

IRSTI 14.15.25
UDC 371.14

<https://doi.org/10.51889/2959-5762.2023.79.3.022>

Zhummykbayeva A.,^{1*}, Ablayeva M.¹

¹ Centre for pedagogical measurements of Autonomous educational organization
"Nazarbayev Intellectual schools",
Astana, Kazakhstan

TEACHER ATTESTATION: IDENTIFYING THE FACTORS INFLUENCING TEACHER REFLECTIVE SKILLS

Abstract

This research article examines reflective reports as part of the teacher appraisal model in a network of secondary schools in Kazakhstan. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study explores the factors that influence teachers' reflective practices in this context. Surveying schoolteachers (n=469) and analyzing appraisal-related documents reveal that teachers generally perceive reflective reports as valuable for enhancing their pedagogical practices. However, several factors, including a heavy workload, high requirements for reflective report writing, time constraints, lack of experience in written reflection, and inadequate understanding of the reflective report criteria, hindered their ability to evaluate their teaching practices critically. The study concludes by highlighting the need for policymakers to address these challenges to facilitate the effective use of reflective reports in teacher appraisal models. This research contributes to the limited literature on in-service teachers' reflective report writing as a part of teacher evaluation in the Kazakhstani context and elsewhere. It offers insights that could inform the more effective use of teacher reflections as one of the components of teacher appraisal.

Keywords: teacher evaluation, teacher attestation, reflective practice, teacher research, reflective report.

А.К. Жумыкбаева^{1*}, М.К. Аблаева¹

¹Назарбаев Зияткерлік мектептері
ДББҰ филиалы Педагогикалық өлшеулер орталығы,
Астана қаласы, Қазақстан

МҰҒАЛІМДЕРДІ АТТЕСТАЦИЯЛАУ: МҰҒАЛІМНІҢ РЕФЛЕКСИЯЛЫҚ ДАҒДЫЛАРЫНЫҢ ДАМУЫНА ӘСЕР ЕТЕТІН ФАКТОРЛАРДЫ АНЫҚТАУ

Аңдатпа

Бұл мақалада Қазақстанның жалпы білім беретін мектептер желісіндегі мұғалімдерді бағалау моделінің бір бөлігі болып саналатын рефлексиялық есеп зерделенеді. Зерттеуде аралас әдістерді қолдану арқылы осы контексте мұғалімдердің рефлексиялық тәжірибесіне әсер ететін факторлар қарастырылады. Мектеп мұғалімдерінен алынған сауалнама (n=469) және бағалауға қатысты құжаттар талдауы мұғалімдердің рефлексиялық есептерді педагогикалық тәжірибелерін жетілдіру үшін құнды деп қабылдайтынын көрсетеді. Дегенмен, бірнеше факторлар, соның ішінде көлемді жұмыс жүктемесі, рефлексиялық есеп жазуға қойылатын талаптардың жоғары болуы, уақыт жетіспеушілігі, жазбаша рефлексия жүргізу тәжірибенің болмауы және критерийлер туралы түсінігінің жеткіліксіз болуы олардың оқыту тәжірибесін сыни тұрғыдан бағалауға кедергі келтіреді. Зерттеуде рефлексиялық есептерді мұғалімдерді бағалау шеңберінде тиімді пайдалануы үшін саяси деңгейде аталған міндеттерді шешу қажеттілігі көрсетіледі. Зерттеу аясында Қазақстанда және басқа елдерде жеткілікті түрде зерделенбеген – мұғалім-

дердің тәжірибесін бағалауда рефлексиялық есептерді қолдану мәселе қарастырылады. Мұғалімнің рефлексиясын бағалау компоненттерінің бірі ретінде тиімді қолдану үшін ұсыныстар беріледі.

Түйін сөздер: мұғалімдерді бағалау, мұғалімдерді аттестаттау, рефлексиялық тәжірибе, мұғалімдер зерттеуі, рефлексиялық есеп.

