounding environment to deduce and understand why some things are shaped in a certain way.

Unfortunately, this aspect of reflection has long been neglected by educators due to their busy schedules and overwhelming tasks. Van Manen (1977) emphasizes that teachers who are overburdened and occupied with plenty of tasks and responsibilities, along with their lack of understanding of their own areas of strength and the areas that need improvement, may experience low levels of teachers' engagement in reflective skills. This could be applied on the Egyptian context, as it is known within the community of education in Egypt that the teacher is always busy with a lot of tasks aside from teaching such as: correction, proctoring, preparation, mentoring and grading. Therefore, there is no much time for the teachers to self-reflect on their work as educators, or to introduce this concept to the students to track their performance and learning. This is confirmed by Freire (1993) who states that busy practitioners do not have time for reflecting. Furthermore, Jaeger (2013) posits that despite the fact that literature on reflective teaching practice assert the importance and the pros of reflective practices and skills, limited papers show how educators reflect inside and outside the classroom or how to create reflective professionals. This may be because the significance of reflection is only known theoretically in the Egyptian context, but is still too far from practical application.

In regards to the conflicting conception of the meaning of introspection and reflection in psychology, it has been noticed that introspection is a more personal and philosophical self-analysis. This realization is the drive to study the effect of the reflective practice within an educational setting on the students' learning, performance and development.

In his book, "How We Think", Dewey (1997) relates reflective thought to learning and education. He states that when we deliberately seek the ground or basis for a certain belief and its adequacy to support, the belief is examined. This process is called reflective thought. He describes this process of reflective thought as educative in value forming, the

latter concept being the principal subject of this volume. Moreover, he defines 'reflective thought' as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought" (p. 6). Dewey (1997) affirms that reflection is a belief or a disbelief of something grounded by evidence.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Reflective practice is a concept of experiential learning where people learn from experience. Thus, from a personal view, it is important for educators to study it as a construct, in addition to the students' perception of reflective practice as a tool to enhance their learning. In addition, it is important to examine how it is approached by the students.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Based on the above mentioned personal and professional experiences regarding reflective practices, the purpose of this study is shaped. This study aims to examine general perceptions towards reflective practices and to explore educators' experiences on these reflective practices. This can be achieved through exploring: a) how a masters' program in liberal arts in a private university in Egypt implemented reflective practice; b) what the types of assignments that involve reflective practice might be; c) how the graduate students within the program are approaching these types of assignments; whether they were familiar with this type of assignments before joining the program; and how they approach it after joining the program.

1.5 Organization of the Study

This thesis is divided into five chapters:

Chapter One: is an introduction that includes the personal and professional background and context that drives the researcher to choose this topic in particular. Additionally, it involves what reflection is in psychology. Finally, the significance and the purpose of the research are stated.

Chapter Two: is a review of literature of the previous studies related to the research topic. This chapter also presents the: a) research questions, b) operational definitions, and c) selected aspects from previous theoretical frameworks found in the literature.

Chapter Three: is a representation of the research methodology used divided into two phases which are the quantitative phase and the qualitative phase, each phase includes a description of the participants, the instruments used and the data collection along with the data analysis.

Chapter Four: is the presentation of the analyzed study findings.

Chapter Five: includes the verbal analysis and discussion of the findings. In addition to the study's conclusions, limitations, practical implications and further recommendation for the future research are presented.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Reflective practice has various definitions within the literature. The literature also presents models for reflection that are designed by the theorists of reflection. Furthermore, the literature shows how the authors view reflective practice and relate the theory to practice for practitioners within any field. Among the major works that tackle the topic of reflective practice are: *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner* by Christopher Johns (2013), Reflective *Practice in Early Years* edited by Michael Reed and Natalie Canning (2010), and *Critically Reflective Practice* by Stephen Brookfield (1998).

Schon (1983) offers a new approach to educating professionals in all areas showing how professional schools can use this approach to prepare students to handle the complex and unpredictable problems of actual practice with confidence, skill and care. This approach includes two concepts: 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action'. Schon (1983) claims that his concepts of 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' respond to problematic situations, problem framing, problem solving and the priority of practical knowledge over abstract theory. Basically, Schon (1983) defines 'reflection-on-action' as a type of reflective practice that involves reflecting on an experience that a person has already had, or an action that a person has already taken, and considering what could have been done differently, as well as looking at the positive aspects of that interaction.

Schon (1987) explicitly explains the concept of 'Reflection-in-action' by stating that 'Reflection-in-action' has a critical function where a practitioner questions his/her structure of assumptions in knowing-in-action. Schon (1987) says that practitioners critically consider the thinking that got them into a certain fix or a certain opportunity, and during the process they could restructure strategies of action, understand phenomena, or come up with ways of framing problems.

In summary, the interest in the topic is formed on educational and professional levels, which have driven to the point of exploring 'reflective practice' in an educational setting, specifically in a Masters' Program for Egyptian graduate students offered by a private university in Egypt.

John Locke's definition of the act of reflection in psychology and John Dewey's view of reflective practice in an educational context are presented. From research it is

realized that Donald Schon is a philosopher who relates his concept of 'reflective practice for practitioners' back to Dewey's theory of reflection as an educative value.

This thesis' review of literature focuses mainly on four aspects, which are: a) definition of reflective practice, b) models for reflective practice, c) reflective practice for practitioners, and d) reflective practices and its relationship with other variables in education. First, from a personal view, it is very important to review different definitions for reflective practice from the literature to give the reader a concrete understanding of what the term 'reflective practice' means, so it will be easier for them to understand this concept clearly when it is referred to throughout this study. Second, the rationale behind choosing to talk about reflective practice models is to give a visual image about the cycle of the reflective process to the reader in different ways; thus, the reader can reach a vision of how the process unfolds as depicted by the theorists in the literature. Third, it is chosen to highlight the aspect of reflective practice usage for practitioners to review for the audience how reflection is important, to link theory to practice. Lastly, it is necessary for the reader to be presented to how reflective practices are related to other variables in education; to be able to detect the possible impact of such practices on the learning process.

2.1 Definition of Reflective Practice

Reflective Practice is a familiar term within the literature which is defined differently by the authors. In his book *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner,* Johns (2013) defined 'reflection' by saying that it is learning through everyday experiences towards the realization of one's own version of desirable practice as a lived reality. He adds that it is a critically reflexive process of self-inquiry and transformation of being and becoming the desired practitioner. Therefore, Johns (2013) claims that reflection is always purposeful. Moreover, Johns says that reflection is a special quality of being and it is necessary to learn its right posture to tap into its mystery to gain most benefit from its learning potential.

In a study that discussed reflective practice in accounting education, Bisman (2011) defines reflective practice as 'learning journals'. He says that the journal is a personal disquisition narrative in which students can record and relay their thoughts, feelings, attitudes, comments and reflections on the contents of a certain course and their learning journey in that course. Similarly, Cathro and O'Kane (2017) define reflective practice as

reflective learning journals or 'RLJs'. In their study they present ways in which business educators can successfully interact with 'Reflective Learning Journals' (RLJs). In this empirical study the students were asked to submit an ungraded business plan in addition to a graded one-page reflection on their experience. The authors mention that students were provided with readings and access to archived journals to support the development of their RLJ along with a group in-class discussion to support their RLJs.

Brookfield (1998) defines reflective practice as a process where the practitioners are involved in discovery and research, in addition to the assumptions that frame how they work. Lai and Calandra (2009) in their description of the instruments that they used in their empirical study list four levels of reflection: routine, technical, dialogic and transformative. Among their assumptions was that question prompts and displaying the writing process significantly enhance the scaffolding of teachers' reflective journal writing.

After exploring many formal and informal definitions for reflective journaling, Hubbs and Brand (2010) define reflective practice as narratively written reflective journals that facilitate ongoing disclosure of the writer's cognitive and emotional insights. Moreover, they depict it as a "vehicle for chronicling the writer's internal processes about experiences, values and beliefs" (p. 59). They add that journal writing that is used throughout training supports the connections between thinking and feeling.

2.2 Models of Reflective practice

This section reviews various models of reflective practice. These models are shaped by theorists to depict how the reflective process takes place. The rationale behind choosing these models is to provide a deeper understanding of how the reflective process develops from reflective thought to reflective practice.

2.2.1 Borton model.

Borton (1970) depicts a simple learning cycle composed mainly of three questions that the practitioner asks which are: *What? , So what,* and *Now what?* Through those three questions, a situation is described which leads into the scrutiny of the situation and the construction of knowledge that has been learnt through experience. Consequently, Borton (1970) adds that practitioners reflect on ways in which they can personally improve and the consequences of their response to the experience.

2.2.2 Kolb and Fry model.

Kolb and Fry (1975) highlight in their model the experiential learning concept and how centered it is on the transformation of information into knowledge. They exemplify this by saying that their model takes place after a situation has occurred, and entails a practitioner reflecting on the experience, gaining a general understanding of the concepts encountered during experience, and then testing these general understandings in a new situation. In this way, the knowledge that is formed from a situation is continuously applied and reapplied, building on a practitioner's prior experiences and knowledge.

2.2.3 Argyris and Schon model.

Argyris and Schon (1978) introduce the idea of 'single-loop learning' and 'double-loop learning'. They build their theory around the recognition and correction of a perceived error. They say that 'single-loop learning' is when a practitioner or an organization continues to rely on the same strategies, techniques or policies when a situation comes to light again, even after an error has occurred and a correction is made. However, Argyris and Schon (1978) clarify that the 'double-loop learning' involves modifying objectives, strategies or policies so that when a similar situation arises a new framing system is employed.

2.2.4 Gibs model.

Gibbs (1988) presents the stages of a full structured reflective model which includes: a) a description, where the practitioner only describes what happened within his/her initial experience; b) feelings, where the practitioner depicts his/her reactions and feelings without yet analyzing them; c) evaluation, as the practitioner makes value judgments about whether their experience, good or bad; d) analysis, where the practitioner

could bring ideas from outside the experience to help him/her and view what was really happening through this particular experience and compare it to previous personal experience and other people's experiences; e) conclusion, where a person can draw general and specific conclusions upon this experience; f) personal action plans, as the practitioner will think what s/he will do differently next time.

2.2.5 Brookfield model.

Brookfield (1998) proposes that critically reflective practitioners research their assumptions continuously by seeing practice through four lenses:

2.2.5.1 Lens one: the autobiography as a learner.

Brookfield (1998) suggests that a practitioner's autobiography is a necessary source of insight into practice. As practitioners talk to each other about critical events in their practice, they start to realize that individual crises are usually collectively experienced dilemmas. Furthermore, analyzing autobiographies allows practitioners to draw insight and meanings for practice on deep visceral emotional levels.

2.2.5.2 Lens two: the learner's eye.

Brookfield (1998) mentions that the practitioners see themselves through the learners' eyes. Moreover, the practitioners discover that learners are interpreting the practitioners' actions in the way that they mean them. However, the practitioners are often surprised by the diversity of meanings people read into their words and actions; therefore, practitioners should make the learners feel safe. Moreover, when practitioners see their practice through learners' eyes, this helps them teach more responsively.

2.2.5.3 Lens three: the practitioners, colleagues' experience.

Brookfield (1998) states that the practitioners' colleagues serve as critical mirrors that reflect back the images of the practitioners' actions. He adds that talking with colleagues about problems and gaining their perspective increases the chance of finding some information that can help in the practitioners' situation.

2.2.5.4 Lens four: theoretical literature.

Brookfield (1998) claims that theory helps practitioners name their practice by illuminating the general elements of what they think are idiosyncratic experiences.

