

Evolution of Reflective Teaching: Key Themes, Trends, and Scholarly Contributions (1999-2024)

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Research Paper

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Abstract: Reflective teaching (RT), a key component of contemporary education, is linked to professional development, encouraging educators to improve their practices through reflection and self-assessment. Despite the growth of RT literature, a comprehensive analysis of its key themes, scholarly contributions, trends, and evolution remains scarce. This bibliometric study examined 461 articles from 1,373 Web of Science-indexed publications spanning 1999 to 2024. Using VOSviewer software, it conducted analyses on term co-occurrence, citation patterns, co-citation relationships, and bibliographic linkages. The study identified three publication phases: Inception (1999-2005, n=17, 3.68%), Growth (2005-2019, n=273, 59.21%), and Rapid Growth (2019-2024, n=171, 37.09%), showing increased interest in RT, particularly in the last five years. In addition, the study detected five thematic clusters: (1) Reflective Pedagogy in Teacher Education; (2) Contextual Challenges and Professional Development; (3) Collaborative Reflection and Learning Communities; (4) Action Research and Continuous Professional Development; and (5) Beliefs, Self-Efficacy, and Classroom Practices. The study also highlighted influential authors and seminal works and discussed their contributions to the development of RT theories and practices. More diverse applications and cross-disciplinary studies are needed to explore RT's full potential. Insights from this study outline RT's evolution and provide a roadmap for future research to bridge gaps and promote innovation and reflection in teaching.

Keywords: Bibliometric Mapping, Evolution, Professional Development, Reflective Teaching, VOSviewer

Introduction

In the evolving field of education, reflective teaching (RT) has attracted significant interest from scholars and become a key trait of highly skilled educators. RT is a critical practice in educational research and practice, enhancing the professional development of educators by encouraging continuous improvement and self-assessment. This systematic process involves self-observation, self-evaluation, and the subsequent adjustment of teaching practices, combining theoretical knowledge with practical application, which enables teachers to address classroom challenges more effectively (Tang, 2023). In this process, teachers must critically analyze their instructional methods, consider student feedback, and make adaptations to increase teaching efficiency. To inspire future teachers to develop adaptability and reflection, one solution is "to develop [them] as reflective practitioners who can make their own informed decisions about their practice based on such reflection" (Farrell, 2019, p. 38).

RT holds significant value, as it bridges theoretical knowledge and practical application. This approach requires deep reflection and research in instructional practices to continually assess and

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compare actions against predetermined standards. Despite extensive literature on RT, there is a lack of comprehensive bibliometric analyses mapping the development and trends of RT research over time. A comprehensive bibliometric study can synthesize existing research, identify key trends, keywords, main contributions, and gaps, and offer comprehensive insights into RT practices within education. Such a study is significant from several perspectives. First, it provides an overview of the development and trends in RT research, identifying key focus areas and gaps in the literature. By analyzing citation patterns, co-authorship networks, and thematic trends, this bibliometric research provides important perspectives on key studies as well as new domains of research to inform future work. Second, a bibliometric study can shed light on the broader applicability of RT across different educational contexts and subjects, as well as identify under-researched areas by mapping the distribution of RT research. Third, it can help enhance the advancement of more efficient RT methods, tools, and practices by extracting key themes and trends from the literature.

Given the growing demand for comprehensive evidence summaries within applied linguistics (Visonà & Plonsky, 2020), the authors of this bibliometric analysis sought to bridge gaps in the literature on RT by presenting a comprehensive and multifaceted analysis of previous research. Unlike earlier review studies that examined the conceptual basis as well as real-world applications of RT, this study distinguishes itself by employing a bibliometric approach to map the trends, focus areas, key themes, and influential contributors of RT research from 1998 to 2024. Thus, this research directly explored these key questions:

Research Question One: What are the key themes and trends in reflective teaching literature from 1999 to 2024, and how have they contributed to teacher education and professional development?

Research Question Two: How has the scholarly landscape of reflective teaching evolved, and which authors and works have significantly shaped its theoretical and practical contributions?

Research Question Three: What gaps and opportunities for interdisciplinary research exist to further advance the field of reflective teaching?

Literature Review

Various discussions on RT appear throughout research on teacher training and career growth (Akbari, 2007; Cornford, 2002; Farrell, 1999, 2016; Gore, 1987; Kelchtermans, 2009; Kuit et al., 2001; Larrivee, 2000; Rodriguez-Valls, 2014; Tang, 2023; Tsangaridou & Siedentop, 1995), highlighting its growing prominence over the past few decades as an essential element in advancing professional growth and pedagogical enhancement. Across most studies and publications on RT, the roots of this educational paradigm are linked to the early 1900s, with two key figures: Dewey (1933), who explored these ideas in *How We Think: A Re-statement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educational Process*, and Schön (1983, 1987, 1991).

The theoretical underpinnings of RT are diverse and multifaceted, drawing from various educational theories and models. Key contributions come from Dewey's (1933) notion of reflective thinking, Schön's (1987) concept of the reflective practitioner, and Zeichner's (1994) frameworks for RT. Dewey (1933) described RT as a deliberate, continuous, and thoughtful examination of beliefs or assumed knowledge, framing it as a critical skill for problem-solving, critical thinking, and ultimately, effective teaching. Schön (1987) introduced the idea of the "reflective practitioner," emphasizing two forms of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Hong et al., 2019). The former refers to reflection during the teaching process, enabling real-time adjustments based on observations and experiences, while the latter occurs after teaching, allowing teachers to analyze and evaluate their actions to improve future practice. Zeichner (1994) categorized RT into three paradigms: technical, practical, and critical reflection, each serving different goals in the educational context. These pioneers argued that RT encourages teachers to carefully analyze instructional approaches, classroom dynamics, and learner outcomes to create a more adaptable and impactful learning environment. Furthermore, RT strengthens teachers' growth while greatly improving student learning and the overall quality of education. The theories highlight the need for the systematic analysis of teaching

experiences to achieve continuous professional growth (Gore, 1987). Engaging in reflective practices provides teachers with opportunities to identify and address instructional weaknesses, design effective solutions, and continually improve their teaching strategies (Tang, 2023).