Жұмыкбаева А.К.,^{1} Аблаева М.К.¹*
*¹АОО Назарбаев Интеллектуальные школы,
филиал Центр педагогических измерений,
г. Астана, Казахстан*

АТТЕСТАЦИЯ УЧИТЕЛЕЙ: ВЫЯВЛЕНИЕ ФАКТОРОВ, ВЛИЯЮЩИХ НА РАЗВИТИЕ РЕФЛЕКСИВНЫХ НАВЫКОВ УЧИТЕЛЯ

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается рефлексивный отчет как часть модели оценивания практики учителя в общеобразовательных школах Казахстана. На основе смешанных методов исследуются факторы, влияющие на рефлексивную практику учителей. Опрос учителей (469 человек) и анализ документов, связанных с аттестацией, позволили определить, что учителя считают рефлексивные отчеты полезными для развития своей педагогической практики. В то же время несколько факторов, в том числе большая рабочая нагрузка, высокие требования к написанию рефлексивного отчета, нехватка времени, отсутствие опыта письменной рефлексии и недостаточное понимание критериев оценивания рефлексивного отчета препятствовали критическому осмыслению учителями своей практики. В исследовании определяется необходимость решать эти проблемы на уровне политики, чтобы способствовать эффективному использованию рефлексивных отчетов в рамках оценивания учителей. Исследование рассматривает недостаточно изученный вопрос использования рефлексивных отчетов для оценивания учителей в Казахстане и других странах. Предложены рекомендации для более эффективного использования рефлексии учителя как одного из компонентов оценивания.

Ключевые слова: оценивание учителей, аттестация учителей, рефлексивная практика, исследование учителей, рефлексивный отчет

Main provisions. The teachers' written reflection on their own experience is a valuable tool for their professional development. The fact that teachers systematically study their experience and critically analyze it, discuss lessons with colleagues, and keep a written reflection contributes to the development of their reflective skills.

The fact that teachers, in their written reflections, do not pay attention to the changes that have occurred in their thought processes and practices, and think to respond «correctly» as expected from them, limits the purpose of reflection to promote professional growth as part of the teacher attestation.

The mandatory nature of writing a reflection report within the framework of teacher attestation and aimed at a high «rate» assessment is an obstacle to the perception of written reflection by teachers as a tool for professional development.

Mandatory reflective writing risks limiting the teacher's flexibility and leading to stress and emotional distress. School leadership and specialists coordinating professional support should review the approaches to providing support to teachers and consider the most effective aspects.

Introduction. The primary objective of teacher evaluation is to enhance the efficacy of teaching practices [1]. To this end, different nations employ varying approaches, including the adoption of reflective reports as an evaluative tool for teachers. Reflection has been acknowledged as a potent tool for teachers to critically examine their pedagogical strategies and, consequently, enhance student learning [2]. Research suggests that reflection positively influences teacher practice [3]. However,

researchers also acknowledge that critical evaluation of teaching practices may not always be feasible for teachers, primarily due to factors such as time constraints, lack of support [4], fear of criticism [5], and inadequate understanding [4]. Against this backdrop, the current article highlights concerns surrounding the use of reflective reports as an element of teacher evaluation in Kazakhstan's network of secondary schools.

Teacher evaluation (attestation) is a procedure carried out every five years according to a set of criteria to identify the level of a teacher's professional qualification [6]. Since there is a range of different school types in Kazakhstan (including but not limited to rural, urban, lyceums, gymnasiums, mainstream state schools, specialized schools, schools for gifted, private, elite, and international schools), schools employ different teacher evaluation instruments to promote the professional development through teacher attestation. The current article is associated with attestation within the network of schools implementing reflective report writing as a part of teacher attestation. There are six levels of teacher pedagogical mastery within the network schools: teacher-intern, teacher, teacher-moderator, teacher-expert, teacher-researcher, and teacher-master [6; 7]. Since 2017 an updated model of evaluation of teachers as part of attestation has been implemented within the network of schools, which includes three stages: school evaluation, independent evaluation, and decision on attestation (teacher's interview with the attestation committee). The evaluation system aims to develop the teacher's research culture and reflective practice [7].