2.2.6 Johns model

Christopher Johns, who is a professor of nursing, designed a structured model of reflection that provides any practitioner with a guide to gain greater understanding of his/her practice. Johns (2011) states that his model is designed to be carried through the act of sharing between a colleague and his/her mentor. He emphasizes that this enables the experience to become learnt knowledge at a faster rate than reflection alone. Moreover, Johns (2011) highlights the importance of experienced knowledge and the practitioner's ability to access, understand and put into practice information that has been acquired through empirical means. He asserts that reflection occurs through "looking in" on one's thoughts and emotions and "looking out" at the situation experienced.

All the previously mentioned models emphasize the importance of reflecting on previous experience for practitioners. This act of regular reflection of practitioners leads to personal improvement through gaining a general understanding of certain concepts within the experience. Practitioners also reach mature level of learning when they tend to change and modify objectives, strategies or policies in new situations. This mature level of learning happens upon the practitioners' reflection.

The models mentioned in Table 1 contain the basic concepts used in the theoretical framework, as discussed later in this chapter.

Table 1

Models of reflective practice

Name of Model	Year	Concepts
Borton	1970	Practitioners in their learning cycle, ask three main questions, which are: 1. What? 2. So What? 3. Now What? So that the practitioners reflect on ways in which they can personally improve and the consequences of their response to the experience
Kolb and Fry	1975	When a situation occurs and entails a practitioner reflecting on the experience, gaining a general understanding of the concepts encountered during experience, and then testing these general understandings in a new situation. In this way, the knowledge that is formed from a situation is continuously applied and reapplied, building on a practitioner's prior experiences and knowledge.
Argyris and Schon	1978	'Single-loop learning' is when a practitioner or an organization continues to rely on the same strategies, techniques or policies when a situation comes to light again, even after an error has occurred and a correction is made. 'Double-loop learning' involves modifying objectives, strategies or policies so that when a similar situation arises a new framing system is employed.
Gibbs	1988	Stages of a full structured reflective model: 1. Practitioner describes what happened within his/her initial experience. 2. Practitioner depicts his/her reactions and feelings without yet analyzing them. 3. Practitioner makes value judgments about their experience, good or bad. Practitioner brings ideas from outside the experience to help him/her and view what was really happening through this particular experience and compare it to previous personal experience and other people's experiences.
Johns	2011	This model is designed to be carried through the act of sharing between a colleague and his/her mentor.

2.3 Reflective Practice for Practitioners

Corey, Corey and Callanan (2007) claim that effective practice in many professional disciplines calls for the integration of theory, skills' application, logical insights and the attitudes, beliefs, and philosophy unique to each practitioner. Moreover, the goal of higher education for professional studies is the development of professionals who are capable of analysis and self-reflection. This agrees with what AbuAmsha (n.d.) mentions in his article that tackles the necessity of reflective thinking in education as he mentions that reflective educators who practice teaching emphasize on two main factors which are: first, the relation between what they are trying to teach and the students' previous experience. Second, the relation between what they are trying to teach and their students' personal aims. Stickel and Waltman (1994) state that reflective journaling is an instructional tool that helps professionals who are in training to develop these necessary skills. Furthermore, Dyment and O'Connell (2007) talk about the journal writing as a means of creating a valuable connection between lifelong learning and sustainability. Thus, as mentioned by Hubbs and Brand (2010), reflective journaling can serve as a method for enhancing understanding of course content, a strategy for making meaning, and a means for illuminating and critiquing student understanding.

As Appleby (2010) pointed out, we tend to use reflective practice to engage in the process of becoming an effective reflective practitioner. The author adds that in order to get involved in this process there are key questions that should be posed by the reflective practitioner. These questions are: How is the reflection relevant to them and to their practice? What is the reflection? What does it look like? How is the reflection done? What are the benefits of the reflection? Appleby also adds six processes a reflective practitioner goes through which are:

●   Reflection: as a generic term to describe behaviors that involve feeling and thinking about thoughts and experiences, in order to identify issues and to develop new understandings and insight;

●   Reflective learning: that implies a sense of open exploration in order to find out how something is or to find out more about it, in addition to examining the value of learning through action;

●   Reflective thinking: that implies there is a purpose, either consciously or subconsciously. It also includes active and deliberate critical thinking, along with creative thinking, reflection in action and on action, reflexivity or focusing a close attention upon one's own actions' and the way a person is experienced and perceived by others;

●   Reflective writing: as a mode of reflective thinking, expression and representation and stimulus for further reflective thinking;

●   Reflective action: which is informed by other processes;

●   Meta-reflection: it involves making an explicit process of reflection or as known as reflection on reflection.

       Appleby (2010) emphasizes that we use reflective practices as a process of understanding oneself through reflective learning. Reflective practice enables any person to evaluate his/her thinking, understands the difference between deep rather that surface learning, and to identify what has changed and what needs to change.

       Callan (2010) confirms that asking questions during reflection is a tangible means of reflecting on practice within a particular culture, context or situations. This agrees with what Bolton (2005) mentions about 'reflexivity', as she illustrates as part of the dynamic between the tutor and the student working together. She suggests that students are to formulate their own questions about the situations in which they find themselves 'reflective' to be able to reflect on their learning efficiently. Furthermore, Bolton suggests that engaging in such a process of reflection promotes a deeper understanding of actions that forms a value-base for delivery of the course program.

       One of the usages found in the literature for reflective practice is developing the educator's identity as a reflective professional practitioner. AbuAmsha (n.d.) asserts that educators need to reflect because education is a complex task that does not a bid by a certain routine, furthermore, education is a task that requires a lot of effort, time and an ample of wisdom and foresight; this is due to it happens within a context full of variables that makes its problems vague. As Appleby (2010) notes, developing one's identity as a reflective professional practitioner who aspires to be more than a worker, for example, to be a technician, requires commitment as an agent of personal change and recognition of anyone's role and responsibility as learners as well as a practitioner. Moreover, developing

a reflective professional practitioner's identity is also about recognizing the change in personal understanding and practice.

Callan (2010) asserts that introducing, explaining and engaging with the notion of reflective practice must be a careful process. She claims that previous learning experiences may have encouraged an absolute approach to knowledge as something finite, technocratic and skill based with assessment based on finding right answers; this results in dependency of students on the academic staff. The usage of reflective techniques helps in identifying the transition to other ways of knowing and necessarily enables a positive response to personal and professional change. Callan also affirms that it is of a high importance that teams within a certain course present reflection in terms of facilitating the transitions of students rather than narrowing academic domain where the practitioner feels oppressed or unworthy.

Christopher Johns (2013), a theorist who wrote about reflective practice within a clinical educational context, mentions that the practitioner sometimes faces classroom situations that do not go so smoothly. He adds that the practitioner must then pause and stand back to consider how to best proceed. Johns (2013) states that Donald Schon (1983) termed this 'reflection-in-action', a type of problem solving where the problem is reframed in order to proceed. This approach demands a shift in thinking and contemplating new ways of responding (Schon, 1983, cited in Johns, 2013).

2.4 Reflective Practices and its Relationship with Other Variables in Education

Hickson (2011) argues that there is a plethora of strategies, apparatuses, procedures and structures for reflection and these techniques can be used independently or by following a guide of self-improvement. Hickson (2011) adds that individuals reflect on a wide range of routes and these routes are incorporated through a certain discourse or discussion with their moderator, writing in a diary, journal or in their communication of emotions and thoughts creatively through verse, tune, a narrative or a drawing. Thus, this relates reflection as a skill to the human ability of creativity. Additionally, Grace and her colleagues (2006) contend that reflective practices begin from individuals and prevail to wider communities and groups of practice. Their contention shows that practicing reflections maintains individualism and helps the practitioners in shaping their personal

thoughts and values which in its turn help in developing their personalities and structuring their identities and ideologies. Consequently, this will help the individuals to practice thoughtful reflections in a larger community of individuals who practice reflection as well. Agreeably, Atkinson and Irving (2013) state that reflection includes proficient development, growth on the personal level and significant change. They say that reflection in teaching has developed into an overarching standard worldwide where a productive educator includes an individual sense of duty concerning thoughtful practice.   To conclude, the literature shows that reflective practice is intended to help students or practitioners in any field to assess their understanding and learning. Moreover, reflection has more than one model that describes how the process actually takes place and why it is important for practitioners to use reflection to be able to link theory to practice. While reviewing the literature, published research studies that tackle reflective practice within Egyptian educational contexts is not found. Thus, this research aim is to examine the construct of reflective practice in an Egyptian educational setting.

2.5 Research Questions

1.   How is reflective practice implemented in the master's program?

2.   What are the types of assignments used as assessment of reflective practice?

3.   How do the enrolled students in the program approach the reflective practice assignments?

4.   How do the enrolled students in the program view rubrics/guiding instructions of the reflective assignments?

2.6 Operational Definitions

   Reflective practice: Reynolds (2011) asserts that regardless the way people acquire knowledge; whether from reading, through conversation or from formal education, the type of learning that is derived from reflecting on experience is necessary for development for professional managers and educators. Thus, Loughran (2002) emphasizes reflection on its turn gives prominence to learning through questioning and investigation to lead to understanding development. Therefore reflective practices in this study is defined as any form of explicit formal reflection such as graded assignments in any form whether in the format of summative journals, formative journals, longer essays (midterm or final

papers), or in-class-discussions. These assignments strengthen the students' reflective skills on their learning; as they will be able to go deep in the courses' concepts and reach a clear understanding of their status of what they learn and how they learn. This deep process of thoughtful reflection is supposed to help the students shape a solid comprehension that will help them in practice.

2.7 Theoretical Frameworks

This research adapts some aspects from theoretical frameworks found in the literature. These aspects will help in organizing and analyzing this research's results, they are adapted from Hubbs and Brand (2010), Kember and Leung (2000), Stewart and Richardson (2000), Marchel (2004), and Boud and Walker (1998).

These three aspects will help to organize and interpret the data collected. First, the usage of the reflections within the program: are they used for enhancing the students' skills as practitioners or are they used for understanding the content of the course? As Hubbs and Brand (2010) mentioned, reflective journals are used in subjects requiring the students to write about their understanding of the course's content, and this is a way that is different from using journals for internships or practice. The latter way of using reflection, as mentioned by the authors, makes the learning much more embedded in the experience where the students must decipher personal meaning for themselves. Hubbs and Brand (2010) highlight the difference between the two usages when they say that when journaling assignments focus strictly on course content, the instructor will assess mastery of the subject mainly. However, when the reflective assignments ask the students to broaden their perspectives by disclosing personal thoughts, feelings, and values as common in reflective writing assigned in human services internships and practice, assessment of these reflections imposes a qualitative approach from the instructor. The rationale behind this aspect is to investigate the purpose of the reflective practice usage and outcomes in an educational setting. As asserted by Kember and Leung (2000), authors who are interested in writing about reflective practice suggest a need for ways of assessing the nature and quality of students' reflections as well as critiquing the content of reflective journal entries. Stewart and Richardson (2000) propose that reflective processes in an academic context should be reviewed by the instructor but not assessed.

The second aspect is the language: do the reflective practices use a language that is mutual and common between the professors and the students, and how far is it common to the instructor and the student's understanding? Hubbs and Brand (2010) emphasize the importance of a common language between the instructor and the students, for example, when they say that common language serves to abbreviate, clarify, and expedite communication and to minimize misinterpretation and miscommunication within a certain group. They claim that reflection, by itself, has no such language and, therefore, poses challenges to a clear and comprehensive communication about thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. The rationale for using this aspect in the thesis's framework is to explore the type of language used in reflective practice where the professors and students reach an agreement about the language to be used in the student's reflections.

