Fostering Preservice and Novice EFL Teacher Leadership Through Collaborative Reflections: A Narrative Phenomenology

Fomento del liderazgo de profesores de inglés en formación y principiantes mediante reflexiones colaborativas: una fenomenología narrativa

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This small-scale study investigates how collaborative reflective practice can foster teacher leadership among preservice and novice EFL teachers, while recognizing the benefits and challenges related to this approach. The findings suggest that collaborative reflective practice offers personal, social, and professional benefits, such as enhanced confidence, social support, and developed pedagogical practices. Yet, problems, including time limitations and changing levels of reflective expertise, were identified. This study contributes to the developing body of literature on teacher leadership by emphasizing the role of collaborative reflective practice in enhancing leadership development among EFL teachers.

Keywords: collaborative reflective practice, EFL teachers, professional development, teacher education, teacher leadership

Este estudio narrativo investiga los beneficios y desafíos asociados a la práctica reflexiva colaborativa y cómo esta puede fomentar el liderazgo entre profesores de inglés en formación y principiantes. Se encontró que la práctica reflexiva colaborativa ofrece beneficios personales, sociales y profesionales, como una mayor confianza, apoyo social y el desarrollo de prácticas pedagógicas. Sin embargo, también se identificaron problemas como limitaciones de tiempo y niveles variables de experiencia reflexiva. Este estudio contribuye a la creciente literatura sobre el liderazgo docente al enfatizar el papel de la práctica reflexiva colaborativa en el desarrollo del liderazgo entre docentes de inglés.

Palabras clave: desarrollo profesional, formación docente, liderazgo educativo, práctica reflexiva colaborativa, profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera

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Introduction

In the educational arena, teachers are expected not only to develop subject-specific knowledge and instructional skills but also to assume leadership roles within their schools and communities (Ghamrawi et al., 2024). Teacher leadership—conceptualized as the ability of teachers to affect educational practices, enhance collaboration, and foster school growth—has received considerable attention recently (MacLeod, 2020). Educators and policymakers progressively identify its potential to develop school improvement, enhance teaching and learning processes, and assess student achievement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). At the initial stages of the teaching career, it is important for preservice and novice teachers to cultivate leadership skills. Although these educators have the capacity to determine the future trajectory of education, they often come across challenges that hinder their professional development and leadership skills (Reeves & Lowenhaupt, 2016).

Within the Iranian context, preservice and novice English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers face particular challenges. These teachers regularly function within a top-down leadership structure, where their voices are downgraded due to their supposed lack of experience. Furthermore, they struggle with the difficulties of teaching a foreign language rooted in cultural values that may diverge from their own, inadequate access to professional development and support, and the discouraging effects of working with unmotivated students and unsupportive administrators. In Iran, English language teaching operates within a centralized education system in which curriculum and materials are often standardized by the Ministry of Education (Arefian, 2022b). Whereas private language institutes provide more flexibility, they still encounter limitations, including inadequate access to professional development resources and Western instructional methodologies because of geopolitical factors. EFL teachers in Iran must explore these structural challenges while meeting high student expectations for English proficiency, chiefly for academic and economic opportunities. These barriers underline the necessity for creative approaches to foster teachers' professional growth and leadership development.

One important approach is collaborative reflective practice (CRP), a systematic but changeable framework that supports teachers in engaging in reflective and collaborative dialogue about their instructional experiences and practices (Ciampa & Reisboard, 2024). CRP includes critical reflection, shared understandings, and shared problem-solving within a community of practice (CoP), where teachers collectively plan, act, observe, and reflect on their instructional practices (Arefian et al., 2024; Farrell, 2019). This process facilitates a reflective mindset, which is indispensable for continuing professional development and adaptive leadership. Furthermore, CRP nurtures a sense of community and mutual responsibility, supporting teachers to learn from one another and build supportive professional networks (Esfandiari & Arefian, 2024; Lee, 2007).

For preservice and novice EFL teachers, CRP provides a supportable model for improving leadership skills within the fabric of professional development. By engaging in CRP, these teachers can foster key leadership attributes such as instructional quality, innovative practices, professional understanding, cooperation skills, motivation and engagement, mentorship, and socio-cultural competence (Yagata, 2017). New studies have underscored the usefulness of collaborative reflections in supporting teacher leadership, as such practices help teachers elucidate uncertain thoughts, make decisions, solve problems, and enhance helpful communication strategies (Esfandiari et al., 2025; Meyer et al., 2023). Besides, CRP generates a supportive environment where teachers can mutually face the problems they encounter, thus increasing their resilience and ability to flourish in the profession (Arefian et al., 2025).

Despite increasing recognition of the significance of teacher leadership and CRP, there is an important gap in the literature concerning the significance of CRP in developing the leadership skills of preservice and novice EFL teachers. Although previous studies have investigated the advantages of collaborative and reflective practices in general teaching contexts, few have explored how these practices can be operationalized to facilitate leadership skills among EFL teachers, chiefly in challenging environments like those found in Iran. This gap underlines the necessity for targeted research to investigate how CRP can be successfully applied to enhance the leadership development of EFL teachers. To address this gap, the present study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How can CRP enhance the leadership skills of preservice and novice EFL teachers?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of implementing CRP for fostering teacher leadership in EFL contexts?

