



International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research
 Vol. 23, No. 5, pp. 454-474, May 2024
<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.23.5.24>
 Received Feb 25, 2024; Revised May 24, 2024; Accepted May 30, 2024

Reinforcing Reflective Practice through Reflective Writing in Higher Education: A Systematic Review

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Abstract. Reflective practice provides positive reinforcements for students in higher education to develop reflective writing skills, allowing them to enhance academic performance, self-reflection, decision-making and problem-solving strategies. This systematic review aims to describe essential aspects of reinforcing reflective practice through reflective writing and the contributions of reflective practice to the praxis of the students' reflective writing skills in higher education. Using 20 of 745 peer-reviewed articles published from 2018 to 2024 in Scopus and Web of Science-indexed journals, this research applied the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses guidelines to underpin the data search and identification criteria, data selection and data analysis procedures. The findings show that reflective practice embedded in reflective writing can enhance students' academic performance, particularly reflective writing skills, self-reflection and appreciation of diverse cultures, shared beliefs and values and other practices across disciplines. Such vital aspects contribute to the praxis of effortful reflective writing skills developed to implement the processes of writing essays reflectively while concentrating on collaboration, critical thinking skills, deep learning and feedback. This reflective practice assists students in reinforcing their enthusiasm to keep writing reflective essays

regardless of challenges and hindrances they encounter. The more time they spend on reflective writing skills, the more they will likely appreciate reflective practice that cultivates the powerful values behind writing activities.

Keywords: Reflective practice; reflective writing; reflective writing skills; metacognitive skills; academic performance

1. Introduction

As reflective writing is deeply rooted in reflections and critical analyses, university students are encouraged to communicate their insights clearly. Several studies on reflective writing focus on the students' writing competence, which entails the ability to produce texts at a deep level of reflection (Gadsby, 2022) involving linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. Further guidance on these specific details indicates how reflective writing is likely to require extensive assessments and modifications (Day et al., 2022), allowing students to provide self-assessment, peer review and professional re-evaluation. Meanwhile, upgrading writing skills leads to the mastery of linguistic features that extend beyond their professional practice and reflection (Marshall et al., 2022). In essence, reflective writing is more complex than simply presenting critical viewpoints and the inclusion of theme-based writing.

In a broad sense, in reflective writing, students not only reflect on information about personal experiences but also enhance their professional development and reflective practice (Marshall et al., 2021). More specifically, the craft of reflective writing has predominantly been used as a learning tool to mediate between reflection (Markkanen et al., 2020) and professional learning (Marshall, 2019). The integration of reflection and learning significantly enhances the effectiveness of reflective practice in writing. This practice emphasises cognitive and metacognitive skills, encompassing a wide range of writing processes. These processes include critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity, and self-reflection. By monitoring one's writing strategies, strengths, weaknesses, and desired outcomes, reflective practice fosters a deeper engagement with writing principles. By integrating such aspects, students can improve their reflective writing, rhetorical style, and knowledge base (Heron & Corradini, 2020; Ryan, 2011). Hence, students can optimise their cognitive and metacognitive abilities to demystify the capacity of writing reflectively to foster lifelong learning (McCarthy, 2017) based on self-regulated learning experiences.

Reflective writing necessarily depicts key concepts that reinforce writing skills through influential instructions (Ahmed, 2019). Providing feedback over weeks or months within a semester is crucial for maintaining an effective reflective writing timeline. This extended duration ensures comprehensive engagement with writing processes, builds self-assurance, and fosters trust, allowing for deeper reflection on original issues. Additionally, the benefits of reflection are enhanced through the incorporation of teamwork and research (Bashan & Holsblat, 2017). Through reflection, students receive positive feedback and reinforcement, enabling them to enhance their knowledge and life skills. This self-

reflection process becomes actionable in their reflective writing. Despite its lengthy nature, reflective writing is essential for tackling critical issues highlighted in a reflective text. It leverages the power of learning (Veine et al., 2020) to enhance writing skills, incorporating language awareness into self-editing and peer editing guidelines.