The third aspect is the instructor's guidance regarding the length of the reflection, how the students present their understanding of the course content, how they link their personal experience to the course content, and the topics to be addressed in their journals. Hubbs and Brand (2010) assert that "professors should provide students with information regarding the length of the journal entries, the demonstration of understanding of course content, the linking of students' experiences to course content, and the topics to be addressed in their journal entries (p.62). The rationale behind choosing this aspect is to study the extent to which the professors' description and guidelines for reflective assignments affects the students' understanding of the reflective practice and their performance in the reflective assignments. Marchel (2004) notes that an assumption is underlying the assignment of journal writing that the act of chronicling thoughts and feelings will aid students in their personal growth and professional development. Furthermore, Boud and Walker (1998) confirm that reflection without some direction can become diffuse and disparate; therefore, the conclusions or outcomes of these reflections may not emerge.

As the three aspects were chosen theoretically, the investigator has a way to look at each aspect practically; first, the reflection usage within the program the researcher in this paper investigates the different types of reflective assignments used within the program and assumes whether they are enhancing the skills of the students as practitioners or they

are used to evaluate the course content and material. Second, the use of language within the reflective assignments, the researcher looks at the style in regards of formality and the tone whether the students use prefer personal or passive tone and which tone helps them in expressing their thoughts and ideas better and clearer. Thirdly, the instructor's guidance was regarded as the rubrics and the assignments' description and guidance.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This study follows a mixed methodology approach going through two main phases: the quantitative phase and the qualitative phase. Each phase serves this study in a certain manner. The quantitative phase helps in shaping an overview of the students' perceptions of reflective practices and how do they approach it. Whereas the qualitative phase helps in taking the study in to a deeper level. In the quantitative phase a ten-minute Likert-type survey is designed and piloted on alumni students graduated from the same Masters' Program before using it with the actual participants of the study. The aim of this pilot study and details of its outcomes are discussed thoroughly within this chapter. The rationale behind using this tool is to shape a quantitative understanding of the reflective practices' construct in respect to the students' perception of reflections and how reflections shape their learning, language usage and guiding instructions of the reflective practices. Then, in the qualitative phase a semi-structured interview including five questions is designed. The rationale for using interviews as a part of the test is to add a more qualitative depth and to better understand perspectives on reflective practices. Moreover, this section provides a description of the participants, their number, gender, and experience, in addition to presenting information on the instruments, the data collection methods and the data analysis methods.

According to Creswell and Clark (2007) as they addressed the triangulation design procedures as a one-phase design in which researchers implement both the qualitative and quantitative methods equivalently within the same time frame and with equal weight as shown in figure 1 below.

Quantitative	Quantitative	Quantitative			
Data	Data	Results	↘		
collection →	analysis→		**Compare**	**&**	**Interpretation**
			Contrast	**⇒**	**Qualitative +**
					Quantitative
Qualitative	Qualitative	Qualitative			
Data	Data	Results	↗		
collection→	analysis→				
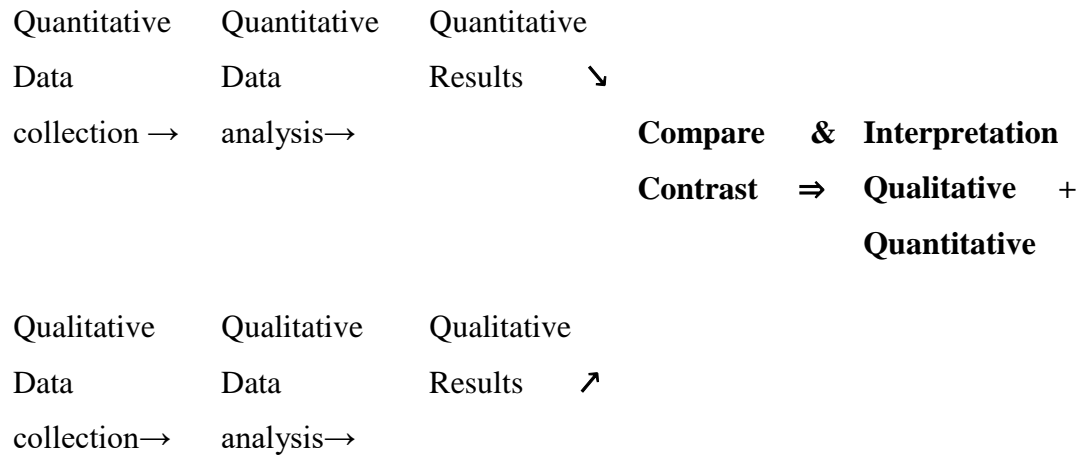
Figure 1. Creswell and Clark Triangulation Design (2007), "Reprinted from *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (p 63).

3.1 Setting

The setting where the data is collected is a masters' program in liberal arts in a graduate school in a private university. This graduate school of education aims at contributing to the educational reform in Egypt through providing theoretical and applied components that are needed to create capacity of professionals and policy makers in the education system. Within this school there is a department of international and comparative education that offers five masters' programs in education, three diplomas and an undergraduate minor. The masters' program tackled in this study is in international and comparative education that covers two concentrations which are: teaching and learning, and international education development and policy. The mission statement of this program states that the program "supports and enhances the practices of reflective professionals" (program website). Furthermore, the program has shared norms of transforming students into critical thinkers on education, a norm that can be manifested in various practices of the faculty.

3.2 Quantitative Phase

3.2.1 Participants.

This phase includes 38 participants who are graduate students enrolled in a masters' program in liberal arts in a graduate school in a private university in Egypt. The number of

female participants is 33 while 5 male educators participated in the study. Their profession is mentioned in table 2 below.

Table 2

Quantitative Phase Participants' Profession

Participants' Profession	Number
Class Teacher	12 (9 females, 3 males)
English Instructor	6 (6 females, 0 males)
Unemployed	5 (5 females, 0 males)
Academic Content Developer	2 (2 females, 0 males)
Teaching Assistant	2 (2 females, 0 males)
Academic Counselor	1 (1 female, 0 males)
Office Manager	1 (1female, 0 males)
Coordinator	1 (0 females, 1 males)
Middle School Leader	1 (1 female, 0 males)
Director of e-learning for Masters Students	1 (1 female, 0 males)
Head of Academy	1 (0 female, 1 males)
Curriculum Writer	1 (1 female, 0 males)
Educational Program Manager	1 (1 female, 0 males)
Educational Consultant	1 (1 female, 0 males)
Academic Content Officer	1 (1 female, 0 males)
Total	38 (33 females, 5 males)

3.2.2 Instruments.

A 10-minute survey is designed to examine the participants' experience of reflective practices before and during the master's program, in addition to examining the kinds of reflective practices used within the program. This survey is a Likert-type. In addition to one open-ended item added in the survey, this item is designed to enable individuals to offer their own suggestions and describe their own experiences as shown in Appendix A.

3.2.2.1 Questionnaire design.

As cited by Shenton (2004), it is crucial that the researchers define the right operational measures for the concepts being studied; therefore, the researchers shall derive the specific procedures employed such as the line of questioning used in the data collection. In this study the researcher designs the questionnaire based on the study's four main research questions; to guarantee that the designed survey as a tool is covering all the

variables needed to be tested in the study. Moreover, the researcher consulted two academic faculty members to ensure the relevance and the completeness of the questions within the used survey.

The survey is developed based on this study's research questions. Drafts of the questions were designed and consulted with the academic advisor to guarantee that the designed questions are testing the main points addressed in the research questions. These ten questions cover the main points asked in the research questions of this study and they were in a form of statements, for instance: "I believe that writing reflections helps me to learn more and to shape concrete concepts of the course material" , "I perform in reflective assignments better when the professor provides clear guiding instructions for them", " Using informal English helps me articulate more accurate reflection than answering using formal English" and " I find reflection assignments challenging". All the questions' answers where on a scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. The survey is designed in such manner to be more user-friendly and comprehensible to the participants to answer. In addition, a short introduction for the survey is presented in the survey to introduce the topic and to inform the participants about its purpose and the operational definition of reflective practice so that the participants can understand the purpose of the survey and relate to their experiences to help add clear and objective comments and recommendations for the suggested edits.

The purpose of this survey is to explore how the program implements reflective practice, what are the assignments used for reflection, how the graduate students enrolled in the program are approaching these assignments, their experience of reflective practice before and during the program, and whether they experienced reflective practice before joining the program or not.

3.2.2.2 Piloting the questionnaire.

According to Shenton (2004), it is also important to develop an early familiarity with the participating organizations and their culture before the first data collection dialogues take place. Shenton (2004) clarifies that this familiarity development can take place by achieving consultation of appropriate documents and paying preliminary visits to the organizations themselves. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993) recommend

prolonged engagement between the researcher and the participants and they specified to reasons for this: first, such a prolonged engagement will help the investigator in gaining an adequate understanding of the organization. Secondly, to this prolonged engagement will help in establishing a relationship of trust between the parties. Moreover, it is emphasized that the researcher should welcome opportunities for scrutiny of the project by colleagues, peers and academics. In this study, the survey is piloted on alumni students and they are introduced to the study's research questions and operational definitions in order to be able to measure the relevance of the questions to what is intended to be investigated to the study. Additionally, the pilot version of the survey included a place for the participants to add their comments, insights, suggestions and recommendations. A list of all these edits is made and is taken in to consideration before the data collection stage. Moreover, the researcher investigates the comments via phone calls with the alumni students for further discussion and elaboration of their rationale. Most of the alumni students are keen to share their previous experiences in regards to the tools they used in their theses. First, the survey was piloted on a sample of 19 alumni students, to help ensure its validity and relevance for graduate students; as they answered the survey and they added their comments regarding the questions' relevance and organization. The survey draft was revised based on the pilot sample comments, as there is a space in the pilot survey for the participants to leave their comments and recommendations. After editing the draft for the final time, it was ready for the actual participants of the study to answer.

After obtaining the IRB approvals in August 2018 as shown in appendix B, the survey was distributed on the graduate students enrolled via email starting from September 2018. For the survey distribution Google Forms was used and the link was shared through the enrolled students' emails.

3.2.3 Data analysis

The quantitative survey data is introduced through the percentages calculated by Google Forms for each question separately. Google forms automatically designed colored pie charts presenting the percentages upon the response of the participants. All the results are presented clearly with relevance to the four main research questions of the study and are analyzed by the adapted theoretical framework aspects previously mentioned.

3.3 Qualitative Phase

3.3.1 Participants.

This phase includes 8 participants who gave consent for one on one recorded interviews. The participants of the qualitative phase include 6 females and 2 males, their professions are mentioned in table 3 below.

Table 3

Qualitative Phase Participants' Profession

Participants' Profession	Number
English Instructor	3 (3 females, 0 males)
Class Teacher	2 (1 female, 1 male)
Content Developer	1 (1 female, 0 males)
Academic Counselor	1 (1 female, 0 males)
Head of Academy	1 (0 females, 1 male)
Total	8 (6 females, 2 males)

The participants were given codes according their professions, order of interviews and gender, for instance the first participant is a class teacher female, her code is CT1F and the seventh participant is a head of academy male, his code is HA7M. The rest of the participants are coded in the same manner.

3.3.2 Instruments.

A semi-structured interview that included five questions was conducted with 8 participants in which they were asked about their perception of reflection and how they approach it. The interview questions were: "How do writing reflective papers help in you in learning more and shaping concrete concepts of the course material?", "Do reflective assignments influence your performance as a teacher/educator/practitioner? Please explain how.", "Tell me more about learning through a reflective process.", "How do you view guiding instructions and rubrics? Do you prefer one over the other? And how far do they help you in approaching the reflective assignments?", and "Do you think there are challenges associated with reflective assignments/practices? Could you please elaborate on them?" as shown in appendix C.