Literature Review

Teacher Leadership in Educational Contexts

The complexity of contemporary educational environments has led to a shift from traditional top-down leadership models to more participatory and distributed approaches (Arefian, 2022a). This change highlights the significance of teacher leadership, in which teachers take active roles in management, syllabus design, material development, and school development (Campbell et al., 2022; Ghamrawi et al., 2024). Teacher leadership is mainly relevant for facilitating collaboration, reflection, and professional development among teachers, empowering them to go beyond classroom boundaries and facilitate wider administrative goals (Shen et al., 2020).

For preservice and novice teachers, teacher leadership provides a path to explore the challenges of early

career phases, boost teaching skills, and enhance a culture of lifelong learning (Shen, 2023). In the context of EFL teaching, teacher leadership can support novice teachers in navigating the difficulties of language teaching, incorporating technology successfully, and boosting learners' engagement (Ghamrawi & Tamim, 2023). By assuming leadership roles throughout their formation, preservice teachers can strengthen resilience, gain experiential learning, and improve a sense of agency within a CoP (Taylor et al., 2011). Teacher leadership includes a range of roles, comprising mentor, curriculum specialist, and classroom supporter (Ghamrawi, 2013). For novice EFL teachers, these roles offer chances for mutual empowerment, in which shared capabilities and collaborative learning nurture a sense of collective efficacy (Harris & Spillane, 2008). This collaborative approach supports the principles of distributed leadership, highlighting democratic and inclusive practices that facilitate reflection, feedback, and mutual goals (Harris, 2011).

Collaborative Reflective Practice

Reflective practice has long been known as a foundation of teacher development, empowering teachers to critically assess their practices, recognize areas for development, and implement meaningful modifications (Crawford, 2022). Recently, the focus has transferred from individual reflection to collaborative approaches, in which teachers partake in collaboration, exchange experiences and ideas, and produce knowledge collectively within a CoP (Takahashi, 2011). CRP underlines the significance of shared support, collective responsibilities, and joint problem-solving, enhancing a culture of continuous professional development (Arefian, 2023).

For preservice and novice EFL teachers, CRP provides a planned framework for professional development. By means of collaborative planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, teachers can gain crucial perceptions into their practices, receive helpful feed-

back, and foster a deeper understanding of their roles as educators (Arefian & Nami, 2025; Farrell, 2019). CRP additionally inspires teachers to participate in critical reflection, present their ideas, and form strong professional networks (Takahashi, 2011). Studies have illustrated that CRP can facilitate collective scaffolding among teachers, leading to enhanced teaching practices and student outcomes (Chung & Fisher, 2022).

The usefulness of CRP relies on some factors, including the quality of collaboration, the kinds of reflective techniques used, and the level of organized support (Hennessy & Davies, 2020). For novice EFL teachers, CRP provides a helpful environment where they can try new strategies, face challenges collaboratively, and develop leadership skills through mutual decision-making and reflective dialogue (Esfandiari & Arefian, 2025). These practices are in line with the principles of teacher leadership, highlighting the significance of collaboration, reflection, and continuous development.

Theoretical Framework: Situative Theory and Communities of Practice

This study is established on situative theory, which suggests that learning is a social process rooted in genuine contexts and facilitated by participation in CoPs (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Situative theory highlights the prominence of appropriate peripheral participation, in which novice learners progressively move from the periphery to the center of a CoP through active engagement, collaboration, and reflection (Wenger, 1998). This framework supports the principles of CRP and teacher leadership, both of which highlight the role of collaborative and reflective practices in professional development.

Within a CoP, novice EFL teachers can be involved in CRP to facilitate their leadership skills, exchange knowledge, and share mutual goals. The cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting enables teachers to learn from their experiences, modify their practices, and build a mutual understanding of effective teaching and leadership (Farrell, 2019). This approach contrasts with individualistic models of learning (e.g., Kolb et al.'s [2014] experiential learning theory), which have been criticized for their lack of contextual relevance and dependence on static learning styles (Arefian & Esfandiari, 2024). As an alternative, situative theory offers a more flexible and context-sensitive framework for understanding how novice teachers boost leadership skills through collaborative and reflective practices. By situating this study within the framework of situative theory and CoPs, we seek to explore how CRP can facilitate teacher leadership development among preservice and novice EFL teachers. This approach highlights the social and contextual dimensions of learning, emphasizing collaboration, reflection, and mutual participation in professional development.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative approach to obtain a rich, contextualized, and in-depth understanding of how a small sample of preservice and novice EFL teachers engaged in CRP to improve their leadership skills and practices (Nassaji, 2020). Moreover, as qualitative studies explore participants' thoughts, beliefs, theories, ideas, and experiences, this study shows how preservice and novice EFL teachers can enhance their leadership through CRP in Iran (Collins & Stockton, 2018). The study follows a narrative phenomenological approach to explore participants' lived experiences while implementing CRP to foster and develop their leadership. Narrative phenomenology integrates the strengths of narrative analysis and phenomenology, allowing researchers to gain both profound personal stories and discover the essence of participants' experiences (Klenke, 2016). So, the narrative analysis underscores individual stories that provide contextual details about their social,

physical, professional, and emotional experiences with CRP and leadership.