Teachers' reflective reports are evaluated externally by trained experts. The main criteria for evaluation are reflection (analysis, evaluation, planning the development of practice) on the planning, teaching, assessment of students' learning achievements, and assessment of the quality of the lesson. The underlying purpose of assessing teachers' reflective reports is that reflective reports are linked to teachers' research practices. Teachers think, reflect, and change their practices by studying their lessons. The primary act of any schoolteacher is his or her classroom teaching. When writing their reflective reports, teachers do it based on their lessons, depending on the pedagogical mastery they apply in the attestation period. It is worth mentioning that teachers are committed to writing a reflective report as a mandatory component of teacher attestation. Although teachers have experience in reflective writing through various professional development courses, teachers struggle to write reflective reports based on classroom practices [4]. At the same time, teachers show positive dynamics in other components of teacher evaluation, such as students' achievements, evidence of professional development, and other artifacts. Therefore, this study explores teachers' understanding and experiences of reflective writing as a part of teacher attestation and identifies challenges in teachers' reflective report writing.

The following research questions guided this study: What are teachers' perceptions about writing reflective reports? Why do teachers struggle to write reflective reports? What factors influence the writing of reflective reports by teachers as part of the teacher evaluation process?

Since teachers' work are multidimensional, teacher evaluation cannot be separated from other aspects of teaching and learning [8]. A review of the international literature shows that collaboration, systemic professional support, and reflection must be at the level of educational policy if there is to improve teacher practice through evaluation. However, in many school systems, reflection, especially structured written reflection or a reflective report, is not required for teacher evaluation. Scholars have argued that self-assessment and reflection as assessment tools can improve teacher practice. Of course, however, teachers cannot consistently demonstrate and prove what they have learned and evaluate their practice in reflective writing. Researchers argue that evaluators/teachers/mentors' understanding of reflective writing affects how they engage and evaluate students in reflective writing [9]. Chan et al. [9] examined teachers' opinions about evaluating reflective writing by interviewing six university teachers in Hong Kong who evaluated the written reflective writing of 135 students. The grading was done on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = poor, 5 = excellent). Overall, this study showed that teachers place different values on reflective writing. This suggests that different understandings of reflective writing may be one of the factors inhibiting the writing of quality reflective writing.

A study by Tummons [10], through interviews and document analysis, revealed that the course trainees resisted writing reflective practice. This does not mean that students reject the broader process of reflective practice or its position within the teaching profession; instead, they refuse to practice reflective writing, perhaps because it is an unfamiliar genre for them [10, p-480]. A study conducted by Pak [4] at one of the gifted schools in Kazakhstan found that teachers face challenges when writing reflective reports. This is often due to certain aspects of report writing being unfamiliar to them, and they may require support from experienced colleagues. Furthermore, the study also identified other obstacles, such as high workloads at school, which can make reflective writing more challenging for teachers.

If the goal of teacher professional development is sustainable change, it must engage teachers in analysis, critical appraisal, reflection, and improvement of their practices in the classroom. One well-known approach to studying a teacher's practice is Action Research [11]. Scholars who study Action Research often point to its usefulness in developing teachers' reflective skills [12]. As discussed earlier in the article, teachers write a reflective report based on one lesson they have taught, where they analyze and evaluate their practice.

Baumann and Duffy [12], reviewing 34 publications on "teacher research in the classroom," found that teacher research is based on a knowledge base that guides and informs classroom instruction. Most papers they reviewed included literature reviews demonstrating that teachers were familiar with existing research and theories [12, p-610]. In addition, this study demonstrates that one of the attributes of a teacher-researcher is reflective practice. Also, Baumann and Duffy [12] define the teacher-researcher as: "a reflective, purposeful, action-oriented researcher who explores personal issues in the classroom in practical ways" [12, p-614].