After reaching 38 responses on the survey, the interviews were carried out and recorded. The interviews took place on campus. The interviews took from 10 to 20 minutes.

Each participant agreed on separate dates and times in advance to guarantee confidentiality, one or two interviews were conducted in the same day within the university's campus. The participants' verbal consents were recorded and they signed the IRB informed consent form shown in appendix D.

3.3.3 Data analysis.

Clark and Creswell (2010) design four main steps for qualitative researchers to analyze qualitative data: a) data preparation, b) data exploration and coding, c) description and themes development and d) findings validation. This study takes the four measures during the qualitative data analysis phase:

a) Data preparation: the researcher recorded all the interviews in English language. All the audio records were transcribed.

b) Data exploration and coding: the investigator read through the transcripts and gave codes to the participants according to their professions, order in the interviews and their genders; i.e. class teacher participant number one female (CT1F).

c) Description and themes development: the qualitative data was analyzed according to the three theoretical dimensions used in the theoretical frameworks in the literature which are the purpose and usage of the reflective practice, language and the teacher's guidance.

d) Findings validation: all the findings are compared to the quantitative findings of the study and they are discussed thoroughly in the discussion section of the study in lights of the findings found in the literature.

3.3.4 Trustworthiness.

As cited by Shenton (2004), Guba – a naturalistic investigator- proposes four criteria that should be considered by qualitative researchers in guaranteeing the trustworthiness in the study which are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.3.4.1 Credibility in the study.

Shenton (2004) states that one main criterion in ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative study is credibility which is pursuing internal validity. This internal validity is supposed to ensure that the study is actually measuring or testing what is actually intended by the researcher. In this study the researcher intends to design the questions used in the semi-structured interview according and in relevance to the main four research questions addressed in this thesis. Moreover, the drafts of these questions were sent to two faculty members to be revised. The revisions, comments and recommendations were taken in to consideration in finalizing the final five questions used in the individual interviews.

3.3.4.2 Transferability in the study.

Transferability is the external validity which is concerned with how far the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. It is mentioned that in positivist work, the concern often lies in presenting that the results of any current work can be applied to a wider population. It is not possible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations when the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals. Thus, it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure providing sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork sites; to enable the research to make such transfer (Shenton, 2004).

Shenton (2004) provides an outline for the information that should be given by the investigator at the outset. The information that need to be given regarding a) the number and locations of the organizations participating in the study, b) any restrictions in the type of participants, c) the sample size involved in the study, d) the data collection methods employed in the study, e) the number and length of the data collection sessions, and f) the time period of the data collection. This study covers all these issues in its methodology section. The organization involved in the study is a private university in Egypt. The paper

is a case study done over graduate students enrolled in a masters' program in liberal arts in a private university in Egypt. The sample size for the qualitative phase is 8 participants; 6 females and 2 males. The methods used to collect the data are individual interviews, their duration fall from 10 to 20 minutes within the university's campus in two weeks.

3.3.4.3 Dependability in the study.

Shenton (2004) cites that there is a stress on the close ties between credibility and dependability because the former goes some distance in ensuring the latter. This could be achieved via using focus groups and individual interviews. This study's qualitative phase relies on one-to-one interviews where the investigator records the interviews and gives the participants the room to answer thoroughly on the questions and share personal experiences that add to the findings.

3.3.4.4 Confirmability in the study.

The confirmability concept is the qualitative researcher comparable concern to objectivity. Thus, the role of triangulation in promoting such confirmability must be emphasized to assure reducing the impact of the investigator bias (Shenton, 2004). The qualitative phase within this study involves individual interviews in order to add more depth to the qualitative phase findings and reach further understanding for the sample's answers within the quantitative phase.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter represents the analyzed quantitative and qualitative findings. The findings address the four research questions.

4.1 Research Question One

The first research question proposed in this thesis is: "What are the main aims of the reflective assignments in the master's program?" The survey addressed this question in three assumed aims.

4.1.1 Quantitative findings.

4.1.1.1 First aim: reflective assignments as a tool for course material evaluation.

The first aim is that a reflective assignment is a tool to evaluate the course material where 36.8% of the participants agreed on this, 23% strongly agreed, 21.1% were neutral, and 18.4% disagreed as shown in pie chart 1.
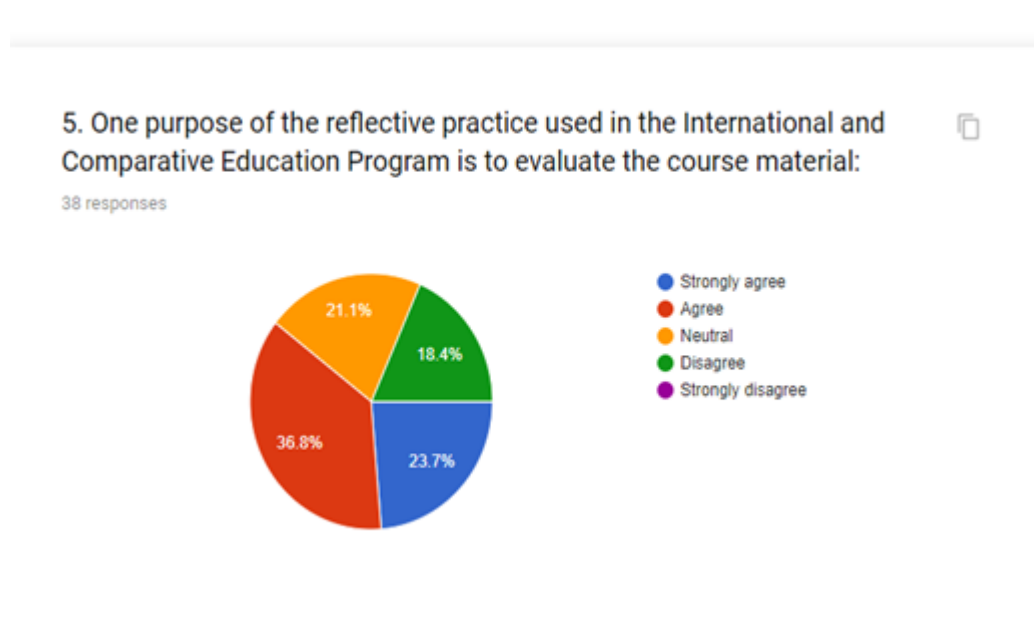
Pie chart 1: First aim, reflective assignments as a tool for course material evaluation

4.1.1.2 Second aim: reflective assignments as a tool for course material improvement.

The second aim is that reflective practices are used as a tool to shape recommendations for improving the course material, 52.6% of the participants who are the enrolled students in th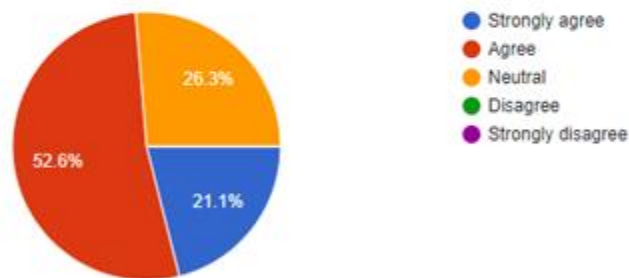e Masters' Program agreed with this aim, 26.3% were neutral and 21.1% strongly agreed and no one disagreed or strongly disagreed as shown in pie chart 2.

6. One purpose of the reflective practice in the International and Comparative Education Program is to come up with recommendations for updating the course material:

38 responses

Pie chart 2: Second aim, Reflective practices as tool of course material improvement.

4.1.1.3 Third aim: reflective assignments as a tool of learning.

Finally, the third aim that reflective assignments is used to help the students experience learning through a reflective process. The highest percentage of the participants strongly agreed with this aim (60.5%), 28.9% agreed and only 10.5% were neutral and no one disagreed or strongly disagreed as shown in pie chart 3.

7. One purpose of the reflective practice in the international and Comparative Education Program is to help the students experience learning through a reflective process:

38 responses

● Strongly agree
● Agree
● Neutral
● Disagree
● Strongly disagree

60.5%
28.9%
10.5%
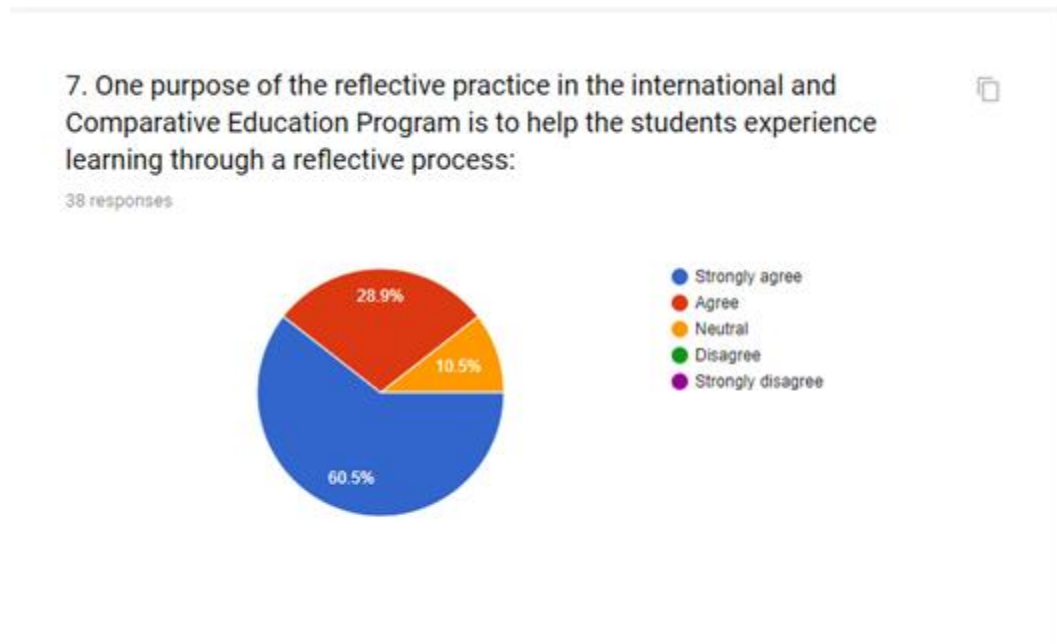
Pie Chart 3: Third aim, reflective practices as a tool of learning.

4.1.2 Qualitative findings.

The interview focused on the third aim which is the usage of reflective practices as a learning tool. In the interview the participants shared their experiences regarding learning within a reflective process and their answers varied. CT1F (Class teacher participant one female) mentioned that she prefers starting classes with a reflective question and have room to search and reflect to understand the depth of some concepts, she said: "I learn more as I connect the knowledge that I have in my mind and remembering things that I have read before when I reflect".

EI2F stated that the more she involves personal insights in a reflective practice the more she learns as she said: "Because it is not only about theoretical understanding, it is about practical ideas in reflecting on your own personal experience and relating back to all the concepts you get introduced to and everything on your mind". In addition, an English teacher in a public school said: "Personally, I have learned so much through reflective practices especially written ones. This helped me see the purpose of what I am learning. I have enjoyed it." CT3M said also: "As a postgraduate student I have learned a lot from the in-class reflections as I learn more when I hear the reflections of my colleagues, their understanding and their shared insights."

"I am an auditory learner. I do not like to join any discussion unless I have my thoughts ready. So I receive all the information from the discussions that take place in the class along with notes and the class reading material then I think of them deeply. I discuss my thoughts with a colleague in the class and we reflect on them together and this is the part where most of the learning happens", said CD5F. AC6F said: "I reflect to choose a methodology of how to learn".