In a professional context, reflective writing aims to capture detailed learning experiences that thoughtfully enhance various perspectives (Thompson, 2022). Such activities are fundamentally linked to reflective practice, reinforcing students' re-exploration of in-depth scholarly content, pedagogy and knowledge. They use vital themes to link their learning experiences and pertinent interactions to higher-order thinking skills. The results of their reflections can unleash creativity once they embrace reflective practice curiously (Pendrey, 2022). In Pendrey's argument, reflective writing assists them in creating more spaces for in-depth reflection; still, critical ideas at hand address are imperative for harnessing professional development, critical thinking, and self-awareness (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018). Therefore, reflective practice will likely nurture creativity, pedagogy and knowledge. Most of all, it tends to foster reflection, professional development and higher-order thinking skills.

Reflective writing is an important part of building knowledge, but there is still a significant research gap concerning its key principles. Reflection is closely linked to advanced professional development. However, students need to understand how reflection influences critical thinking and reflective practice through reflective journal writing (Woldt & Nenad, 2021; Yeh et al., 2023; Penggabean et al., 2023; Şener & Mede, 2023). More studies are required to identify the contributions of reflective writing to multidisciplinary practice, particularly concerning professional reflective practice and genre-based approaches to enhance cognitive and metacognitive abilities. Hence, knowledge about reflective writing should be explored to raise students' self-awareness of generating rhetorical content (Taczak & Roberston, 2017; Gibson et al., 2016; O'Loughlin & Griffith, 2020; Septina et al., 2018; Hughes et al., 2019; Sweet et al., 2019; Sessolo, 2018). This focus likely points to unexplored aspects of rhetorical and linguistic techniques in reflective writing, which helps students clearly show their rhetorical and linguistic skills.

Reflective writing helps students manage their writing process, enabling them to enhance self-reflection while revisiting feedback (Yang, 2023), writing achievements, advanced language awareness (Gebremariam & Asgede, 2023), and reflective thinking (Kingkaew et al., 2023). More research is urgently needed to explore how feedback supports and promotes reflective practice, which is essential for creativity, critical thinking, and curiosity in various contexts. In response to such growing concerns, two research questions arise, as follows:

RQ 1: What aspects are essential in reinforcing reflective practice through reflective writing in higher education?

RQ 2: What are the contributions of reflective practice to the praxis of the students' reflective writing skills in higher education?

Reflective practice is crucial, and this research adds to the theory, teaching, and practical use of reflective writing. First, reflective writing is based on theories that support knowledge-building and reflective practice. Second, teaching methods have used these theories to improve how writing is taught. Finally, the strength of reflective practice lies in how these theories enhance critical thinking, self-reflection, engagement, and creativity.

2. Literature Review

This section outlines three theoretical domains: reflective practice, reflective writing and reflective journal writing. Each covers several aspects that fundamentally support the extent to which the research topic can be developed and reviewed.

2.1 Reflective Practice

The practice of reflective writing means that today's writers balance important and traditional issues, going beyond their expectations to address them (Bolton, 2010). Reflective writers go beyond those who use a repetitive writing style, urging them to make meaningful reflections. They use their reflective skills when writing essays (Grayson, 2018), which enthusiastically express their personal learning styles and professional growth. It is important to consider solutions for reflective writing that allow for learning from mistakes and errors. Without thoughtful reflection, writing practice may lose its important role in self-awareness and professional growth. Reflective practice in various fields also aims to improve writing skills (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018)

More specifically, writing involves combining self-reflection and critical thinking, which are two sides of the same coin when it comes to reflective writing. On one side is self-reflection, which helps students write for media and pursue their goal of becoming professional writers (Leggette et al., 2020). On the other side is critical thinking, which shows their ability to explain facts, highlight ideas, and develop reasoning skills. As they process writing analytically, they can compare and contrast things. Analogies involve reflections, beliefs, and critical concepts to build logical arguments (Lin, 2018). Both self-reflection and critical thinking help writers organise ideas powerfully and present them systematically to capture readers' attention.