More recent studies have captured the growing enthusiasm for reflective practice and RT in educational fields, leading to the development of various RT frameworks. Farrell (2019) discusses ways in which educator training programs may utilize various tools—such as technology, team teaching, peer coaching, dialogue journals, supportive partnerships, discussions, experiential learning, action research, and analytical scenarios—to involve teachers in reflective activities. These studies emphasize RT's significance in preparing educators and advancing their careers, demonstrating how reflective approaches strengthen teachers' capacity to thoughtfully assess their instruction, which results in higher quality instructional strategies and more notable student outcomes. For instance, Kuit et al. (2001) linked RT to improved teacher effectiveness and greater student engagement. Belvís et al. (2013) evaluated a reflective practice program in teaching and reported strong approval from participants, its suitability for teaching, and significant learning outcomes, although its overall impact was deemed moderate.

Later on, some researchers (Akbari, 2007; Birmingham, 2004; Conway, 2001; Fendler, 2003; Griffiths, 2000; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Zeichner, 1985) explored different dimensions of RT and offered critiques. For instance, Akbari (2007) published a critical appraisal of RT, arguing that while the practice is widely endorsed in teacher education, it often lacks a critical dimension. He pointed out that reflective practices are frequently retrospective, focusing on past experiences rather than promoting innovative and forward-looking approaches to teaching. Akbari emphasizes the need for RT to incorporate both practical and theoretical considerations, stressing the significance of incorporating teachers' firsthand experiences and practical insights within the reflective process.

The landscape of RT has been evolving for about four decades, with several emerging trends becoming the focus of numerous studies and directing future exploration. In this regard, researchers have raised issues such as the integration of digital tools and technology (Genus, 2006; Mair, 2012; Tripp & Rich, 2012; Yuksel, 2013), collaborative reflection (Clarà et al., 2019; Peel & Shortland, 2004; Zeichner & Liston, 2013), and a focus on equity and inclusion (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Howard, 2003). The use of digital tools and technologies, such as video recordings (Bergman, 2015; Eröz-Tuğa, 2013; Merriam et al., 2018), online reflection platforms (Chua, 2022; Dilling & Vogler, 2023; Heymann et al., 2022; Keramati et al., 2024), and digital portfolios (Chye et al., 2019; Cleveland, 2018; Wall et al., 2006) in RT, has been a hotbed of research, laying the groundwork for the documentation and analysis of teaching practices. These tools offer innovative chances for teachers to participate in thoughtful self-examination of their teaching methods. Tripp and Rich (2012) documented that digital tools deepen reflective practices, accelerate meaningful professional development, and enable teachers to exchange their insights among colleagues while gaining constructive responses throughout their growth process. Collaborative reflection emphasizes the importance of reflective discussions among peers and fosters a supportive professional learning group, where teachers exchange experiences, gain insights from one another, gain diverse perspectives, and collectively decide on improving their teaching practices, as noted by Zeichner and Liston (2013). The critical role of RT in promoting equity and inclusion in education, and in creating an inclusive classroom environment, has also garnered attention. In their studies, Howard (2003) and Gay and Kirkland (2003) concluded that RT can help teachers develop culturally responsive teaching strategies, meet the varying needs of their learners, and reduce disparities in educational outcomes, highlighting RT's transformative potential in promoting social justice in education.

As another branch of studies on RT, several comprehensive reviews have been conducted on reflection and RT, some of which are described below. Tsangaridou and Siedentop (1995) described and commented on various perspectives regarding theory and research on RT published between 2010 and 2020, focusing on three dimensions: conceptual alternatives and theoretical traditions, practical and empirical efforts, and methodological issues along with suggestions for further studies. In their scoping review, Anani Sarab and Mardian (2022) systematically analyzed a corpus of 92 papers on RT in EFL/ESL education, categorizing definitions, theoretical frameworks, research methods, as well

as the intricate nature of reflective practices. They reported that the explanations of teacher reflection tend to be broad and descriptive and that most studies have focused on in-service teaching contexts, using qualitative methodologies in the majority of cases.

Teacher educators and policymakers require access to comprehensive reviews of existing research to make informed decisions about teacher training programs. A bibliometric study can compile and analyze the evidence on RT, promoting the adoption of evidence-based practices in teacher education (Anani Sarab & Mardian, 2022). This need highlights the significance of the present bibliometric study on RT. This comprehensive review would serve as a valuable resource for educators, researchers, and policymakers, providing a solid foundation for promoting effective teaching practices and improving educational outcomes.

Methodology

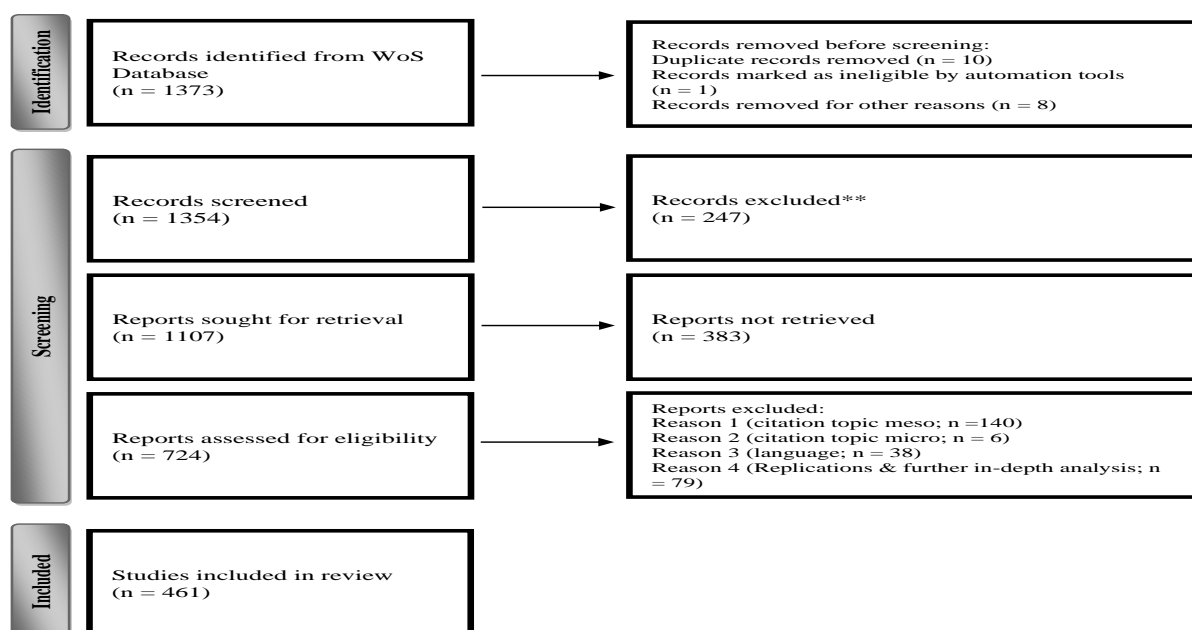
This structured bibliometric analysis was carried out following the guidelines of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to offer a thorough insight into the development and current state of knowledge in the RT literature. The PRISMA 2020 Statement, available at <http://prisma-statement.org/PRISMAstatement/checklist.aspx> (accessed on 7 August 2023), includes 27 items to be addressed and explored across three sequential steps: identification, screening, and inclusion. The PRISMA 2020 flowchart for recent systematic reviews, focusing solely on database and register searches, is shown below to outline the research process.