Participants and Context

Four preservice (three men and one woman) and four novice (two men and two women) EFL teachers were selected through snowball sampling. To carry out snowball sampling, we identified one preservice and one novice EFL teacher who were enthusiastic about conducting CRP and teacher leadership and were engaged in in-depth qualitative research. These initial participants then recommended other individuals in their network who also met the specified criteria. The preservice teachers had one year of teaching experience in private schools, and the novice teachers had 2 to 3 years of teaching experience. It was stated that novice teachers were those with less than 3 years of teaching experience (Freeman, 2007). In Iran, undergraduate EFL teachers are required to teach at school for one to three years before obtaining their degree. In that sense, all participants are considered as preservice teachers. However, we decided to focus on the amount of teaching experience, and participants with just one year of teaching experience are labelled as preservice teachers for the ease of comparison, while more senior undergraduates (with two and three years of teaching experience) are treated as novice teachers. Finally, participants' age ranged from 20 to 27 ($M = 23$, $SD = 2.36$), and they came from different parts of Iran.

Participants were all BA undergraduates of English Language Teaching at different state universities in Tehran, Iran. During their BA, they had taken courses in language pedagogy, methodology, psychology, assessment, linguistics, education, research, technology, curriculum, practicum, and so on. They had completed the teacher training course certificate in the language department of their university. All of them were English teachers at a private junior high school. The junior high school had a department dedicated to the English language, aiming to help students progress from A2 to B2 proficiency levels. Within their school context, reflective practices and collaborative learning were two important areas that they needed to focus on, and the school managers used them for their annual salary raise.

Data Collection

We provided participants with a consent form to verify their agreement and to inform them that their personal information would remain anonymous and that the results would be utilized solely for research purposes (Wiles, 2012). Consequently, two workshop sessions were conducted related to CRP and teacher leadership for preservice and novice EFL teachers. Thus, they were invited to participate in a one-hour workshop to learn the processes, procedures, applications, and benefits of CRP. At the end of this workshop, they were given sufficient time to ask questions and share concerns regarding the implementation of CRP (e.g., planning, acting, observing, and reflecting collectively). Additionally, there was another workshop session on the features of effective teacher leadership, such as instructional expertise, innovation and creativity, vision and goals, communication skills, advocacy and influence, mentorship and support, cultural competence, professional development, and, more importantly, reflective practice and collaboration. Although the workshops offered foundational knowledge of CRP and teacher leadership, their short duration (two one-hour sessions) may have restricted participants' depth of understanding. The short-term nature of this intervention means findings should be interpreted as primary understandings into how CRP impacts leadership development, rather than definitive evidence of long-standing transformation. At the end of the second workshop, participants had some questions to clarify the concept, procedure, and implementation of teacher leadership.

One of the researchers formed two groups, each including two preservice and two novice teachers. They were encouraged to use CRP to enhance their

leadership in their classes for three months. During the study, they had to conduct CRP with other team members in a focus group discussion. They had discussions regarding CRP and leadership every week. They asked their questions, received help and guidance, gained solutions, obtained feedback, identified areas for improvement, co-planned and implemented their actions, and reflected on and evaluated their peers' practices to enhance their leadership. Author 2 acted as both a participant and an observer to provide some comments, give feedback, respond to participants' concerns, and help them throughout the process (Hockey & Forsey, 2020). The sessions were recorded, and field notes were taken during the discussions.

Additionally, participants were required to compose six reflective narratives (about two pages each), that is, written accounts in which they recorded their introspective thoughts, experiences, actions, decisions, and feelings associated with their instructional practices and leadership development via CRP. They discussed how CRP could enhance their leadership, the experiences they had, and the stories of how CRP influenced teacher leadership, teaching effectiveness, and students' learning achievement. These narratives recorded participants' introspective accounts of their experiences, thoughts, decisions, actions, and feelings, allowing for deep personal engagement and highlighting significant moments reflectively. The narratives were gathered throughout the term, and some follow-up questions were asked to gather deeper information. All participants but one (who submitted only four essays) provided their reflective narratives.

At the end of the study, participants had a 20-minute unstructured interview around the following questions regarding the role of CRP in teacher leadership:

1. Did CRP influence your leadership? In what ways?
2. Which features of CRP have most positively changed?
3. Will you use this approach in your future practices? Why?

Since the interviews were unstructured, the questions were expanded based on participants' answers. Finally, the interview sessions were audio-recorded for transcription.