Kazakhstan's government has invested immensely in its education sector for the last two decades. However, little is known about how the implemented novelties are influencing teacher and student learning. Moreover, studies elsewhere explored the reflective practices of student teachers (for example, Tummons) in higher education institutions, and there is a scarcity of research related to reflective practices of practicing teachers at secondary schools [13]. This paper, therefore, aims to fill the gaps in the existing research on teacher appraisal, teacher research and reflexivity, and professional development in Kazakhstani secondary schools and elsewhere.

While developing the questionnaire items, we considered the teachers' research practices, such as lesson study and action research. Consequently, we aimed to look at the relationship between the teachers' abilities to reflect and their research practices.

Materials and Methods. This article is part of a research project titled "*Study of the professional development of teachers in the framework of attestation*" (AP19679296). The data reported in this article were collected using a mixed method approach, including an online questionnaire and analysis of appraisal-related documents [14] to address the following research questions: What are teachers' perceptions about writing reflective reports? Why do teachers struggle to write reflective reports? What factors influence the writing of reflective reports by teachers as part of the teacher evaluation process? The study aimed to explore teachers' understanding and experiences of reflective writing as a part of teacher attestation and identifies challenges in reflective report writing. Documents included analytical reports for the last three years (2019, 2020, and 2021), Teacher Appraisal Regulations of network schools, and Regulations for independent assessment of the reflective report on the lesson. Document analysis was employed in order to complement the survey findings as well as to compare the major issues with teachers' voices.

An online survey questionnaire was administered to all teachers of network schools who underwent teacher attestation in 2021 and 2022. Four hundred sixty-nine (n=469) teachers filled out the survey. Of these, 122 teachers have more than ten years of teaching experience in the system of network schools. 70 teachers out of 469 are teachers of mathematics, 62 teachers of English, 49 of biology, 41 of Kazakh language and literature, 39 of Russian language and literature, and 38 of physics and other subjects.

The majority of respondents have the level of pedagogical mastery – teacher-moderator (n=231), while the least number of survey respondents are teacher-interns (n=24). The second dominating number of teachers is teacher-experts (n=113) and teachers (n=95). The majority of the teachers' work language is Kazakh (n=201); 174 teachers indicated that their medium of instruction is Russian, while 94 teachers use English. Seventy-nine (n=79) teachers responding to the survey had experience in teacher training or were professional development course trainers.

Hosted in Microsoft Forms, the online survey questionnaire contained twenty closed-ended and five open-ended questions to capture the research participants' perceptions about and challenges with reflective report writing and factors influencing the writing of reflective reports as a part of teacher appraisal.

The survey used “Yes” and “No” questions, questions with multiple answers, and Likert scales from 1 to 5, where 1 stand for ‘strongly agree,’ 2 for ‘agree,’ 3 for ‘neutral,’ 4 for ‘disagree’ and 5 for ‘strongly disagree.’ The survey questions covered a) demographic information about the teachers, b) their experiences with new teacher attestation and reflective report writing, challenges and factors, and c) the relationship with teacher attestation, reflective practice, and Action Research/Lesson study practices of teachers.

The survey questions were administered in Kazakh and Russian to ensure active participation.

Results and Discussions. The findings are presented into four main themes: teachers' perceptions about reflective writing, challenges associated with reflective writing, factors influencing teachers' reflective writing, and the link between teacher reflectivity and Action Research/Lesson Study.