Data Source and Search Strategy

The Web of Science (WoS) database was selected for this bibliometric analysis due to its comprehensive coverage and robust bibliometric data capabilities, making it a popular choice in similar studies (Asadzadeh et al., 2022; Farooq, 2023). A broad search string was used—"reflective teaching" OR "reflective practice" OR "reflective pedagogy" OR "teacher reflection" OR "reflective educator" OR "reflective practitioner") AND ("teacher development" OR "professional development")—to capture the various terms used in relevant RT studies. The search string was applied to the title, abstract, and keyword fields of the selected papers.

Figure 1

WoS Database Search and Selection Procedures



On 30 July 2024, a literature search was conducted without a time limit, resulting in 1,373 records, of which 461 papers were included in the study (see Table 1). The titles, abstracts, and keywords of the selected records met the following inclusion criteria: (1) addressing RT or reflective practice specifically in TEFL, TESOL, ESL, or EFL contexts; (2) published in peer-reviewed journals; and (3) written in English. Additionally, articles focusing on RT in disciplines other than TEFL/TESOL, along with non-peer-reviewed articles, book reviews, editorials, and conference abstracts, were excluded. Articles not available in full text were also removed.

Table 1 presents details of the full-text papers selected from the WoS database. According to the table, funding for these studies comes from multiple sources, the most frequent being the European Union, Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (KAKENHI), the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan (MEXT), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the U.S. Department of Education, each contributing to 0.651% of the total papers. The primary citation topics are Teacher Education (74.620%), Language Policy (7.158%), and Academic Development (4.121%). Furthermore, the majority of papers are published by Taylor & Francis (57.267%), followed by Elsevier (7.592%), Springer Nature (5.206%), Sage (4.989%), and Emerald Group Publishing (2.820%). Geographically, the highest contributions come from the United States (21.692%), England (13.015%), Australia (10.195%), Turkey (6.074%), Canada (5.640%), Ireland (3.471%), and China (3.037%). The most prolific authors in this field include Farrell, T. S. (1.518%) and Clarke, A. (0.868%), along with Cirocki, A., Fox, R. K., Gutierrez, S. B., Lamb, P., Saito, E., and Samaras, A. P., each contributing 0.651% of the articles.

Table 1

Details of Papers on Reflective Teaching Selected from Web of Science Database

| Categories | N | Percentage (%) |
|--|-----|----------------|
| Funding Agencies | | |
| European Union | 3 | 0.651 |
| Grants in Aid for Scientific Research KAKENHI | 3 | 0.651 |
| Japan Society for the Promotion of Science | 3 | 0.651 |
| Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology Japan (MEXT) | 3 | 0.651 |
| National Science Foundation (NSF) | 3 | 0.651 |
| US Department of Education | 3 | 0.651 |
| Citation Topics Micro | | |
| Teacher Education | 344 | 74.620 |
| Language Policy | 33 | 7.158 |
| Academic Development | 19 | 4.121 |
| Others | 65 | 14.09 |
| Publishers | | |
| Taylor & Francis | 264 | 57.267 |
| Elsevier | 35 | 7.592 |
| Springer Nature | 24 | 5.206 |
| Sage | 23 | 4.989 |
| Emerald Group Publishing | 13 | 2.820 |
| Others | 102 | 22.12 |
| Countries/Regions | | |
| The United States | 100 | 21.692 |
| England | 60 | 13.015 |
| Australia | 47 | 10.195 |
| Turkey | 28 | 6.074 |
| Canada | 26 | 5.640 |
| Ireland | 16 | 3.471 |
| Peoples R China | 14 | 3.037 |
| Others | 170 | 36.87 |
| Most Published Authors | | |
| Farrell, T. S. | 7 | 1.518 |
| Clarke, A. | 4 | 0.868 |
| Cirocki, A. | 3 | 0.651 |
| Fox, R. K. | 3 | 0.651 |
| Gutierrez, S.B. | 3 | 0.651 |
| Lamb, P. | 3 | 0.651 |
| Saito, E. | 3 | 0.651 |
| Samaras, A. P. | 3 | 0.651 |

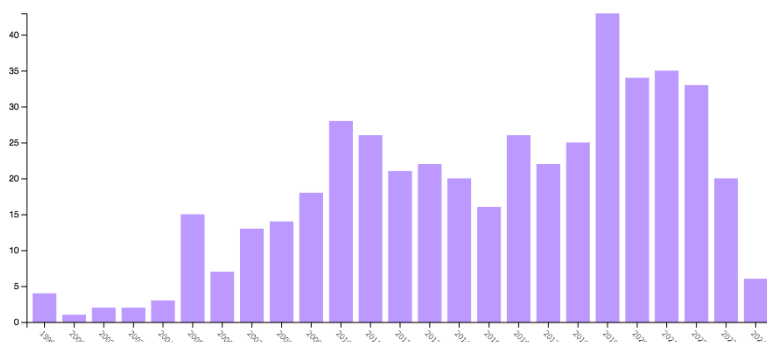
The "full records and cited references" of the included documents were retrieved and imported into the VOSviewer bibliometric mapping software. VOSviewer was used to conduct various analyses, such as keyword co-occurrence, citation patterns, co-citation networks, and bibliographic coupling. These analyses illustrated the yearly count of published works to understand the growth of interest in the topic, identified the most prolific authors and their contributions to the field, examined the co-occurrence of keywords to detect major themes and research focuses, highlighted the most cited articles and influential works, and identified leading institutions and collaborations in RT research.