HA7M shared his personal experience in learning a new language as he said: "I did not take classes to learn Spanish when I spent seven months in Columbia. Instead, I listened to people speaking and I asked them about the meaning of the words and I started relating the Spanish structure to the English structure and compared them together and reflected on my own learning and development in learning Spanish from people".

4.2 Research Question Two

The second question addressed in this paper is: "What type of assignments used as an assessment of reflective practices?" This was answered in the open-ended question in the survey. The participants mentioned the following types:

4.2.1 Experiential reflective essays.

Experiential reflective essays where one of the participants wrote: "Experiential reflective essays are the most challenging where you need to combine the four elements of Kolb experiential learning model together to present a vivid experience to the reader. In other words, experiential essays need very high level of metacognitive awareness, from describing any incident, reflecting on it, and framing it in a broader context to apply it differently when repeated again".

4.2.2 Reflective journals.

Reflective journals where the students were asked to reflect on each class and submit the assignment the next class.

4.2.3 Course readings reflections.

Reflections on the course readings where the students were asked to share their understanding of each class readings and relate them to their personal experience and contextualizing them in the Egyptian context.

4.2.4 Summative reflections.

Summative reflections where the professors asked the students to reflect on their understanding of the course content holistically and the main concepts and usually submitted by the end of the course.

4.2.5 Reaction papers.

Reaction papers where one of the participants wrote: "We were assigned to write a reaction paper in several courses, using different texts and analyzing them and linking them to personal thoughts and experiences. Then trying to find a link and synthesize the different assigned texts and come up with a clear analysis and reflection".

4.2.6 Reflections through online blogs.

Reflections through online blogs: "We were asked to create a blog in human development and learning theories course after watching a video and analyzing it according to the course material and learnings of the semester. This was a reflective assignment; it made me recollect all of the course material from the very start until my last reading and created a blog that summarized the main learnings. It made me research, analyze, and reflect on those learnings rather than simply having the Dr. repeat the information in a couple of hours. Moreover, the information is pretty much engraved in my head now that I had to extract clippings from the video that match the course material and analyze them according to what I have learned during the entire semester".

4.2.7 Reflective paper after a project.

Reflective papers after a project: "Reflection papers on educational projects; we did this as a team".

4.2.8 Objective /weekly reflection.

Objective/weekly reflection: "Some weekly reflections were more about narrating what happened in each class and when I introduced some ideas that the sessions inspired me with, they were regarded as irrelevant which had me repeat my reflections just to get the grade. It was more like I had to fill in specific gaps". Another participant wrote: "Most professors assign a reflective paper on their course objectives. I don't find this kind of assignment beneficial in any way, to be honest, but they're an easy A".

4.3 Research Question Three

4.3.1 Quantitative findings.

The third research question was: "How do the enrolled students in the program approach the reflective practice assignments?" This question was approached through five questions within the survey.

4.3.1.1 First approach: reflections' role in shaping concrete concepts of the course material.

The first approach was testing the participants' understanding of the course material and shaping concepts in regards to the main topic of the class. As shown in pie chart 4, 60.5% of the participants strongly agreed with this perspective, 31.6% agreed, 5.3% were neutral, only 2.6% strongly disagreed and no one disagreed.
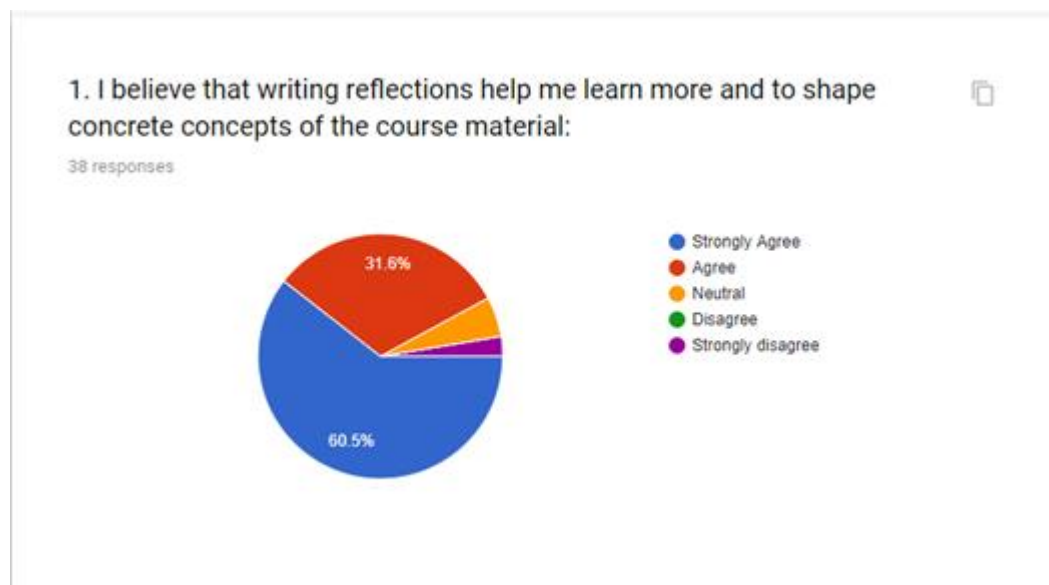
Pie Chart 4: Reflections role in shaping concrete concepts of the course material.

4.3.1.2 Second approach: reflections create better practitioners.

The second approach for question three gives an insight about the participants' view of themselves as educators or practitioners in general and whether their reflective practices help them enhance their professional performance and development or not. Pie chart 5 shows that 42.1% strongly agree with this aspect, equivalently 42.1% agree, 13.2% were neutral, 2.6% disagreed and no one strongly disagreed.

2. Reflections help me become a better teacher/practitioner:

38 responses

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

42.1%

13.2%

42.1%
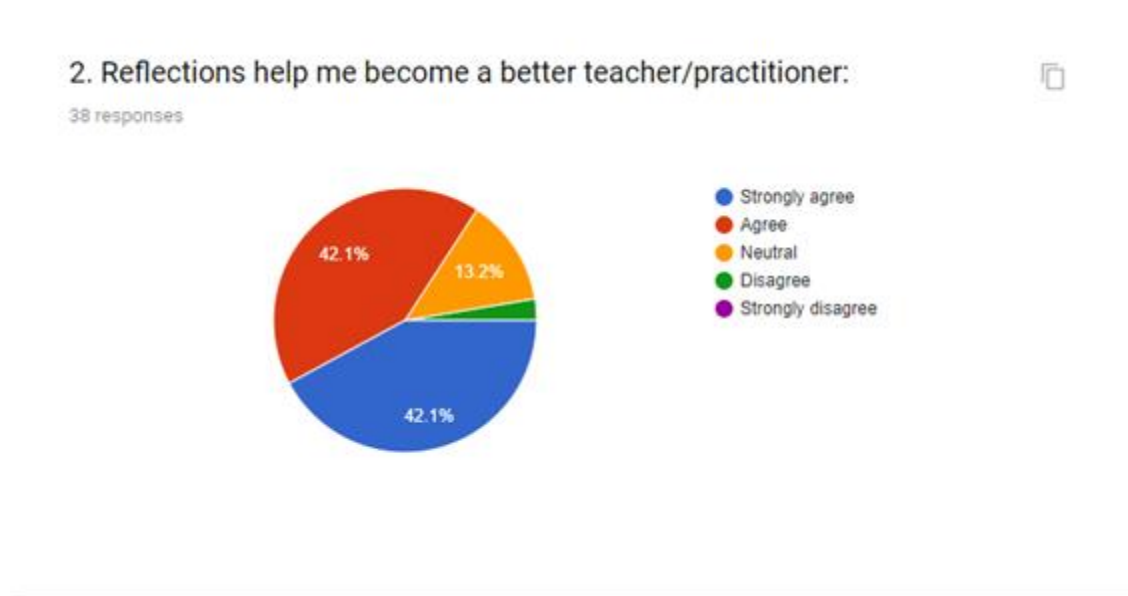
Pie Chart 5: Reflections create better practitioners.

4.3.1.3 Third approach: language usage in reflections.

As for the third approach, it targeted the participants' perception of the language usage and whether formal or informal English helps them articulate their reflections better. Pie chart 6 shows that the answers regarding language vary as 34.2% of the participants disagreed that informal English helped them articulate more accurate reflections, 23.7% were neutral, 21.1% agreed, 13.2% strongly agreed and 7.9% strongly disagreed.

8. Using informal English helps me articulate a more accurate reflection than if I answer in formal English:

38 responses

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

34.2%
7.9%
13.2%
21.1%
23.7%
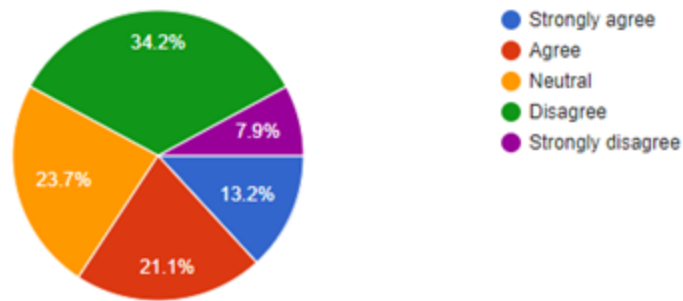
Pie chart 6: Language usage in reflections.

4.3.1.4 Fourth approach: reflections as a graded assignment.

The fourth approach in addressing research question three depicted the students' attention to reflective practices as a graded assignment. As shown in pie chart 7 below, 28.9% disagreed that they pay more attention to reflective assignments when they are assigned a higher percentage of the final grade rather that only a small percentage, 26.3% were neutral, 21.1% agreed, 15.8% strongly disagreed and 7.9% strongly agreed.

9. I pay more attention to reflective assignments when they are
assigned a higher percentage of the final grade than if they are assigned
only a small percentage:

38 responses
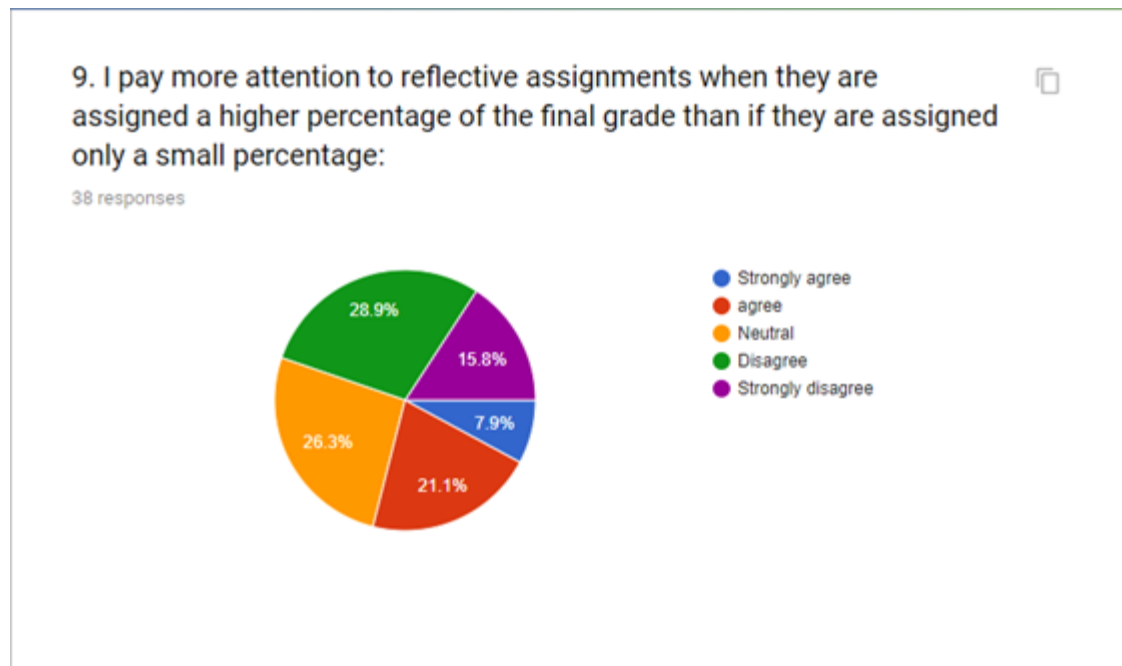
Pie Chart 7: Reflections as a graded assignment.