Teachers' Perceptions about Reflective Writing

Results revealed that 62% of survey respondents (n=290) indicated they do not have difficulties with reflective report writing as a part of teacher appraisal, whereas 38% (n=179) responded that they do have difficulties. Respectively, 57% of teachers (n=267) responded “Yes” to the question, “In your opinion, is it necessary to write a reflective report as part of the attestation?” and 43% (n=202) of respondents chose “No.” A striking majority of respondents (n=220 and n=177) chose ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ to the statement ‘The systematic study of my lessons positively contributes to the writing of a reflective report.’ Although most participants perceived reflective report writing as something positive for developing their teaching practices, some teachers argued its usefulness and relevance. Below are some insights from open-ended survey questions:

To develop practice, it is essential to reflect systematically on your teaching. However, the report is far from the best tool for this. Writing a reflective report has a low efficiency (productivity), as it takes much time.

Reflective report writing is an extra burden. It is unnecessary because writing the report does not improve teachers' experience. Instead, provide constructive feedback to lessons.

I have to write the reflective report because of teacher appraisal.

Without a reflective report and reflection in general, as required by the attestation, I have relatively good results for the semester/ year in various competitions, including project competitions and Olympiads, as well as the results of the Cambridge Assessment.

These open-ended responses indicate that some teachers merely perceive the teacher reflective activities as one of the aspects of the high-stake teacher evaluation process and execute the reflective report for the sake of appraisal. Researchers [15] ensure that teachers learn in a more comprehensive, meaningful, and formative scope of appraisal rather than mandating rigorous and high-stake ones. While some teachers criticize the mandatory reflective writing, others see the value in reflecting on their teaching practices in terms of progress and diagnosing areas for improvement:

Analyzing my pedagogical path, I understand how important it [reflection] is for me. Without reflection, it is impossible to progress.

Reflection allows teachers to evaluate their teaching practices, identify areas for improvement, and develop strategies to enhance their instructional skills.

The insights above reflect teachers' different perceptions of reflective report writing. It can be seen from the open-ended responses that reflective report writing based on one lesson can be both positive and negative for teachers due to differing teacher experiences, skills, subject matter, and students. Generally, these findings align with research elsewhere. For example, researchers Williams and Grudnoff [13] compared the perceptions of both beginner and experienced teachers about the reflection for practice and found out that both groups were skeptical about the reflection at the beginning but came to the realization that reflection can be used as a tool to analyze and change their practices. However, at the same time, these researchers suggested that regardless of teaching experience, teachers need support and guidance in developing reflection skills [13]. Another study by Shukri [16] investigating the relationship between teacher development and reflective teaching found that teacher reflection has a critical role in enhancing teacher development.

Challenges Associated with Reflective Writing

Although most teachers have no difficulties with reflective report writing, the number of those with challenges comprised 179 (38%), which is a serious indicator to pay attention to. Explaining their responses, 38% of those with reflective writing challenges highlighted various challenges. The most mentioned challenge was related to the reflective report's 'analysis and quality evaluation' part. The second most challenging aspect was the 'understanding of criteria of the reflective report.' These imply that it is vital to have the same understanding of the criteria when it comes to the high-stakes assessment process in teacher appraisal. The discrepancy in understanding of the assessment criteria by appraisers and appraisees may result in low motivation among teachers [17] as well as neglect of the primary purpose of the appraisal, which is teacher professional learning. The current study also found that teachers have difficulties with the format and structure of the reflective report and the lack of constructive feedback from trainers. Teachers pointed out that they had the following difficulties while preparing for the teacher appraisal and writing their reflective reports: the lack of experience in writing reflective reports, lack of time, difficulties while maintaining evidence in the report, low support from trainers, word count, and difficulties with understanding the instructions and criteria for reflective report writing. Teachers elaborated on all these challenges through open-ended questions. Below given are some excerpts:

In the section on assessment, although it is written expertly, the examiner gives a low score. It is better to have a full course on how to write reflectively. The report has difficulties in writing a general conclusion. Writing without repeating one's thoughts, it would be better to show examples of the best-written report.