Results and Discussion

The study primarily aimed to explore the evolution of themes and focus areas in RT over time, with a particular emphasis on identifying emerging trends and future directions. The annual publication trends from 1999 to 2024 were analyzed, revealing a clear pattern of growth across three distinct periods (see Figure 2). Inception Period (1999-2005) accounted for 17 publications, representing 3.68% of the total. Growth Period (2005-2019) saw a substantial increase, with 273 publications constituting 59.21% of the total. The most recent period, termed Rapid Growth Period (2019-2024), included 171 publications, making up 37.09% of the total. In this bibliometric analysis, 2019 emerged as the year with the most publications, accounting for 43 records, which represents 9.33% of the total 461 articles analyzed. This peak in 2019 highlights increased scholarly interest and research outputs in the field of RT, marking it as a pivotal year in Rapid Growth Period (2019-2024). Overall, the analysis reveals accelerating interest and an expanding research base in RT, especially over the last five years, indicating a dynamic and rapidly evolving field.

Figure 2

Annual Publication Trends from 1999 to 2024



Note that this bibliometric analysis, conducted in 2024, identified a significant increase in publications during Rapid Growth Period (2019-2024), particularly in 2023 and 2024. However, despite the marked rise in the number of publications under press during these years, most were not included in the present study due to the unavailability of their full texts. The exclusion of these recent publications underscores the rapid evolution of the field and suggests that the number of studies on RT is likely to continue growing at an accelerated pace.

Main Subject Areas

Co-occurrence analysis is a method that identifies key topics and their connections within a particular research field by analyzing terms found in titles, abstracts, and keyword sections using VOSviewer software. Figure 3 displays the density visualization of keyword co-occurrence analysis from 1999 to 2024. In this figure, the size of each node represents how often a keyword appears. Accordingly, the most frequent items in the RT literature during the concerned period are 'professional development'

Cluster 1 (Red Cluster) encompasses items such as "Assessment," "Education," "Experiences," "Feedback," "Identity," "Practicum," "Preservice Teachers," "Reflective Pedagogy," "Reflective Tools," "School," "Self-study," "Student Teachers," "Teacher Reflection," "Technology," and "University." This cluster primarily focuses on the incorporation of reflective teaching methods into teacher education programs. Reflective pedagogy is crucial in helping preservice teachers critically analyze their instructional approaches, receive constructive feedback, and engage in self-study to enhance their professional identity (Calderhead, 1989; Roohani & Haghparast, 2020). The focus is also on how RT practices are intertwined with the development of teacher identity, particularly during preservice and early career stages. The cluster highlights the broad application of reflective practices in education and refers to various aspects of teacher development, from the use of reflective tools and technologies to self-study and feedback mechanisms (Genus, 2006; Mair, 2012). The cluster also emphasizes initial teacher education and the formative experiences underpinning reflective practices, as indicated by items such as "Practicum," "Student Teachers," and "Preservice Teachers" (LaBelle & Belknap, 2016; Yee et al., 2022). The connection between reflective tools and the practicum experiences provided by universities emphasizes the need to establish supportive environments where student teachers can integrate theory with practice, experiment with different teaching strategies, and reflect on their outcomes in diverse classroom settings (Yee et al., 2022). Feedback mechanisms and assessments play a critical role in shaping these reflective experiences, further linking them to the practicum and school contexts where such reflections occur. The inclusion of items such as "Identity" and "Self-study" highlights an interest in the development of teachers both individually and in their careers on the through reflective practices (Dimitrieska, 2022; Ismail et al., 2023). Moreover, the presence of items such as "Technology" and "Reflective Tools" suggests the integration of digital resources in facilitating reflective practices (Genus, 2006).

Cluster 2 (Yellow Cluster) is characterized by items such as "Challenges," "Context," "Impact," "Instruction," "Knowledge," "Lesson Study," "Professional Development," "Reflection," "Students," "Teacher Learning," and "Video." It examines the contextual factors and difficulties linked to RT. Moreover, the presence of "Lesson Study" and "Professional Development" emphasizes how reflective practices are integrated into instructional strategies and professional growth (Hendriwanto, 2021; Loo, 2013; Myers, 2013). The mention of "Video" highlights utilizing digital media resources as a tool for self-reflection, facilitating reflection and enhancing teacher learning (Wong & Pow, 2012). Lesson study and video analysis are powerful tools that empower teachers to collaboratively analyze their teaching approaches, assess their effectiveness, and adjust their strategies to support student learning (Hamel & Viau-Guay, 2019). "Reflection" is central to this process, allowing teachers to evaluate and enhance their instructional practices (Merriam et al., 2018; Peel & Shortland, 2004). Overall, this cluster reveals the importance of understanding the impact of reflective practices across various educational contexts and their role in improving instructional outcomes (Olaya Mesa, 2018).

In Cluster 3 (Green Cluster), items such as "Collaboration," "Critical Reflection," "Framework," "Inquiry," "Leadership," "Learning Communities," "Model," "Policy," "Professional Learning," "Reflective Learning," "Reflective Practice," and "Teacher Professional Learning" co-occur. This cluster centers on the collaborative aspects of reflective practice, including the establishment of learning communities and professional learning frameworks that support critical reflection (Subbaye, 2018). "Inquiry"-based approaches and "Leadership" within these communities drive "Reflective Practice," often guided by established "Models" and "Policies" that facilitate professional learning (Bray & Fotheringham, 2022; Ryan & Ryan, 2013). Moreover, "Collaboration" and "Learning Communities" highlight the role of professional and social settings in supporting reflective practices and fostering a collective approach to teacher development, where teachers/practitioners work together to enhance their reflective practices (Kuh, 2016; Soisangwarn & Wongwanich, 2014). In this regard, "Reflective Practice" and "Reflective Learning," coupled with action research, are key outcomes of these collaborative efforts, ultimately leading to deeper professional growth (Peel & Shortland, 2004). This co-occurrence analysis reveals that the third cluster reflects continuous efforts to refine and institutionalize RT practices through structured frameworks and policies (Benade, 2015).