Data Analysis

An inductive thematic analysis was employed (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to examine the qualitative data. As Braun and Clarke (2006) claim, "inductive analysis is . . . a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a preexisting coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions" (p. 83). Table 1 presents a six-step framework that expands on the analysis of data in the current study.

The data from field notes, narratives, and interviews were thoroughly coded for categorization, with attention to their meanings and patterns. Then, extracts with similar meanings were grouped under a broader category. Furthermore, the subcategories were linked to the overarching themes. Besides, after counting the frequencies of themes and categories, charts and tables were manually made in PowerPoint to show the percentages of categories and provide a meaningful representation. Frequency percentages emerged from inductive coding of all qualitative data sources, with each meaningful unit of analysis (e.g., a participant's statement about time limitations) counted as one code. Percentages reflect code prevalence, not individual participants. Besides, after measuring the coding process, the result displayed an inter-coder reliability of 97.5. All disagreements were resolved following an extensive discussion between Author 1 and an expert in coding, resulting in unanimous consensus.

Findings

In this section, we present the role of CRP in teacher leadership, exploring the applications and procedures, results and reasons, opportunities and challenges, as well as benefits and difficulties. The three main themes covered are: (a) Teacher Leadership

Table 1. Phases of Inductive Thematic Analysis (Adapted From Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

Phase		Description of the process
1	Familiarizing with the data	Thoroughly reading the narratives, focus group discussion field notes, and interview data
2	Generating initial codes	The process of systematically coding intriguing features of the dataset, gathering pertinent data for each code
3	Searching for themes	Compiling codes into possible themes and collecting all pertinent data for each potential theme
4	Reviewing themes	Verifying the functionality of the themes in connection to the coded excerpts (Level 1) and the complete dataset (Level 2), producing a thematic map of the analysis
5	Defining and labeling themes	Continual examination to enhance the details of every theme, as well as the overarching narrative conveyed by the analysis, creating precise definitions and titles for each theme
6	Producing the report	The ultimate chance for examination. Choosing vibrant and captivating instances from the extracts, conducting the ultimate analysis of the chosen extracts, connecting the analysis to the research question and existing literature, and creating an academic report based on the analysis

and CRP for Professional Development, (b) Teachers' Reflective and Collaborative Leadership, and (c) Benefits and Challenges of Enhancing Teacher Leadership With CRP (see Table 2). Hence, the extracts provided by participants were explained. Participants stated perceived development in leadership skills by means of CRP; however, these self-reported advances need to be considered in light of the study's restricted timeframe and workshop-based introduction to leadership concepts. The developing themes suggest possible pathways for leadership development instead of conclusive outcomes. In terms of coding the data, preservice teachers are identified as "PT," and novice teachers as "NT." The narratives are labelled as "N," field notes of observations as "FN," and interviews as "I."

Theme 1: Teacher Leadership and CRP for Professional Development

Figure 1 summarizes the developing process of leadership development that participants labelled in their narratives and discussions. We use it here because it openly reflects participants' stated experiences before analyzing their wider implications in the discussion section.

Table 2. Themes and Categories

Theme 1: Teacher Leadership and CRP for Professional Development	Theme 2: Teachers' Reflective and Collaborative Leadership	Theme 3: Benefits and Challenges of Enhancing Teacher Leadership With CRP
Categories		
Reflective practices	Self-assessment and evaluation	Benefits: personal, professional, and social
Collaborative practices	Instructional practices	Challenges: time constraints, trust, and resistance to change
Professional growth	Community of practice	

Figure 1. Process of Developing Leadership Through CRP Based on Experiential Learning Theory

To develop professionally and actively, preservice and novice EFL teachers need to know how to learn from their practices reflectively and collaboratively. Since teachers' professional development was regarded as an active, ongoing, situated, reflective, and coherent process, preservice and novice EFL teachers could reflect on their practices to solve problems, enhance instruction, identify strengths and weaknesses, connect theory and practice, implement wise plans, and look for growth through reflective observation, as seen in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 1. Reflective practices
Reflections helped me in finding and seeing my problems, those problems were reflectively observed, such as using a lot of academic words during my speech for talking to young learners. (NT1, FN)

Excerpt 2. Collaborative practices
I explained everything for my students, like by reading books, discussing topics, and explaining grammar and vocab…I have to engage students more in my class for the next sessions…So, I could be more creative by using

more questions, prompts, clues, body language, pictures, elicitation, and so on. (PT3, N)

Excerpt 3. Enhancing creativity
I used to work with my peers to enhance our students' engagement during class. We planned to use more creative methods, such as assigning projects, promoting group work and collaborative learning, using technology and virtual reality, having creative assignments, generating games and tailored activities, and using mindfulness and short breaks. The result was fantastic!! (PT1, N)