4.3.1.5 Fifth approach: reflections as a challenging task.

The fifth and final approach in answering research question three tests if the participants view reflective practices as challenging. 50% of the participants were neutral about this approach, 23.7% disagreed, 13.2% agreed, 10.5% strongly disagreed and 2.5% strongly agreed as shown in pie chart 8.
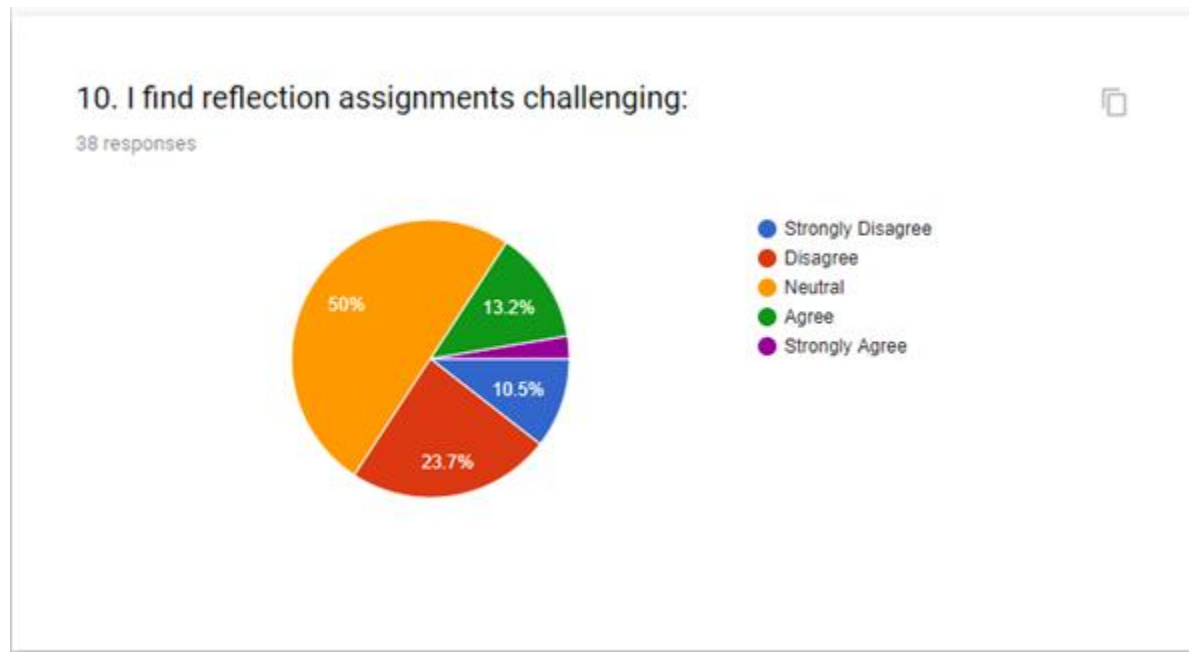
Pie chart 8: Reflections as a challenging task.

4.3.2 Qualitative findings.

The interview focused more on three aspects: a) the students' ability in shaping their understanding of the course material and grasping its concepts, b) the students' view regarding their performance as practitioners after reflection and c) how far do the students view reflections as challenging.

When CT1F was asked to elaborate more on how reflections help her shape concrete understanding of the course content she said: "I believe that it's is like a Jigsaw puzzles where I connect the dots of more than one source". She added: "I do learn more from the reflective practices that pushed me to search for more information to help me understand, moreover, reflections help me retain information." She mentioned that she always needs an avid input from the course theoretical part and readings followed by a reflective assignment to help her learn more with adding personal insights. She said: "Learning is not only about stating what is in the books. I have to reflect on what is in the books, I have to add my insights". When she was asked about how she views herself as a practitioner after reflection, she said: "I grow more confident because I become more knowledgeable. Reflective practice promotes my confidence but not my teaching

strategies, moreover, it helps me change my mentality and it increases my knowledge." Furthermore, she addressed one positive challenge for doing reflections and another negative challenge. The positive challenge was: "Doing a lot of reading and searching to shape my own thoughts and communicate my insights". Regarding the negative challenge, she said: "For me the type of reflections where the professor asks us to reflect on each objective in the course is boring! I totally dislike it as I do not learn from this type for reflection, I feel that I'm only giving my opinion to the professor."

EI2F said: "Reflective practices really helped me relate different concepts together. They helped me relate new concepts to my previous ideas and my personal insights". When asked if she finds reflective practices as a challenging task she said, "At the beginning I did not understand how to do it because as undergraduates we were not used to practice reflections. It was a totally new concept for me".

HA7M in regards to his perception of reflective practices said: "Writing reflections is really important because you touch the part that has changed within yourself as a student concerning the course material". He believes that reflective practices should not be directed by the professor to give the students room to express their personal opinions as he also said: "Professors should give their students freedom to reflect on their personal experiences". When asked about the reflections impact his performance as a teacher he answered: "I always try to go beyond the question oriented system that we have in public schools. I encourage my students to reflect on their understanding through writing poems or drawing". He added that this technique of reflective teaching is favored by neither the institution nor the parents: "The parents want everything written and graded, they do not believe that their children learn through reflective practices", he said. About the challenges he said: "Maybe one of the challenges is that the student might go beyond the purpose of the reflection defined by the professor. However, as a student, I do not find it a problem as long as I succeed in elaborating and developing my ideas". He also added: "I tend to reflect more on the concepts that touch me the most while neglecting other concepts; this is a challenge as the professor asks us to reflect on all the concepts introduced in the course material so I guess it is challenging to control such type of subjectivity in a reflective practice".

"Reflective practices help me see things from a new perspective that could add or change my way of thinking regarding previously learned concepts", said EI4F. She also added: "As a teacher, reflection enhances my critical thinking skills because I reflect on my lesson plans before class. Also after the class I reflect on how the session went after watching the students' presentations or their discussions during the class." She added: "Reflecting helps me also to customize the course material with my students' needs. First, I customize it to their gender. Second, as I have a diversity of students I have to customize the course material with their socio economic standards. Thirdly, age wise, because the institution I work for offers the course of teaching English as a second language from the age of 15 and above." She added: "Sometimes the course material is not relevant to their culture, so I have to reflect on this point and customize the material so it would suit their needs". When asked about her the challenges she meets in reflective practices she answered: "The main challenge was that I never did reflections before and I did not know what reflection is, however, when I understood the concept it put me at ease to communicate my insights in a narrative manner". In regard to the reflective style she said: "I very much like the idea of expressing yourself freely through reflective practices because when a person expresses him/herself, s/he gets a golden opportunity in shaping their ideology and creating their own theories".

CD5Fsaid: "Reflection helps me get back to my previous thoughts. It helps me a lot in understanding myself more and the way I think; to be more critical to my own ideas and the ideas presented to me". As a practitioner she relates reflection to her profession saying, "I reapply the concept of reflection with my students to make use of their metacognition and use their ability of understanding to do different things". She presented the challenges she finds when dealing with a reflective practice saying, "Rubrics are challenging for me; as they take away from the reflection I do because I get to focus more on following the rubric rather than exploring the ideas and expressing myself". She added: "The first time writing a reflection was challenging because it took me a while to grasp the concept of reflection. Reflective practices are not like writing a research where you get bits and pieces from every related literature; it is deeper, more expressive and subjective".

When AC6F was asked about how far reflective practices help her shape understanding of the course material, she answered: "I do not find reflecting on the course objectives beneficial, for me it is like giving feedback to the professor on the course. I do not learn from this way of reflection. She added: "Reflecting through class discussions after reading articles related to the class topic has always been a good way of learning for me". She also said that reflecting affects her learning as she said, "I reflect to choose a methodology of how to learn". She said when asked about the challenges of reflections: "We have never learned how to do it, it is like asking me to ride a bicycle in my twenties! Asking me to sit and reflect on the spot does not work for me". She prefers the reflective journals and writing academic papers; it is easier than reflecting.

"Reflection gives me a practical approach of relating the class readings and discussions to real life. Reflective practices give me practical implications for information and how to apply them in reality." said HA7M. When relating to his current profession he said, "I reflect after my classes, especially after incidents where I have to take decisions of giving them importance or just letting them go. Reflection helps me big time especially in shaping the behavior of my students as effective citizens in the community and the society they live in". He said about the challenges that he faces in a reflective practice: "I would say that the limitation in reflecting is the person's ability to understand that they have the power to sit and self-reflect, to reject and accept things and to correct themselves. I believe the challenge lies in the person's ability to accept that they are not perfect".

EI8F said in regard to her perception of reflection as a tool of shaping the comprehension of new concepts: "Reflection helped me a lot to relate what I have learned to real experience and to have a real learning experience that does not rely on only memorizing. Reflective practices made a connection between what we have in life to the concepts introduced in the course readings". When asked do reflections have an impact on her performance as a teacher, she said yes and elaborated: "Because in each reflective assignment we were usually asked to relate what we have learned to our career as educators. During classes we reflect on our experiences with our students and as a community of learners we are learning from each other". Of the challenges she meets in a reflective practice she said: "Relating new concepts from the course material to my personal insights

was a totally new practice for me, so this was a challenge in the beginning; a good challenge though. Another thing that I find really challenging for me is reflecting on very theoretical readings and the grading pressure of the reflective assignments". She finally added: "Reflective practices offer students a real learning experience were they can relate any new knowledge to their lives".

4.4 Research Question Four

       4.4.1 Quantitative findings.

       This thesis proposed a fourth and final question which was: "How do the enrolled students in the program review rubrics/guiding instructions of the reflective assignments?" 71.1% strongly agreed that they perform better in reflective assignments when guiding instructions are provided, 15.8% agreed, 7.9% were neutral, 5.3% disagreed and no one strongly disagreed.
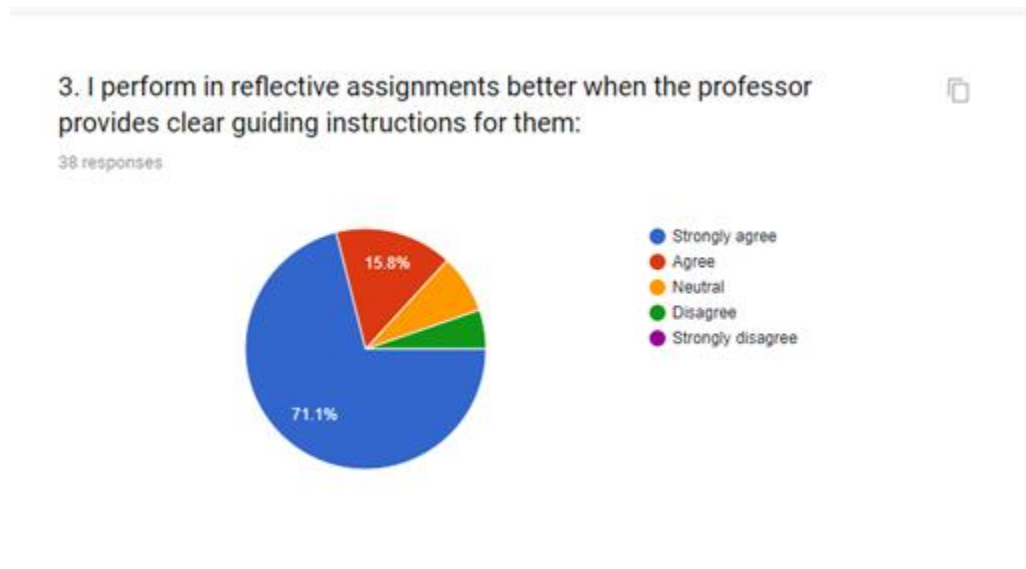
Pie Chart 9: Reflections with guiding instructions.