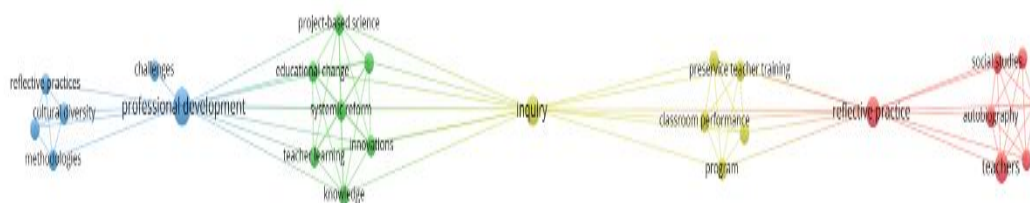
Cluster 4 (Blue Cluster), which includes items such as "Action Research," "Continuous Professional Development," "Higher Education," "Literacy," "Reflective Practitioner," and "Reflective Teaching," primarily highlights the research-oriented and developmental aspects of RT within higher education contexts. In the relevant literature on RT, "Action Research" is introduced as a prominent method for engaging in reflective practice, allowing teachers to systematically investigate and improve their teaching strategies (Godínez Martínez, 2022). "Action Research" and "Continuous Professional Development" underscore a commitment to iterative improvement and lifelong learning, as action research methodologies enable educators to engage in reflective inquiry and practices (Chan Fong Yee, 2014). The focus on "Higher Education" indicates that this cluster is particularly relevant to advanced teacher education (not initial endeavors) and the professional growth of educators in academic settings (Barton & Ryan, 2014; Kayapinar & Alkhalidi, 2023; Pérez-Burriel et al., 2024; Ryan & Ryan, 2013). The term "Reflective Practitioner," as introduced by Schön (1987), demonstrates how teachers serve as both educators and investigators in their professional growth (Kayapinar, 2013; Lawrence-Wilkes et al., 2014; Myers, 2013; Sletto, 2010).

Cluster 5 (Purple Cluster) contains "Beliefs," "Classroom," "EFL Teachers," "Self-efficacy," and "Teacher Development." This cluster explores the interplay between teachers' perspectives, self-efficacy, and teaching methods, as the development of reflective practices is closely linked to teachers' instructional beliefs and their perceived teaching efficacy (Menon & Azam, 2021). The item "EFL Teachers" suggests a focus on reflective practices specific to English as a Foreign Language teaching contexts (Dehghani et al., 2023; Kurosh et al., 2020). The inclusion of "Self-efficacy" and "Teacher Development" points to the impact of teachers' self-perceptions and professional growth on their reflective practices (Hosseini et al., 2018; Kurosh et al., 2020). This cluster illustrates how personal and contextual factors contribute to shaping and applying reflective practices in diverse educational settings (Li, 2024).

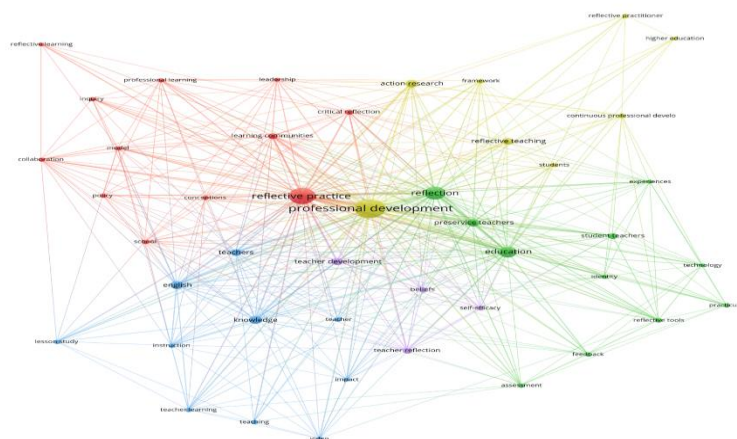
Each cluster reflects a distinct yet interconnected area of RT studies, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of reflective practice within education. Keywords such as "reflection," "professional development," and "reflective" are recurrent across the clusters, revealing the evolving landscape of RT over the past 25 years.

Transformation of Research Subject Areas over Time

A thorough analysis of papers published from 1999 to 2024 indicates focus areas evolving across three distinct periods: Inception Period (1999-2005), Growth Period (2005-2019), and Rapid Growth Period (2019-2024). As Figure 5 displays, the research clusters in Inception Period (1999-2005) reflect the foundational focus of the field, centering on fundamental concepts and methodologies laying the groundwork for future developments. During this period, the emergence of items such as "Professional Development," "Cultural Diversity," "Challenges," "Reflective Practices," and "Methodologies" in the first cluster reveals a primary concern with understanding how teachers can develop professionally within diverse and challenging educational environments (Blue Cluster). Cluster 2 concentrates on "Project-based Knowledge," "Educational Change," "Systemic Reform," "Innovations," and "Teacher Knowledge," highlighting early efforts to explore innovative approaches to education and systemic educational reforms (Green Cluster). Clusters 3 and 4 contain items such as "Inquiry," "Preservice Teacher Training," "Classroom Performance," and "Reflective Practice," and suggest an early emphasis on improving programs designed to train future teachers and understanding the influence of reflective practices on teacher effectiveness (Yellow and Red clusters).

Figure 5*Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis from 1999 to 2005 (Inception Period)*

During Growth Period (2005-2019), both the volume and diversity of research remarkably increased, as reflected in the higher volume of published works and more complex clusters (see Figure 6). Growth Period is marked by the maturation of concepts, with more specific and applied research emerging around collaboration, professional development, and reflective practices. Cluster 1 in this period encompasses co-occurring keywords such as "Collaboration," "Critical Reflection," "Leadership," "Learning Communities," and "Reflective Practice," which point to the expanded focus on collaborative and reflective practices within professional learning communities (Red Cluster). In the second cluster (Green Cluster), the inclusion of "Assessment," "Feedback," "Identity," "Preservice Teachers," and "Technology" indicates the increasing significance of evaluating educational practices and integrating technology into teacher education in general, and RT in particular. In Cluster 3 (Blue Cluster), items such as "English," "Impact," "Instruction," and "Teacher Learning" show how researchers have delved into the subject-specific aspects of teaching, while the emphasis of Cluster 4 on "Action Research," "Continuous Professional Development," and "Reflective Teaching" reflects a growing interest in ongoing professional growth and the application of reflective practices in teaching (Yellow Cluster). The psychological and developmental aspects of teaching, including "Beliefs," "Self-Efficacy," and "Teacher Development," are addressed in Cluster 5 (Purple Cluster). The focus on collaboration and reflective practice during this period feeds directly into Rapid Growth Period, where these concepts are explored in more depth and with broader applications.