In this way, preservice and novice EFL teachers developed their knowledge and skills professionally within their specific teaching context. Along with reflections, teachers could use collaboration to implement CRP, thereby creating more opportunities and benefits. Their professional development turned out to be dialogic, along with social relationships and mutual engagement during reflections. Preservice and novice EFL teachers learned how to provide and receive feedback, guidance, and help, create a supportive learning

environment, take and share responsibilities, act as coaches and mentors for peers, and plan, act, and reflect collectively. NT4 presented:

Excerpts 4 and 5. Collective professional growth
We novice teachers must get help from experienced peers to know what to do and how. When I taught reading, I used to teach every new word before it. However, my peer told me that I need to teach some relevant strategies, such as deducing the word from the context, to make my students autonomous. (NT4, I)
I reflected and collaborated with my peers; they had more experience and were informative; and I could get help from them to teach more professionally. Previously, I learned by reading and workshops, but now, I can have kind friends, a caring class, and a supportive school. (PT1, I)

Hence, preservice and novice EFL teachers shared their ideas and practices socially, made collective decisions, clarified concepts and connected theory and practice together, explored problems and designed materials and tasks to solve them collaboratively, and developed professionally in a professional CoP.

Teacher leadership could help preservice and novice EFL teachers develop professionally. Teachers who adopted the identity of leaders were more responsible for reflecting on their instruction, class environment, students' learning and achievement, and other instructional factors:

Excerpt 6
We could talk to parents, stakeholders, and students more systematically and collectively in a mentally and interactively supportive manner. Once I had a meeting with parents about the student's low achievement, I thought about strategies to motivate and direct them by collaborating with my peers and manager. (PT2, N)

Furthermore, participants needed to collaborate with other teachers, students, experts, and parents to make decisions, implement strategies, and devise plans

and policies. They became able to reflect more critically and, collectively, identify and solve problems related to teaching, the school, and the class within a CoP. In addition, they enhanced the instruction and achievement of students by focusing on quality, taking more responsibilities, working with peers professionally, reforming educational practices, and updating actions, thoughts, and theories. Teachers adopted a more professional discourse and became more professional. They acted as counselors, mentors, material developers, teachers, friends, assessors, and leaders:

Excerpt 7. Reflective and collaborative leadership
We, as novice teachers, were more cognizant of our roles as both teachers and leaders…We had to manage the students, class, and school professionally…This needed a lot of factors such as reflection, collaboration, problem-solving, decision-making, and others. So, we learned how to work together to solve our problems and make wise decisions regarding teaching and learning, policies and initiatives, actions and strategies, and evaluations and assessments. (NT2, I)

Thus, preservice and novice EFL teachers were able to receive feedback and support, enhance their professional development, hold collaborative meetings, gain practical skills, implement innovations, make informed improvements, become adaptable, and create a long-lasting learning environment.

Theme 2: Teachers' Reflective and Collaborative Leadership

Preservice and novice EFL teachers discerned how to develop their leadership skills reflectively and collaboratively during their initial teacher education programs. They could develop their subject matter and instructional knowledge and practice of teaching through reflecting on novel experiences, setting realistic objectives, theorizing practice, practicing theories, making sense of new experiences, supporting plans with collective wisdom, transforming educational

performance, building practice on established studies, and researching and exploring new areas:

> **Excerpt 8.** Instructional practices
>
> I could gain knowledge and skill of classroom management through reading books, discussing, and experiencing new strategies related to classroom management… When I could see myself as a real leader, my management could be enhanced a lot. (NT3, N)

Furthermore, Author 2 perceived that "it was obvious that novice teachers could become more flexible in gaining knowledge of teaching, students' psychology, and school management since they tried hard to make the content appropriate, increase the creativity of teaching, and have smoother procedures" (FN).

Additionally, students' learning and achievement increased due to improved instructional practices, enhanced creativity and advocacy, qualified assessment procedures, practical classroom management, constructive feedback, and effective teachers' roles. One of the preservice teachers could "develop a formative assessment procedure with the help of novice teachers to give feedback, help, and guidance, which was really effective for engaging students" (FN). So, teacher leadership could enhance the whole school's performance by improving and refining participants' overall teaching practices and professional development, analyzing their practices and finding areas needing improvement, sharing applicable and constructive strategies and practices in a CoP, encountering problems and solving them innovatively with other teachers, forming a professional and community-oriented school culture, and making continuous development a norm. As stated by PT4, "we could engage all students to do creative and collaborative tasks, even those students who were demotivated and low achievers" (N).