Suppose $1+1=2$, and there is no other option. In that case, when writing the [reflective] report, teachers, trainers, and evaluators' vision sometimes diverges. What you want to write is considered incorrect, and too many other empty words must be written so that the number of words comes out. It is necessary to write briefly and clearly.

We conduct the research every year, but if the criteria and descriptors of the actual assessment are given according to the research, we will not be able to find the accuracy because each trainer has different requirements.

These sayings reflect that teachers have difficulties, and their challenges vary. The quantitative findings on teachers' challenges related to the 'Analysis, assessment of the quality of the lesson and forecasting the development of one's practice and the practice of colleagues in the professional community' part of the reflective report align with the document analysis findings, revealing that teachers have low scores on reflective reports. These findings align with other studies elsewhere. For example, a qualitative study in England by Tummons [10] revealed that student teachers had difficulties with reflective writing. If some students perceived the written reflections as permanent evidence of bad practice, others resisted writing because of the unfamiliarity of the experience. Therefore, making the reflective report writing more of a formative assessment was suggested, thus lessening its high stake, reaching teachers' more meaningful, critical, and honest writing, and building constructive conversation between the teachers and assessors [10].

Factors Influencing Teachers' Reflective Writing

The present study analyzed teacher appraisal results, revealing a notable weakness in the 'analysis and quality evaluation' aspect of teacher performance. The conclusions drawn from this analysis were corroborated by survey responses obtained from the teachers. The survey questionnaire included a question that allowed the respondents to choose up to four difficulties they encountered when writing a reflective report. The majority of the teachers (n=212) reported that *a heavy workload* was a significant impediment to producing a high-quality reflective report. This finding confirmed the findings of a previous small-scale study in Kazakhstan by Pak (2020), who also found that teachers had difficulties providing high-quality reflection because of a heavy workload. This finding was followed by *the high standards* expected for the report, identified as a significant challenge by n=176 teachers. *Time constraints* (n=166) were the third most frequently reported difficulty, followed by a *lack of experience in reflective writing* (n=157). Scholars [13] emphasize that composing reflective pieces for professional and academic purposes is not an inherent skill and necessitates a specific teaching approach. Additionally, respondents indicated that the *lack of understanding of the reflective report criteria* (n=115) and the *lack of confidence in their ability to produce a satisfactory reflective report* (n=103) were equally significant obstacles. A recent study by Murphy and O'Mahony [18] on reflection writing as an assessment tool for undergraduate students found that students were uncertain about the content and length of reflections despite prior training. Elaborating on the findings, the researchers highlighted that students did not see the reflections as about themselves and how they had changed. Instead, they were worrying about providing the 'right answer' in their reflections [18, p-7]. These are related to the current study's findings in terms of how difficult it might be for teachers to produce a quality reflection when it comes to mandatory writing and assessment. Teachers worry about the 'right answer' instead of genuinely analyzing their practices in such a context.

The Link between Teacher Reflectivity and Action Research/Lesson Study

Among respondents, 227 and 177 teachers chose 'agree' and 'strongly agree' to the survey question 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement "Continuous study of my lessons, systematic use of Action Research/Lesson Study in my practice develops my reflective skills?'. Similar to this response rate, teachers chose 'strongly agree' (n=177) and 'agree' (n=220) to the statement 'The systematic study of my lessons positively contributes to the writing of a reflective report.' One participant elaborated on her or his response this way:

How I planned my lessons? Did I take into account students' needs? How did the lesson go? To what extent was the assessment practical? What was effective and what was not during the assessment of the quality? What outcome did I reach? What should I pay attention to in the future? These questions help me develop my reflective skills.