Figure 6*Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis from 2005 to 2019*

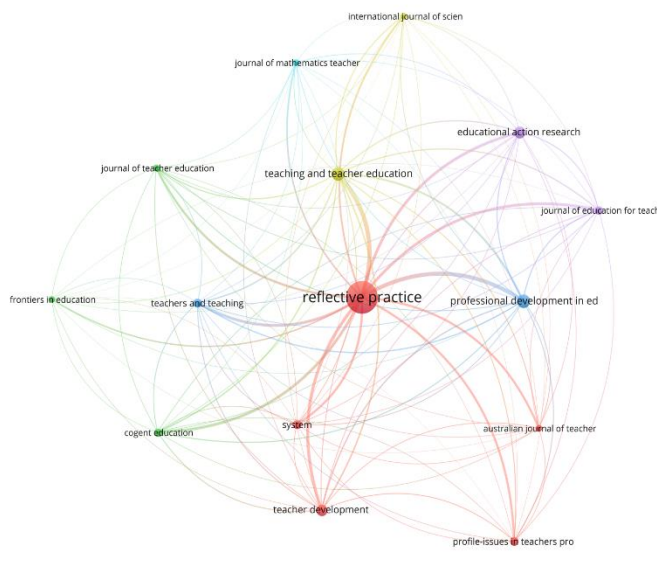
application of reflective practices and the professional development of educators. Rapid Growth Period is further distinguished by new clusters emphasizing challenges in education, continuous professional development, and reflective pedagogy, indicating a shift toward more specialized areas of research. These periods have witnessed a clear evolution from basic concepts to more complex, interconnected themes, reflecting the dynamic nature of RT. The clusters also represent continuity in themes such as reflective practice and professional development, with each period building on the previous one, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of educational methodologies and teacher development.

Leading Journals

In this study, co-citation analysis was utilized to examine the formation of the foundational knowledge in the RT domain. Using VOSviewer software, this approach set a threshold of 50 citations per record, identifying 15 key journals that played a significant role in shaping and advancing RT literature (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Most Leading Journals in Developing Reflective Teaching Literature



Note: The size of each node corresponds to the number of publications, the thickness of the links represents the strength of relationships between journals, and the colors indicate clusters of journals with strong connections.

Among the journals included in this bibliometric analysis, *Reflective Practice* was identified as the leading journal in the field of RT, with 111 published documents, 1,598 citations, and a total link strength of 6,523. This journal has established itself as a cornerstone in RT, consistently contributing significant research that shapes the theoretical and practical understanding of the field. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, despite having only 20 published documents, boasts a high citation count of 1,409 and a total link strength of 2,283, indicating its pivotal role in the academic discourse on teacher education and reflective practices. The substantial difference in citation counts and published documents between these two leading journals and the others suggests the centrality of *Reflective Practice* and *Teaching and Teacher Education* in shaping RT research. The difference is significant when compared to other journals in the RT field, such as *Professional Development in Education* (19 documents, 227 citations), *Teacher Development* (14 documents, 132 citations), and *Educational Action Research* (16 documents, 189 citations), which, while contributing valuable insights, do so on a considerably smaller scale.

Traditional metrics, such as impact factors, have no impact on the ranking of these journals in terms of their role in shaping and advancing RT. For example, the journal *Reflective Practice* has an impact factor of 1.689, which is moderate compared to the impact factor of the *Teaching and Teacher Education* journal, which stands at 3.790. Despite this, *Reflective Practice* is a central publication for research in RT, suggesting that its influence is not fully captured by such traditional metrics. Conversely, the higher impact factor of *Teaching and Teacher Education* aligns with its substantial contribution to the RT field, both in terms of citations and its role in advancing theoretical and practical teacher education knowledge.

Other journals, such as *Journal of Education for Teaching*, *Cogent Education*, and *SYSTEM*, also contribute to the RT literature. These journals generally have lower citation counts, and some have even lower impact factors. For example, the *Cogent Education* journal has the lowest impact factor of 1.5 among the three mentioned. This shows the variability in how these journals influence the field. Accordingly, it can be inferred that while impact factors provide a useful measure of a journal's broader academic influence, the true impact of these journals within this specific niche of RT is better understood through their citation networks and the extent of their contributions to the field's foundational knowledge. The dominance of *Reflective Practice* and *Teaching and Teacher Education* in the field suggests that these two journals are not only centers for scholarly discourse but also key resources for practitioners looking to implement reflective practices in educational settings.

Leading Documents

In the bibliographic coupling analysis of the leading documents in the RT literature, a threshold of 70 citations was set, resulting in 19 key papers that have been instrumental in shaping and advancing RT. Among these, four papers stand out due to their particularly high citation counts, demonstrating their substantial impact on RT research. As presented, the most highly cited paper, "Linking teacher and student learning to improve professional development in systemic reform," authored by Fishman et al. (2003), has received 365 citations. Papers authored by Larrivee (2008), Dudley (2013), and Hobb (2007) are ranked second (187 citations), third (186 citations), and fourth (129 citations), respectively. The details of the papers, including information about the authors, year of publication, title, citations, journals, issue, description, and conclusion, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Most Leading Documents in Developing Reflective Teaching Literature

| Title | Author(s) year | Citations | Journal/Issue/Page | Description | Conclusion |
|---|-----------------------|-----------|---|---|---|
| Linking teacher and student learning to improve professional development in systemic reform | Fishman et al. (2003) | 365 | <i>Teaching and teacher education</i> , 19(6), 643-658. | This paper explores the link between teacher and student learning, highlighting the importance of professional development aligned with systemic reform through reflective practices. The authors emphasize that recognizing this connection is essential for effective teaching. | The authors conclude that professional development should foster both teacher and student learning to enhance overall educational outcomes. |
| Development of a tool to assess teachers' level of reflective practice | Larrivee (2008) | 187 | <i>Reflective practice</i> , 9(3), 341-360. | Larrivee introduces a tool for assessing teachers' levels of reflective practice, emphasizing its role in enhancing teaching and professional growth. | The assessment tool aims to enhance teachers' reflective practices, leading to improved teaching effectiveness and student learning. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---------------|-----|---|--|---|
| Teacher learning in Lesson Study: What interaction-level discourse analysis revealed about how teachers utilized imagination, tacit knowledge of teaching and fresh evidence of pupils learning, to develop practice knowledge and so enhance their pupils' learning. | Dudley (2013) | 186 | <i>Teaching and teacher education</i> , 34, 107-121 | Dudley examines how teachers engage in Lesson Study, focusing on the discourse that occurs during these collaborative sessions. It analyzes how teachers utilize their tacit knowledge and fresh evidence of student learning to enhance their practice. | The findings suggest that interaction-level discourse, intertwined with reflection, is integral for teacher learning, helping educators to develop their practice knowledge and improve student outcomes. |
| Faking it or hating it: can reflective practice be forced? | Hobbs (2007) | 129 | <i>Reflective practice</i> , 8(3), 405-417 | Hobbs examines the complexities of reflective practice, questioning its effectiveness when mandated and addressing the emotional and intellectual challenges involved. | The conclusion is that while reflective practice is vital for professional development, rigid imposition may compromise its effectiveness and authenticity. |

As presented in Figure 9, some of the 19 documents are not connected to each other (n=15). In this bibliographic coupling analysis, the largest set of connected documents consists of four items. Among these items is Hobbs’ (2007) paper, and the other documents coupled in this set are as follows:

- Farrell, T. S. (2016). Anniversary article: The practices of encouraging TESOL teachers to engage in reflective practice: An appraisal of recent research contributions. *Language Teaching Research*, 20(2), 223–247.
- Farrell, T. S., & Ives, J. (2015). Exploring teacher beliefs and classroom practices through reflective practice: A case study. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(5), 594–610.
- Farrell, T. S. (2011). Keeping SCORE: Reflective practice through classroom observations. *RELC Journal*, 42(3), 265–272.