Similarly, NT3 could "enhance one student's listening comprehension by giving some listening tasks, asking for transcriptions and listening for pleasure,
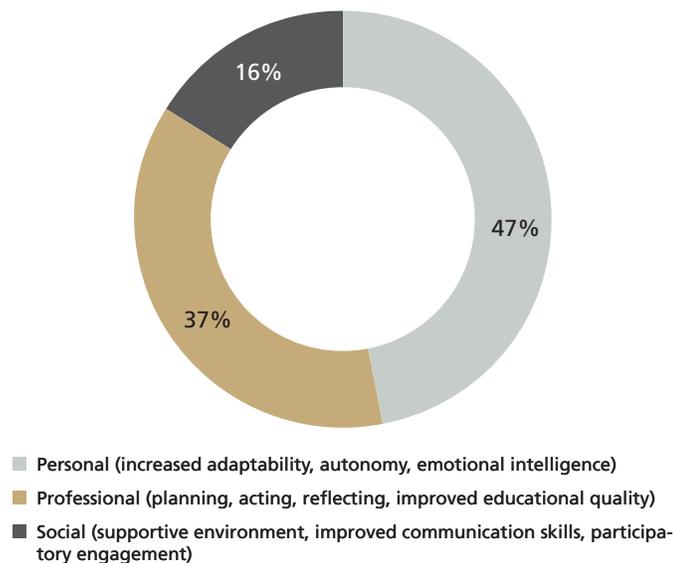
reflecting on his performance, engaging his parents, and introducing some podcasts and audiobooks" (FN).

Preservice and novice EFL teachers developed their leadership reflectively and collaboratively through leadership, implementing self-assessment and evaluation, identifying areas for improvement, receiving constructive feedback, building a professional network, participating in mentoring and coaching sessions, and improving their confidence. As NT2 mentioned: "Collaborative team teaching and coaching practices could change my confidence while teaching…I could add innovation to my grammar teaching through technology, multimedia, tasks, and stories" (FN). So, participants developed their professional knowledge and practice individually through reflective leadership and collectively through collective leadership within a CoP. Commenting on self-assessment, PT2 claimed: "When I reflected and collaborated with other teachers to enhance my leadership, I could assess my own teaching practice, skill, and knowledge and know my areas of strengths and weaknesses" (I).

Theme 3: Benefits and Challenges of Enhancing Teacher Leadership With CRP

Figure 2 shows the frequency of coded responses across all data sources (n = 8 participants' interviews, narratives, and field notes). For example, 47% of coded excerpts (n = 15 of 32 total coded segments) reflected personal benefits like improved autonomy, calculated as: (Number of personal-benefit codes ÷ Total codes) × 100. CRP could enhance teacher leadership personally (47%), professionally (37%), and socially (16%). Collective reflections could make preservice and novice teachers more reflective and cooperative.

Participants became more flexible and committed towards challenges and hardships. Teachers became more autonomous in building objectives, taking action, and exploring the source of problems to solve. Likewise,

Figure 2. Benefits of Enhancing Teacher Leadership With CRP

- Personal (increased adaptability, autonomy, emotional intelligence)
- Professional (planning, acting, reflecting, improved educational quality)
- Social (supportive environment, improved communication skills, participatory engagement)

being mindful and resilient to change, and making positive adaptations were vital elements for teachers. Some novice teachers mentioned that "they had more adaptability and motivation to reflect on problems and collaborate with others to solve them" (FN). In addition, participants learned to take greater responsibility for the whole school and its educational elements. They felt valued after taking on more responsibilities, cooperating with others, sharing ideas, identifying and solving issues, and making big and effective changes inclusively. So, preservice and novice EFL teachers, like experienced members, could possess agency, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness, as stated by PT4: "I could manage my stress and tension by reflecting and collaborating with my peers, directing actions and feelings, and having support and help." Professionally, preservice and novice teachers could plan, act, observe, and reflect collaboratively and iteratively to enhance their leadership, educational quality, students' learning, and school learning atmosphere:

Excerpt 9. Benefits

We could find problems, plan to act wisely, implement strategies, and reflect on their consequences to enhance

our leadership and learners' achievement. Like the time I reflected on a problem related to having more feedback to see how students learn…I used concept-checking questions during my instruction and tried hard to observe their learning. (I)

This led to reflective and collaborative teacher leadership, sharing thoughts and practices, constructive feedback, and managing the school analytically and socially. As mentioned by PT1: "I could reflect on my discourse as a teacher…I tried my best to record and listen to my voice, plan and think before talking, and ask peers for feedback" (N). Participants managed to own experiential professional learning by experimenting with new strategies, actions, plans, and objectives, making sense of new experiences and contextual factors, and gaining meaningful and authentic experiences of teaching, which could foster their leadership. Socially, preservice and novice EFL teachers could have a supportive and inclusive learning environment, collective identity, participatory engagement, reciprocal relationships, strong rapport, democratic educational climate, scaffolding, joint construction, and improved

communication skills and cultural competence. One of the teachers indicated: "Collaborative reflections helped me to learn how to build a professional community to receive help and enhance my leadership roles in the future. So, I could have a friendly and helpful professional learning environment" (NT1).

Figure 3 shows the frequency of coded excerpts from participants' narratives, interviews, and field notes that explain the challenges of CRP. Themes were inductively derived from responses to open-ended prompts about perceived impacts of CRP on their leadership development.

First, participants mentioned heavy workload and time constraints (65%) as the most common problems, since teachers had other jobs as well. NT2 stated: "This process was taking too much time from me…I do not have a lot of time after school as I have another job to do…Also, I like to spend my time on some free-time activities, rather than working professionally" (I).