      Meanwhile, as shown in pie chart 10, 65.8% strongly agreed that it is important for them to review a rubric for the reflective assignments, 26.3% agreed, 7.9% were neutral and no one disagreed nor strongly disagreed.
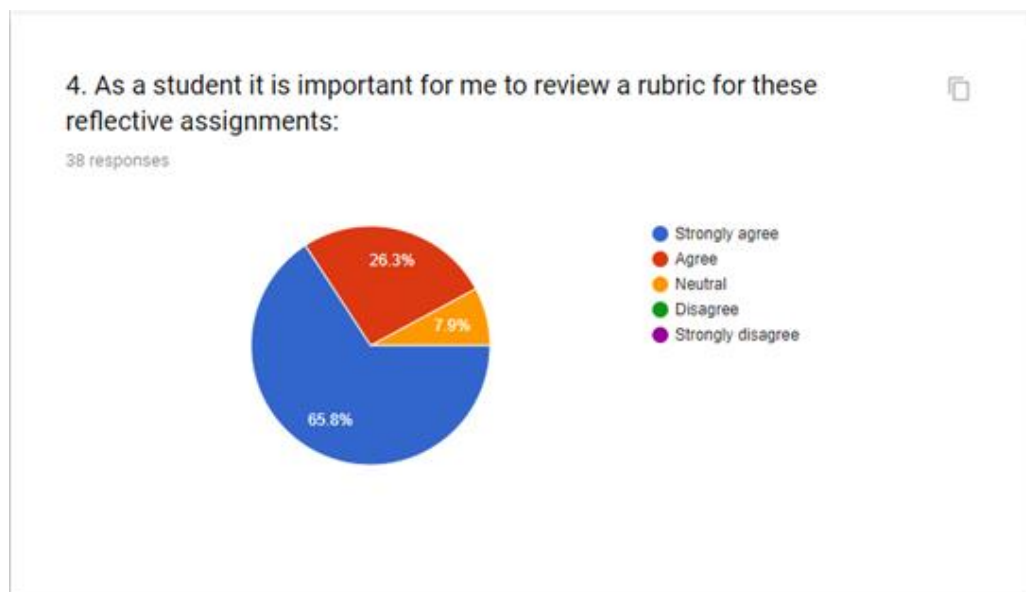
Pie Chart 10: Reflections with rubrics.

4.4.2 Qualitative findings.

The participants were asked about their preference between reviewing a rubric for the reflective assignments and having guiding instructions. CT1F said: "It depends on the type of the reflective assignment but if I think critically according to the approach of the school of continuing education here at the university, rubrics are better because every professor has his/her mentality therefore, it is important to get introduced to rubrics to understand the different mentalities and approaches of the professors. EI2F said: "Viewing guiding instructions is essential as I was stuck in the first time I was asked to write a reflective assignment as the professor did not give us instructions and there was no rubric as well. I think both are important as they show what areas should be considered." On the other hand, CT3M disagreed saying: "Both are restricting! I believe that the professors shall only decide the topics of reflection but not the style, the structure or the language. As a student I need freedom to reflect on my thoughts and also the freedom to express them through poems, drawings or pictures". EI4F said: "It is important to have both, so I can understand how to approach it because I had this misconception that reflecting is summarizing because the teacher did not give clear description of the assignment". CD5F answered: "I prefer guiding instructions to rubrics

as I find them easier than rubrics in answering and looking to certain points and not to drift away from the main topic". AC6F who agreed with the latest said: "I believe guiding instructions direct the students better than rubrics. Guidelines resemble a checklist where I can mark the points that I have covered. Rubrics are generic they do not suit reflective assignments in my view". HA7M who agreed said: "I would rather have guiding instructions because I think rubrics are more grade oriented". However, he added: "I believe that reflective assignments should not have guiding instructions as I think that teachers should embrace their students' ideas the way they learn them. Teachers should embrace the thoughts the way their learners word them and express them along with the structure they use, the structure that helps them to connect the dots in their own way. Reflective practices should happen in a way the learners understand them and the way they are comfortable with". EI8F said: "Neither! I prefer to reflect freely. For me this is more helpful because it gives me more space to approach whatever area of understanding I want to reflect upon. Rubrics are restricting, they restrict my mind and direct me to certain areas just to get the grade and this grading pressure is never helpful". She added: "Ungraded reflective practices are more beneficial to me; I am able to consolidate concepts and put all I have on my mind on paper without that pressure of rubrics and grades".

Chapter Five: Discussion

This study mainly aims to investigate the construct of reflective practices in an educational setting in Egypt. This educational setting resembles a masters' program in liberal arts in a graduate school in a private university in Egypt. This study basically focuses on the graduate student's perceptions of reflective practices to deduce the holistic understanding of the construct of reflective practices in such postgraduate educational setting.

This chapter presents and discusses the major and minor results presented in the previous chapter. The findings are compared and contrasted with the prior research findings, in addition to, interpreting the findings according to the aspects adapted from theoretical frameworks found in the literature presented earlier in the literature review section of the thesis. The three main aspects presented for analysis are: a) the usage of the reflection within a masters' program in liberal arts in a private university in Egypt, b) the language of agreement between the professor and the students to comprehend their reflective practices and c) the instructor's guidance.

5.1 Reflections Usage in the Masters' Program

In the light of the first aspect which is the usage of the reflective assignments in the Masters' Program, Hubbs and Brand (2010), Kember and Leung (2000), Stewart and Richardson (2000) agree that reflective practices are used by students to shape their understanding of the course content and they highlight another use for the reflections which is enhancing the students' skills as practitioners. Moreover, they state that professors should devise techniques to assess the quality and nature of the students' reflections as well as critiquing their content because they agree that the learning that happens within an academic context should be reviewed rather than assessed. This means that the literature already proposes two usages for reflective assignments which are enhancing the students' skills as practitioners and helping them understand the course content.

The findings of this thesis add one more usage which is evaluating the course objectives and its relevance to the course's main topic. The majority of the participants give importance to the first two usages and not all of them find the third usage beneficial for them because most of them argue that they shape more concrete concepts of the course

material through reflective practices. Moreover, the majority of the participants can feel the impact of such practices in their performance as educators or practitioners, they feel the reflection's positive influence on their practices as teachers and some of them claim that it makes them better as practitioners. Wahba (2018) supports this by stating that educators who learn within a reflective process are the first learners of their own reflections. Teachers while delivering their lessons use either traditional or modern techniques of teaching. Sometimes teachers may get unexpected negative results from their learners, thus, teachers realize their need to reflect to learn something new or for the sake of improving their existing skills and practices. During this phase teachers will observe and self-assess themselves via taking notes and comments from students on a certain situation where they describe it in their notebooks and reflective journals. However, almost all the participants found that the type of reflection where they reflect on their learning in regard to each objective introduced in the course material is useless and they do not actually learn from such type of reflection. A high percentage claims that this type of reflective assignments can only help the professors to enhance the course material and amend some of its objectives but it does not mean to teach them anything. As Talbot (2008) claims that educators in regards of their classes as forums of information transfer, they seem to miss that education is more fundamentally about attitude of questioning and learning development and not so much about facts storage.

Moreover, in his articulation of what he calls the process of being a reflective practitioner Schon (1983) claims that an individual is able to successfully solve problems in their professional field by the usage of observation and insight. Schon (1983) highlights that only the individual's ability to question and engage in an effective way with a given situation that they are facing is what distinguishes those individuals as successful ones and not the amount of information they can recite. This supports the findings that reflecting on the course material upon each objective would not be beneficial by most of students who aspire deep learning of new educational concepts. In other words, this type of reflection is not of their preference, most of the participants highlight that they are only doing it for the sake of getting the grade only.

5.1.1 Objective by objective reflection.

Johns (2011) states that people may experience the same situations, however their gains from the same experience differ. Similarly, individuals draw parallels but they are never the same. Thus, people ought to be mindful and read specific signs or else they may get these signs incorrectly. The meant signs are supposedly subtle and requires perception, imagination and intuition. Subtle shifts must take place between present experience and past experience due to the subtle difference that happen to be between the two types of experiences; these shifts of response are always unknown outside the unfolding moment. Therefore, a practitioner who reflects is a person who is always aware of subtle shifts and responds in an appropriate manner. Relatively, the newest usage found in the results of this paper which is reflecting on each objective within one course helps the enrolled students not only evaluating their learning and outcomes of each objective, but also it gives them the room to practice mindfulness and subtle shifts. However, the majority of the participants cannot reach the rationale behind this type of reflective practice.

Lai and Calandra (2009) deduce that new teachers usually in authentic school contexts lack long-term classroom teaching experiences. Additionally, new teachers are found out to have an incomplete development in regards to the metacognitive skills that are needed for critical reflection. However, Lai and Calandra (2009) state that another group of researchers support that the new teachers' ability to reflect is developmental. This developmental process can be enhanced through different techniques, one of these techniques is structured journaling. This explains the importance and necessity of using reflections in the learning process on a regular basis. This shows that the importance of the reflection on each objective does not only rely on enhancing and improving the course material, it also affords regularity to the act of reflection that strengthens the reflective skills and gives it depth. Moreover, this also emphasizes the necessity of reflections for practitioners particularly at the beginning of their career.

5.2 Language Usage within the Reflective Practice

As for the second aspect that is concerned with the language where Hubbs and Brand (2010) depict the language as a code of agreement between the instructor and the student in regard to the reflection's stylistics so it would be easier on the instructor to

comprehend the students' reflection. They proclaim that reflection has no specific language because it is a subjective practice that relies heavily on the students' personal experiences, previous thoughts, insights and feelings. The findings agree with the latter thought as the participants did not have a problem in expressing themselves in formal academic English, however, some of them strongly agreed on having the freedom to express themselves without any leading or limitation imposed from the professor.

As Ramadan (2008) argues that students' perception of the value of reflecting on their learning is sometimes negative because of the general conditioning of the students while schooling to consider learning only as information gain and retention. Some of them also agreed that reflective practices are very subjective and they should only be viewed for mere learning not assessment. This could be supported by what Talbot (2008) mentions in regard to that; there is no sole way to teach, nor can one be outlined in a simple essay.

5.3 Guiding Instructions and Rubrics

The third aspect is the instructor's guidance as Hubbs and Brand (2010); Marchel (2004); Boud and Walker (1998) agreed that reflections should have some directions and description by the instructor so that the students will not get deviated and have the room to express their thoughts. This thesis tested this aspect through shaping the knowledge around the students' perception of rubrics and guiding instructions and which do they prefer. The majority expressed that their preference goes to the guiding instructions as the rubrics are more grade oriented. The findings also emphasize how the students perceive reflective practices as a subjective tool that enhances their learning and not their grades, therefore they care to a bid by the professor's instructions to result a reflection in a correct way because it helps them to learn and not for the sake of grades. Thus, some of them view rubrics as a limitation.