Figure 9

Bibliographic Coupling Analysis of Connected Documents from 2019 to 2024

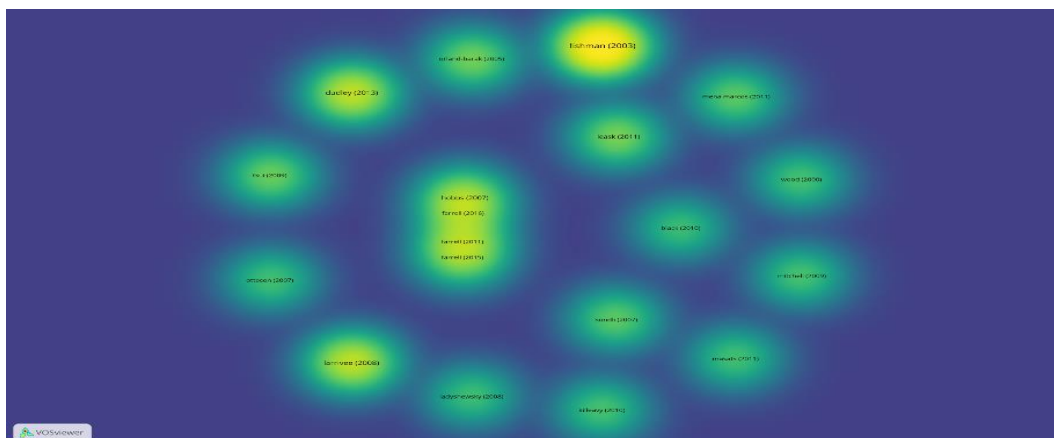
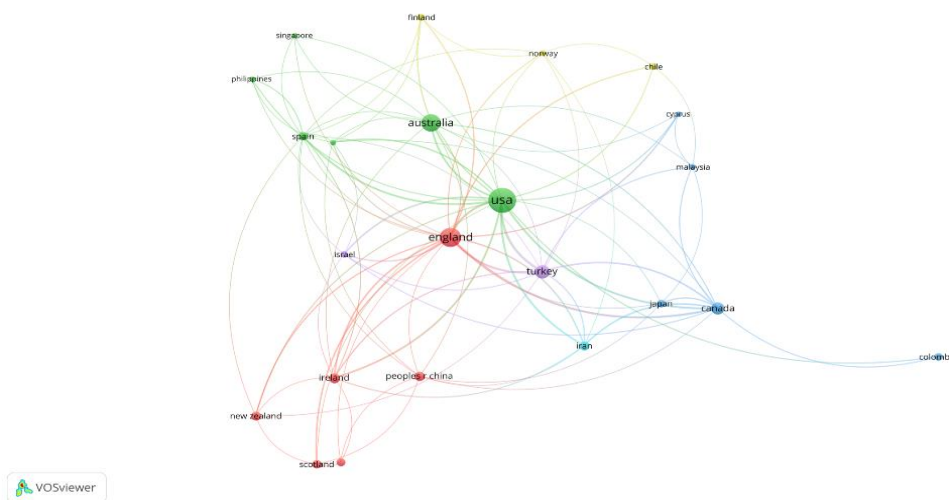


Figure 11

Leading Countries in Developing Reflective Teaching Literature



Note: The node size indicates the number of publications, while the thickness of the links and the varying colors illustrate the degree of interconnectedness among these countries.

Table 3 presents detailed information on the most influential countries identified in this analysis. The United States emerges as the leading country, with 99 documents and a remarkable 1,865 citations, reflecting its dominant role in shaping the discourse on RT. The total link strength of 13,707 further underscores the extensive connections the United States has with other countries in the network, indicating a high level of international collaboration and influence. England follows closely with 58 documents and 1,325 citations. Its total link strength of 9,406 suggests that England is also a central player in the global RT research community, fostering strong ties with other countries and contributing significantly to the field’s development. The other four countries maintaining substantial collaborative connections with other influential countries in the network are Turkey (N = 28, Citations = 222), Australia (N = 27, Citations = 698), Canada (N = 44, Citations = 608), and Ireland (N = 16, Citations = 313). Although smaller in terms of document count, Ireland’s research is highly integrated into the global network, indicating that its contributions are valued and widely referenced by other countries.

Table 3

Most Leading Countries in Developing Reflective Teaching Literature

| Countries | Documents | Citations | Total Link Strength |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|
| The United States | 99 | 1865 | 13707 |
| England | 58 | 1325 | 9406 |
| Turkey | 28 | 222 | 5802 |
| Australia | 27 | 698 | 4970 |
| Canada | 44 | 608 | 4460 |
| Ireland | 16 | 313 | 3014 |

These findings highlight the geographic distribution of influential research in RT, with the United States and England leading the field, followed by Turkey, Australia, Canada, and Ireland. The strong link strengths indicate robust international collaborations, suggesting that RT is a globally interconnected field with contributions from diverse regions worldwide. This global network plays an integral role in the exchange of ideas and the advancement of RT practices, enabling researchers to build on each other's work and push the boundaries of knowledge in this area.