Despite the majority of respondents acknowledging their engagement in Action Research and Lesson Study, certain teachers criticized the requirement of submitting a reflective report as a component of teacher appraisal. Specifically, 91% (n=426) of survey participants confirmed their participation in Action Research/Lesson Study, while only 9% responded negatively. Among the 426 teachers who engage in Action Research/Lesson Study, 331 perform it multiple times annually, indicating a significant response rate. This finding suggests that a substantial number of teachers engage in systematic lesson analysis and possess knowledge of their strengths and areas for growth. Notably, this raises a pertinent question regarding teachers' challenges with reflective report writing, as elucidated in previous sections, with 38% (n=179) of respondents highlighting the difficulty they experience. Researchers contend that reflective practice represents a vital aspect of each stage of Action Research and Lesson Study [5]. Notably, a considerable proportion of teachers systematically engage in classroom-based research, such as Action Research/Lesson Study. Nevertheless, a substantial subset of teachers confronts challenges in reflective writing. This discovery can be linked to the outcomes of the previous section, wherein teachers identified factors that influence their reflective writing. Consequently, despite possessing reflective skills, teachers may experience difficulty in effectively organizing their thoughts as stipulated by the reflective report due to their demanding workload.

Furthermore, an alternative interpretation of this finding could be explained by the responses provided by teachers, wherein they indicated the reflective report's stringent requirements (n=176) and their lack of experience crafting a reflective report (n=157). An alternative explanation for this disparity could be elucidated by the fifth salient factor identified by teachers in their responses, namely, the inadequate comprehension of regulations governing reflective report writing (n=115). Therefore, one can deduce that while teachers may possess the ability to reflect and analyze their classroom practices effectively, not all may excel in the presentation or composition of reflective reports. Additionally, the high-stakes nature of appraisal renders the reflective writing process a weighty and exacting endeavor. Nonetheless, a more rigorous and comprehensive investigation of these factors is imperative to uncover various viewpoints on why composing reflective reports poses a challenge for teachers. Shukri's [16] study found that teachers "have to keep learning from previous experiences, attending workshops and doing empirical research studies in a classroom in order to keep updated to the new teaching approaches, try to find solutions and attain professionalism in teaching" [16,p-199].

Conclusions. This study shed light on teachers' perceptions and challenges regarding reflective report writing in Kazakhstani schools' teacher attestation system. Overall, the participants view reflective practice positively and as a valuable tool for enhancing their teaching practices. However, some teachers criticized the mandatory and appraisal-oriented nature of reflective report writing. This finding raises concerns about its potential implications for teachers' professional development, given that adults learn best when motivated and recognize their learning needs [19]. Moreover, mandatory reflection can restrict teacher flexibility and contribute to stress and burnout, particularly in the context of already demanding schedules. Addressing these issues requires effective leadership from school administrators and professional support from teacher-trainers and mentors. It is crucial to recognize that reflective practice is not a one-time learning goal but an ongoing process requiring pedagogical intervention [13]. The findings suggest that several factors impede teacher reflection. These factors include workload, time constraints, lack of experience in reflective writing, lack of understanding of the reflective report criteria, and lack of confidence in their ability to produce a satisfactory reflective report. These findings indicate the rather hectic and demanding nature of teacher reflective practices, which can lead to further resistance to writing reflections on the part of teachers.

One of our hypotheses was that if teachers are systematically engaged in classroom research, such as Action Research and Lesson Study, they do not have difficulties with reflective writing. However, the findings revealed that the majority of teachers (n=331) are involved in multiple and regular Action Research/Lesson Study, and still, a considerable number of teachers (n=179) have difficulties with reflective writing. Teachers need to engage in critical reflection on the results of their Action Research and Lesson Study. Simply conducting multiple research practices without a deep understanding of their implications is insufficient. It is vital to conduct separate research to determine whether teachers use classroom research to improve their practices or merely to meet school leadership or appraisal requirements. Nonetheless, we explain these findings with the identified factors that impede teachers' quality reflective writing discussed above. In addition, we can suggest that teachers' ongoing classroom research practices and regular reflective records that are not tied to teacher evaluation but are directed to identifying teacher strengths and areas for improvement might be one way to go [16]. Teachers might reconsider their Action Research and Lesson Study approaches to tackle classroom challenges [5]. Otherwise, teachers would continue struggling with reflective writing once every five years during their attestation period. The teachers should turn reflective practice into an everyday routine in order to be able to self-evaluate and write reflective reports. Surveying only teachers and employment of a mere survey were the current study's limitations. While the survey gave insights into teachers' perceptions and factors impeding teacher reflective writing, further in-depth individual and focus-group interviews with teachers, professional development course trainers, and school leadership would strengthen the data by unpacking schoolteachers' realities undertaken during their teacher evaluation practices. More importantly, a vast majority of teachers consented to participate in future interviews and left their contact details while answering the survey questions.