Talbot (2008) supports the latter thought as he argues that it is important for the instructor to ask the suitable question while designing the lesson. This shows the importance of shaping clear guiding instructions for the students to practice their reflective skills in an effective and well-organized manner in order for them to get in touch with the results and track the enhancement of their reflective skill. However, despite their various opinions, the participants did not deny the importance of both of them, because all of the

participants expressed that the main and first challenge of reflective practices is that they never knew how to do it as they have never experienced it in their undergraduate stage. Therefore, instructor's guidance for a reflective practice is crucial because it is a mental skill that requires direction and practice to be acquired and enhanced. As well as the rubrics; Catharo and Gilbertson (2017) state that based upon Kolb's learning cycle, before the beginning of the reflective process educators should provide students with a rubric for their assessment. This agrees with the participants opinion in regards of the importance of the rubrics' existence hand in hand with the guiding instructions but without limiting the students.

Bisman (2011) finds that the students despite of their high performance in writing traditional essay assignments; they did not demonstrate the critical, reflective and higher-order thinking skills expected in learning writing reflective journals assignments. Bisman (2011) adds that in this empirical study the learning journal was the final assignment in the course, therefore the students did not get the chance to identify the weaknesses in their skills, it was too late for providing actionable feedback for the students to redress their deficiencies. Relatively, the reflective process in a learning setting always needs a instructional guidance from its beginning and after it ends. The student needs to know how to do it, and in the middle of the process s/he has to know whether they are doing it correctly or not. In its final stage it is quite necessary to receive a feedback. The feedback is considerably an instructional guidance that takes place at the end of the reflective process. Through the feedback the students will be able to highlight their areas of strength and improvement areas then they will reflect on them to enhance their next trials for reflection.

Focusing on the aspect of depth in reflections Cathro and Gilbertson (2017) assert that although many reflective assignments tend to focus on the first two stages of Kolb's cycle based on an observation made by researchers, the major number of students had the ability to reach the third stage which is the abstract conceptualization. Additionally, Cathro and Gilbertson argue that to help the students to reach the fourth stage which is active experimentation the educators should provide further guidance on the format and the content of the reflective learning journals.   This is where the notion of using Kolb's cycle as a tool to support reflection as well as a tool to assess students, might support more

students to reach the final stage. To simplify, the educator should present examples of deep reflection especially active experimentation. These examples are to be provided within the assignment guidelines, the rubric or through a tutorial style discussion of the reflective learning journal drafts. Regardless the chosen method; the students need to be well supported to write reflectively. Particularly, this explains why some students who participate in this study mention that they lack any clue about reflective writing because they never experienced it in their undergraduate stage. The common challenge mentioned between the participants is that they did not know how to think or write reflectively so they had difficulty with their first assignment. Students need in the instructions some visual examples of previous assignments to be able to grasp the concept of reflection especially in their first time to reflect.

5.4 Conclusion

This paper's findings add one more usage which is evaluating the course material through reflecting on each objective separately and how does it relate to the course's main topic. Most of the participants give more importance to the first two main uses of reflections which are the student's skills enhancement as a practitioner and how the reflections aid them in understanding the course content. Most of the participants argue that they are able to shape more concrete concepts of the course materials through the latter two usages rather than the objective-by-objective reflection. The majority also highlight that reflective practices has a very positive impact on them as practitioners.

In regards to the language use the participants did not have any difficulty in expressing themselves in formal academic English. Nevertheless, some of them agree upon the importance of the freedom of expression as they should not be limited by the professors in such a subjective practice.

Most of the students prefer guiding instructions in reflections claiming that the rubrics are more grades oriented and limiting. However, no one denies the necessity of both of them together since that all of the participants had a common challenge that they did not know how to think or write reflectively in their first reflective practice because they did not practice reflection in their undergraduate level.

5.5 Implications of the Study

The findings of this thesis show that learning through a reflective process can be very productive and an addition to the learners' educational experience, it also show that reflective practices help in enhancing reflective skills and self-understanding. The thesis findings show that learners can shape their ideologies and consolidate concepts and relate theoretical knowledge to practice. Therefore, this learning technique should be introduced to schools especially in the grades were the students start shaping their identities, in other words adolescents should be introduced to the concept of reflection at early stage.

As for the instructional guidance, the teachers should bear in mind providing samples of reflective writing assignments in the assignment guidelines, or they should be keen to present for the students in class some of the previous students' reflections especially if the current students are experiencing reflective skills for the first time.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research

This paper recommends the study of the professors' perception of their student's reflections and how they view, comprehend and assess them, in addition to, studying the relation between the students' reflective practices and their performance level from the beginning of a certain course towards its end. It is also recommended to study the relationship between the reflective performance and instructional feedback.

5.7 Limitations

A limitation in this thesis is the sample size. The study was intended to cover from 50 to 60 participants, but only 38 students answered the online survey despite sending many reminders via email for further responses. Another limitation is that the literature did not offer ready-made surveys for the researchers to use in a quantitative test on this topic. All the studies found in the literature are qualitative content analyses of students' reflective journal entries. Therefore, the researcher could not find ready-made valid questionnaires to answer the research questions of the study. Hence, the researcher had to design a questionnaire of their own.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire

This is a survey to help develop the construct of reflective practices for Educators in an Egyptian Master's Program. This survey tackles any type of reflective practice whether in the format of summative journals, formative journals, longer essays (midterm or final papers), or in-class discussions. This survey contains 10 Likert type questions and 1 open-ended question that will only take from you 10 minutes. Please circle the answer choice that most closely reflects your opinion. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Gender *

_____

Current Profession

_____

1. I believe that writing reflections help me learn more and to shape concrete concepts of the course material:*

Mark only one oval.

- o Strongly Agree
- o Agree
- o Neutral
- o Disagree
- o Strongly disagree

2. Reflections help me become a better teacher/practitioner: *

Mark only one oval.

- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Neutral
- o Disagree
- o Strongly disagree

3. I perform in reflective assignments better when the professor provides clear guiding instructions for them:*

Mark only one oval.

- o   Strongly agree
- o   Agree
- o   Neutral
- o   Disagree
- o   Strongly disagree

4. As a student it is important for me to review a rubric for these reflective assignments: *

Mark only one oval.

- o   Strongly agree
- o   Agree
- o   Neutral
- o   Disagree
- o   Strongly disagree

5. One purpose of the reflective practice used in the master's Program is to evaluate the course material: *

Mark only one oval.

- o   Strongly agree
- o   Agree
- o   Neutral
- o   Disagree
- o   Strongly disagree

6. One purpose of the reflective practice in the masters' program is to come up with recommendations for updating the course material: *

Mark only one oval.

- o   Strongly agree
- o   Agree
- o   Neutral
- o   Disagree
- o   Strongly disagree

7. One purpose of the reflective practice in the masters' program is to help the students experience learning through a reflective process: *

Mark only one oval.

- o   Strongly agree
- o   Agree
- o   Neutral
- o   Disagree
- o   Strongly disagree

8. Using informal English helps me articulate a more accurate reflection than if I answer in formal

English: *

Mark only one oval.

- o   Strongly agree
- o   Agree
- o   Neutral
- o   Disagree
- o   Strongly disagree

9. I pay more attention to reflective assignments when they are assigned a higher percentage of the final grade than if they are assigned only a small percentage: *

Mark only one oval.

- o   Strongly agree
- o   Agree
- o   Neutral
- o   Disagree
- o   Strongly disagree

10. I find reflection assignments challenging: *

Mark only one oval.

- o   Strongly Disagree
- o   Disagree
- o   Neutral

      o   Agree

      o   Strongly Agree

11. What are the types of reflective assignments that you have experienced in this program (i.e. the assignments where you were asked to describe and analyze your understanding of the course content and main concepts, and what are the things that you learned)? Which type/s helped you achieve a better level of reflective practice? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B: IRB Approvals

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Mayada Emam** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants."

Date of Completion: 07/19/2018

Certification Number: 2832031

NIH National Institutes of Health
Office of Extramural Research

CASE #2017-2018-177

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

To: Mayada Emam

Cc: Dena Riad & Salma Serry

From: Atta Gebril, Chair of the IRB

Date: August 17, 2018

Re: Approval of study

This is to inform you that I reviewed your revised research proposal entitled "Reflective Practices of Educators in a Masters' Program in Egypt: A Case Study" and determined that it required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" category. As you are aware, the members of the IRB suggested certain revisions to the original proposal, but your new version addresses these concerns successfully. The revised proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

This approval letter was issued under the assumption that you have not started data collection for your research project. Any data collected before receiving this letter could not be used since this is a violation of the IRB policy.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor, Dr. Ashraf Hatem. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.

This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

Thank you and good luck.

Dr. Atta Gebril
IRB chair, The American University in Cairo
2046 HUSS Building
T: 02-26151919
Email: agebril@aucegypt.edu

Institutional Review Board
The American University in Cairo
AUC Avenue, P.O. Box 74
New Cairo 11835, Egypt.
tel 20.2.2615.1000
fax 20.2.27957565
Email: aucirb@aucegypt.edu

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. How do writing reflective papers help you in learning more and shaping concrete concepts of the course material?

2. Do reflective assignments influence your performance as a teacher/educator/practitioner? Please explain how.

3. Tell me more about learning through a reflective process.

4. How do you view guiding instructions and rubrics? Do you prefer on over the other? How far do they help you in approaching the reflective assignments?

5. Do you think there are challenges associated with reflective assignments practices? Could you please elaborate on them?

Appendix D: IRB Consent Form

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Documentation of Informed Consent for Participation in Research Study

Project Title: REFLECTIVE PRACTICES OF EDUCATORS IN A MASTERS'
PROGRAM IN EGYPT: A CASE STUDY

Principal Investigator:
Name: Mayada Emam
E-mail: mayadaemam@aucegypt.edu
Mobile: 010 64 65 60 12

*You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is to investigate the construct of reflective practices in an educational setting in Egypt which is the Master's Program of International and Comparative Education at the AUC, through the graduate students' perspective along with the professors' as well of reflective practices, and the findings may be published or presented. The expected duration of your participation is six months.

The procedures of the research will be as follows: the data will be collected from the graduate students who are enrolled in the International and Comparative Education master's program, in the Graduate School of Education, AUC, and their course instructors, who are all full-time faculty members in the ICE Department. Sample selection will be based on convenience sampling. The student sample will be from 50 to 60 graduate students and 4 faculty members. A10-minute survey will be distributed by the researcher to examine the participants' experience of reflective practices before and during the master's program, in addition to examining the kinds of reflective practices used within the program. This survey will be a Likert-type. In addition to 1-2 open-ended items to enable individuals to offer their own suggestions and describe their own experiences. The investigator will collect the data herself after obtaining the IRB approvals and the instructors' permission to administer the brief survey during their classes. Interviews will be carried out according to appointments that have been agreed to by the participants. The quantitative survey data will be analyzed through SPSS software. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed according to the three dimensions of my theoretical framework which are the purpose of the reflective practice, language and the teacher's guidance.

*There will not be any certain risks or discomforts associated with this research.

*There will not be any benefits to you from this research.

*The information you provide for purposes of this research anonymous and confidential.
*[*An explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subject's rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject; for example: "Questions about the research, my rights, or research-related injuries should be directed to Mayada Samy Emam 01064656012*."]

*Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or the loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature   _____

Printed Name   _____

Date   _____

List of Tables

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