Secondly, some participants needed more trust and openness (26%) to share their personal feelings, professional thoughts, and hands-on practices, and hoped for fewer group conflicts. Similarly, some participants were resistant to change (9%), as they had always been

immersed in a top-down educational system. According to PT3, "the group discussion was such a battle…no one accepted my idea; sometimes, I think they become stubborn to change the bad conditions" (I).

Discussion

Developing preservice and novice EFL teachers' leadership skills is vital for their professional development (Reeves & Lowernhaupt, 2016), and this development can play a pivotal role in achieving this objective (Ciampa & Reisboard, 2024). Since preservice and novice EFL teachers are at the initial stages of their teaching careers, they need to learn to equip themselves with relevant leadership skills, strategies, and practices to face the various challenges that may come their way. Teacher leadership helped participants in this study take more responsibilities from the beginning to enhance their teaching, students' learning, and school performance. They developed a more nuanced professional identity through professional interactions and reflection on their roles as teachers, managers, counselors, mentors, material developers, friends, and assessors. Additionally, they reflected on and collaborated with peers and other stakeholders to enhance

Figure 3. Challenges Faced by Teachers in Enhancing Leadership With CRP

Time constraints ⬛ Trust and openness ⬛ Resistance to change
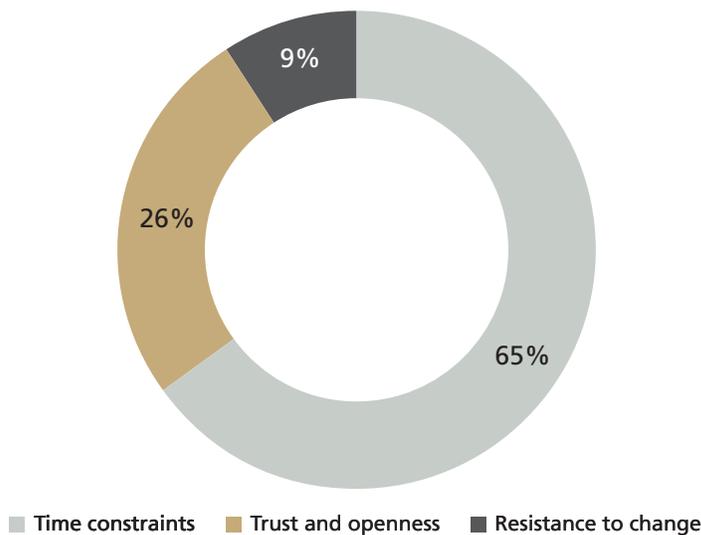
their students' teaching and learning, and developed plans and policies for implementation. These skills are crucial for novice teachers, as they often focus only on classroom behavior.

Preservice and novice EFL teachers could conduct CRP to enhance their leadership skills. Through this approach, they made decisions, discovered problems, and provided solutions collectively and developed professionally in a CoP (Arefian et al., 2024). Thus, they could learn to develop their leadership reflectively and collaboratively in an active, ongoing, and situated learning environment within a professional CoP. Preservice and novice EFL teachers who reflected on their practices could identify and solve problems, recognize strengths and weaknesses, and connect the theory and practice of leadership situationally and contextually (Arefian, 2023). They learned collaboratively by having social relationships and mutual engagement during reflections to make a supportive learning environment; share practice and ideas; receive constructive feedback; become critical friends; and co-plan, co-implement, and co-reflect (Esfandiari & Arefian, 2024). Furthermore, they improved the quality of their instruction by reforming and updating their practices, theories, and thoughts to reach the desired objectives. In this way, they took greater agency and voice to share, implement, and reflect on ideas and experiences. Moreover, they had more professional discourse while teaching and interacting with students. Thus, preservice and novice EFL teachers were able to access support, hold regular collaborative meetings, gain useful skills, use creativity, make informed decisions, develop their flexibility, and create a long-lasting learning environment. Current studies have pointed out the usefulness of CRP in encouraging teacher leadership (Meyer et al., 2023). Lee (2007), for instance, indicated that preservice teachers doing reflective practices enhanced their leadership skills, illuminated their vague thoughts, probed for the best decision and solution, resolved challenges, and gained communication skills.

By implementing CRP to enhance leadership, participants could develop their subject matter and pedagogical awareness of teaching by reflecting on and making sense of new teaching experiences, building collective wisdom and shared values, transforming and reforming educational practices, and investigating and discovering new areas for improvement (Ghamrawi & Tamim, 2023; Shen, 2023). Personally, participants became more autonomous in making decisions, developing plans, taking action, and changing practices with other teachers, students, and parents. They were also more mindful and resilient, as they used both their reflective cognitions and social collaborations within a supportive, constructive, and flexible professional learning context. They enhanced their self- and peer-assessment practices to evaluate their own and others' practices reflectively and critically. Additionally, they developed emotional and social intelligence by reflecting on their emotions, directing feelings, managing interactions, socializing their practices, and enhancing their cognitive understanding. Similar findings were reported by Whitehead and Greenier (2019), who explored perceptions of English language teacher leadership among 20 South Korean university students. The results of their study suggested that those English teachers who were passionate, built rapport, had purpose, reflected, collaborated to enhance practice, and were flexible could go beyond traditional classroom practices and take leadership roles.