Conclusion and Implications

This bibliometric study on RT presents a comprehensive insight into the field's evolution, trends, and scholarly contributions over the past 25 years, from 1999 to 2024. Following the analysis of 461 papers indexed in the WoS, this research elaborates on how RT has developed, detects major thematic clusters, reveals research gaps, and offers directions for future inquiries and practice. Regarding the main findings and current trends of this study, it can be stated that RT has experienced significant growth and evolution, marked by three distinct periods: Inception (1999-2005), Growth (2005-2019), and Rapid Growth (2019-2024). The increasing scholarly interest in RT, particularly in the last five years, implies its significance in professional development, especially within the fields of TEFL and Teacher Education. From the bibliometric analysis conducted using VOSviewer, five major thematic clusters that define the current state of RT research were extracted:

(1) **Integration of Reflective Pedagogy in Teacher Education:** This cluster emphasizes integrating reflective practices into teacher preparation programs, emphasizing the significance of RT in developing the professional identities of preservice teachers and enhancing their teaching abilities. The use of technology, feedback mechanisms, and self-study tools is central to this theme, reflecting a trend toward more technologically integrated reflective practices (Chua, 2022; Dilling & Vogler, 2023; Keramati et al., 2024).

(2) **Contextual Challenges and Professional Development:** This cluster focuses on the impact of contextual elements on RT practices, such as the use of multimedia tools like video analysis for professional development and instructional improvement. It also underscores the challenges teachers face in different educational contexts, emphasizing the need for adaptable reflective practices.

(3) **Collaborative Reflection and Learning Communities:** Reflective practice is increasingly viewed as a joint effort, placing significant focus on the creation of learning communities. These communities support critical reflection and leadership development and establish environments where teachers can learn from each other and collectively enhance their practices.

(4) **Action Research and Continuous Professional Development:** Implementing action research in RT, particularly within higher education, is a prominent theme in this cluster. This approach supports continuous professional development by enabling educators to engage in systematic inquiry into their teaching practices, thereby encouraging lifelong learning and reflective professionalism.

(5) **Beliefs, Self-Efficacy, and Classroom Practices:** This cluster encompasses teachers' beliefs, self-efficacy, and their reflective practices, particularly in the context of EFL teaching. The findings suggest that reflective practices are closely linked to teachers' personal beliefs about teaching and their confidence in their professional abilities.

These five clusters show a rising specialization and contextualization in RT research, with a growing focus on digital tools, collaborative reflection, and the psychological aspects of teaching. They also indicate the importance of reflective practices in fostering professional development (Zhang et al., 2016) and developing educational outcomes across different educational settings. In addition to the extracted clusters, the analysis also elaborated on the leading journals, authors, documents, and countries.

Although the present study provides a detailed map of the RT landscape, there are several research gaps in the literature that necessitate further contributions by future researchers. First, while the benefits of RT for teacher development are well-documented (Rieker & Johnson, 2023; Zeichner, 1981), studies are needed to examine how teachers' reflective practices impact specific aspects of student learning, such as critical thinking, emotional intelligence, metacognitive skills, resilience, and cultural competence. Such research would assist in narrowing the divide between teacher development and student success, contributing to a richer understanding of RT's educational value.

Second, most research in the RT field has been concentrated on specific educational contexts, particularly within TEFL and higher education (Weisi & Salari, 2024). However, there is a need to

explore RT in a broader range of settings, including primary and secondary education, vocational training, and non-Western contexts. This expansion would promote a deeper understanding of how RT can be adapted and applied across diverse educational environments.

Third, many RT studies, including those focusing on pre-service teachers, are designed as short-term and cross-sectional investigations (Dumlao & Pinatacan, 2019; Uzum, Petróñ & Berg, 2014). As a result, the long-term impact of reflective practices has yet to be thoroughly investigated. Conducting longitudinal research is essential to examine how such practices influence teacher development and student outcomes over extended periods. This would provide valuable insights into the sustainability of RT and its role in supporting continuous professional growth. Fourth, a review of RT-related literature reveals a missing critical dimension. Many studies focus primarily on retrospective reflection (Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Schön, 1983), often overlooking forward-looking approaches that encourage innovation. Future research should integrate critical reflection that challenges existing practices and motivates teachers to adopt innovative teaching strategies. This shift would enrich the field and align reflective practices with contemporary educational demands.

Finally, RT is a multifaceted concept that intersects with various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and digital humanities. Adopting interdisciplinary approaches could open new avenues for understanding RT. For instance, future studies could investigate how psychological theories, such as self-efficacy and motivation, influence reflective practices or how digital humanities tools can analyze reflective journals more effectively. Like any bibliometric analysis, this research has some constraints. The examination was confined to works listed in the WoS database, potentially excluding relevant articles from other major academic databases such as Scopus. This database limitation may narrow down the representativeness of the relevant literature on RT. As another limitation, only articles published in English were included, which may have overlooked significant contributions from non-English publications. Moreover, while the analysis spanned a substantial timeframe from 1999 to 2024, it may not fully reflect recent developments or evolving theories emerging outside the WoS-indexed journals. Lastly, clustering thematic trends regarding co-occurrence and citation patterns, though, is effective, certain interdisciplinary aspects or emerging themes in RT research, which were less represented in the selected articles, might have been undervalued. Future researchers may include a broader range of databases and languages to illustrate a more comprehensive view of RT research.

Nevertheless, this study offers the following contributions to the field of RT. First, by classifying the relevant literature into three periods and thematic clusters, a detailed overview of the evolution of RT research is presented. This historical perspective is invaluable for exhibiting how the field has developed over time and for exploring emerging trends that are likely to shape future research. Second, the most frequently occurring themes in RT literature, as well as the most influential authors, journals, and documents, were presented as a roadmap for future scholarship, serving as a valuable resource for researchers and educators looking to engage with foundational and cutting-edge work in RT. Third, the gaps in the existing literature were uncovered, and the resulting recommendations aimed to guide scholars in addressing the most pressing challenges in RT and expanding its applicability across different educational contexts. Fourth, the geographic distribution of RT research presented in this study underscores the necessity of conducting additional cross-cultural research to delve into the applicability of reflective practices in diverse educational contexts. Policymakers are advised to support international collaborations to connect researchers from various regions to exchange best practices and develop culturally responsive RT approaches.

The results carry important implications for teaching and learning practices, particularly in teacher education and professional development, extending beyond academic research and offering valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and teacher trainers. The emphasis on collaborative reflection, technological integration, and critical reflection equips teachers with broader insights to enhance their reflective practices by developing more effective strategies. Policymakers and educational institutions should also prioritize the development of reflective pedagogies that provide preservice and in-service teachers with the necessary competencies needed for continuous professional growth. This could involve integrating reflective practices into teacher certification

programs and incorporating reflective assignments into teacher education courses. To move beyond mere retrospective reflection, educators and policymakers need to encourage the adoption of critical reflection frameworks that challenge existing practices and promote innovation. This could involve integrating critical reflection exercises into teacher training programs and laying the groundwork for teachers to engage in action research.

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