This study is funded by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan under Grant № AP19679296.

References:

1. Darling-Hammond, L., Amrein-Beardsley, A., Haertel, E.H., & Rothstein, J.. *Getting teacher evaluation right: A background paper for policy makers*. National Academy of Education, (2011)93(6), 8-15. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41497541>
2. Dewey J. *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. In *John Dewey on education: Selected writings*, ed. R.Archambault, (1974).230–59. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
3. Park S., & Oliver J.S. *National Board Certification (NBC) as a catalyst for teachers' learning about teaching: The effects of the NBC process on candidate teachers' PCK development*. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching: The Official Journal of the National Association for Research in Science Teaching*, (2008).45(7), 812-834. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.20234>
4. Pak V. *Teacher Appraisal System in one Nazarbayev Intellectual School in Kazakhstan: Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences*(2020).. <http://nur.nu.edu.kz/handle/123456789/4914>
5. Dana N.F., & Yendol-Hoppey D. (2019). *The reflective educator's guide to classroom research: Learning to teach and teaching to learn through practitioner inquiry*. Corwin.
6. Ayubayeva N. *Teacher collaboration for professional learning: Case studies of three schools in Kazakhstan [Doctoral dissertation, University of Cambridge]*. (2018). <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.20729>
7. *Attestation Guidelines 2021*). Rules for attestation of pedagogical workers and persons equated to them in the branches of the AEO "Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools".
8. Zepeda, S. J. (2006). *High stakes supervision: We must do more*. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 9(1), 61-73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603120500448154>
9. Chan, C. K., Wong, H. Y., & Luo, J. (2020). *An exploratory study on assessing reflective writing from teachers' perspectives*. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(4), 706-720. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1773769>
10. Tummons J. 'It sort of feels uncomfortable': *problematizing the assessment of reflective practice*, *Studies in Higher Education*, (2011). 36:4, 471-483 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075071003671794>
11. Hendricks C.C. *Improving schools through action research: A reflective practice approach*. Pearson. One Lake Street, Upper Saddle River, (2017). New Jersey 07458.
12. Baumann J.F., & Duffy A. M. *Teacher-researcher methodology: Themes, variations, and possibilities*. *The Reading Teacher*, (2001). 54(6), 608-615. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20204961>
13. Williams R., & Grudnoff L. *Making sense of reflection: A comparison of beginning and experienced teachers' perceptions of reflection for practice*. *Reflective Practice*, (2011). 12(3), 281-291.
14. Creswell J.W. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications. (2013).
15. Danielson C. *Charlotte Danielson on rethinking teacher evaluation*. *Education Week*, 35(28), 20-24. (2016).
16. Shukri N. *Female teachers' perception of reflective teaching as a teacher development tool in the Saudi context*. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, (2014). 5(5), 192-201.
17. Firestone W.A. *Teacher evaluation policy and conflicting theories of motivation*. *Educational Researcher*, (2014).43(2), 100-107. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X14521864>
18. Murphy C., & O'Mahony T. *Submitting the 'right' reflection*. *Reflective Practice*, 1-14. (2023).
19. Knowles M.S., Holton E., & Swanson, R. *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (6th ed.). (2005). Elsevier.