Ghamrawi et al. (2024) stated that effective teacher leaders obtain a profound understanding of reflective teaching and learning, actively engage in collaborative contributions, and inspire both peers and students emotionally and professionally. Professionally, participants of our study could plan, act, observe, and reflect collaboratively and iteratively to enhance their leadership. They were able to show more reflective and collaborative teacher leadership, express their ideas and thoughts, obtain constructive feedback, and participate in experiential professional learning by trying

out new strategies analytically and socially (Karlberg-Granlund & Pastuhov, 2024). Socially, participants were part of a supportive and inclusive learning environment to develop professionally with other peers, trainers, and stakeholders. In addition, they gained a collective identity as they were fully engaged with others through reciprocal relationships within a democratic educational atmosphere. In addition, they received sufficient scaffolding and joint construction of knowledge, as well as improved communication skills and cultural competence. Askarpour et al. (2024) claim that the personal, social, and professional qualities mentioned above are crucial for preservice and novice EFL teachers to handle the challenges of classroom management, curriculum development, and communication with students, colleagues, and parents. Moreover, existing research investigations underscore the role of CRP in promoting teachers' skills, confidence, discipline, communication skills, rapport, and community building, as some vital characteristics of leaders (Keramati et al., 2024).

However, boosting teacher leadership with CRP faces several obstacles. Initially, the teachers' heavy workloads and time limitations were prevalent issues, as many participants had additional responsibilities. Secondly, certain participants required increased trust and honesty to express their emotions, ideas, and practical experiences, while minimizing group disagreements. Additionally, some individuals were hesitant to embrace change due to their exposure to a hierarchical educational structure during their academic life. To alleviate these challenges, several strategies can be adopted. First, institutions could invest enough time for CRP within teachers' plans or encourage "micro-reflections"—shorter, concentrated sessions—to work on substantial workloads. Second, trust-building activities (e.g., anonymized initial reflections or mentorship pairings) could help preservice teachers feel safe sharing vulnerabilities. In conclusion, resistance to hierarchical norms might

be considered by regularly enabling teachers through small leadership roles (e.g., peer observations) while calling for institutional support to legitimize CRP as a professional development priority. Upcoming research could evaluate the efficacy of these interventions in contexts with embedded top-down structures.

Conclusion

Preservice and novice EFL teachers who face various challenges during their first teaching practices need to enhance their leadership skills to succeed, act professionally, and maintain their profession. Such leadership skills can help them enhance their professional development, their students' learning, and their school initiatives and policies. One way to develop preservice and novice EFL teacher leadership can be CRP. Hence, this study explored how preservice and novice EFL teacher leadership could be fostered by implementing CRP in professional development practices. The results of the narrative phenomenology indicated that preservice and novice EFL teachers could boost their leadership through CRP. Preservice and novice EFL teachers could obtain constructive feedback, generate a caring learning environment, divide their responsibilities, share thoughts and feelings, and plan, act, and reflect collectively to enhance their leadership skills and practices. Additionally, they improved their leadership reflectively and collaboratively through self-assessment, identifying areas for improvement, receiving constructive feedback, building a professional network, participating in mentoring and coaching sessions, becoming more creative and flexible, and increasing their confidence. In practice, preservice and novice EFL teachers could become more autonomous, adaptable, and emotionally intelligent by conducting CRP to enhance their leadership. Socially, they fostered their communication and cultural competence within a supporting CoP. The challenges of conducting CRP to improve leadership include time constraints, a lack of trust and openness, and resistance to change.

Whereas this study offers insights into how CRP nurtures leadership among preservice and novice EFL teachers, the brief duration of the leadership workshop and intervention period (three months) restricts the generalizability of the findings. A longer intervention with continuous reflective and collaborative cycles would yield deeper insights into leadership development and its longstanding influence. Moreover, the small sample size limits wider applicability. Upcoming research should extend this primary framework (Figure 1) by employing longitudinal studies with larger participant groups across different contexts. Such inquiries could also validate the role of CRP in teacher leadership and investigate how institutional support (e.g., dedicated time for collaboration) alleviates challenges posed by time constraints. Some limitations have to be considered, such as the lack of accessibility to a larger sample of preservice and novice EFL teachers. So, further investigations can conduct quantitative research using a larger sample to achieve generalizability. Other investigations can explore how preservice and novice language teachers can develop their leadership skills within different contexts. More inquiries can show how teachers from different disciplines can work together to gain distributed leadership, along with conducting collaborative reflections. This can inform teacher educators, teachers, stakeholders, policymakers, and school managers in using CRP to improve novice and preservice teachers' leadership skills and practices.

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