Reflective practice, also known as critical reflection (Gouthro & Holloway, 2018), focuses on exploring broad issues to understand how students improve their writing skills and professional potential. Firstly, critical reflection encourages reflective learning, which involves finding new ways to develop technical skills, teaching methods, and creativity. Then, the complexities of learning are connected to critical reflection, showing that learning progresses from a basic level of knowledge to an intermediate and advanced level of understanding, leading to a comprehensive outcome. Finally, reflective learning gains insights into the overall concept of critical reflection (Tilakaratna & Szenes, 2024), which combines theories with practical applications. Problem-solving within learning communities also forms a strong basis for reflective practice, enabling learners to be reflective and critical.

Reflective practice involves using skills and attitudes to improve personally and requires thorough exploration and active learning. For instance, students maintain journals to support reflective practice, allowing them to develop practical ideas, create theories, cultivate values, propose assumptions, and establish principles (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018; Gudeta, 2022). Reflective practice helps them manage reflective learning, offering different ways to solve problems. They generate new ideas while maintaining critical reflection, which influences relevant outcomes through their reflective and analytical skills.

2.2 Reflective Writing

Writing encourages reflection as a way of thinking and learning because how writers view the world from different perspectives determines their ability to reflect. They nurture curiosity by asking more critical questions. Each topic they explore shapes how they connect previous knowledge to new ideas through critical thoughts or reflective responses. In this way, reflective writing becomes a learning process where writers seek reliable evidence to present details, analyses, and arguments (Williams et al., 2020). They try to relate theory to practice as reflective writing connects topics while highlighting new ideas. Through this practice, a reflective approach enhances knowledge of content, self-awareness, and understanding of self-assessment and disciplinary thinking (Williams et al., 2020). Therefore, reflective writing continues efforts to think, reflect, and evaluate how previous topics are interconnected and coherent.

Reflective writing incorporates reflection into critical thinking, underscoring the scope of ideas addressed in a way that directs writers to contemplation or reflection. Writing is an essential life skill; writers must understand a topic and explore more ideas to elaborate on it. The possibility of engaging in more reflective writing suggests the beginning of self-awareness and critical thinking, which help in communicating ideas that are consistent with related messages while enhancing ways to deliver them thoughtfully (Cogni, 2019). However, this important viewpoint currently triggers controversies and debates for three reasons. Firstly, reflective writing is a casual way of expressing ideas, leading to familiarity with a more informal writing style. Then, reflective writing, with its detailed analysis, helps writers to explore the main topics being discussed, encouraging them to solve problems in a more familiar manner. Finally, based on this, a writer's impartiality is necessary for addressing an issue, making reflective writing a familiar style without neglecting its scientific nature.

Heron and Corradini (2020) argue that reflective writing has linguistic, generic, and rhetorical features identifiable through genre-analysis tools, showing its widespread popularity. However, the frequent use of the term "reflection" suggests that reflective writing might lose its scientific rigour due to an overemphasis on informality. Another issue is that reflective writing can expose students' lack of deep reflection and understanding, often stemming from habitual behaviours (Avarzamani & Farahian, 2019). Despite this, it should not stop students from using language patterns to improve how they express ideas in reflective writing. Therefore, Lin et al. (2016) support the use of reflective language to build solid background information, helping critical thinking become

part of meaningful reflections. These findings focus on reflective writing's role in professional actions that follow contextual guidelines. The challenge in avoiding the pitfalls of routine reflections is that writers must maintain a scholarly perspective.

Reflective writing is often linked with a participative approach that encourages freedom and inclusion in expressing ideas. Reflection has become a communication tool allowing writers to reflect, stay connected, engage, and call for action (Abiolu, 2022). These features improve the quality of reflective writing by incorporating reflection, engagement, feedback, underlying reasons, and deep learning (Lefroy et al., 2021). This suggests that reflective writing involves starting with brainstorming ideas and ending with discussing topics that address specific issues. Students use reflective writing to improve their writing skills. Through this practice, they write assignments that reflect the outcomes of discussions and mentorships. Reflective writing is an effective tool for developing concepts and deepening reflection (Gadsby, 2022). These assignments often include rubrics (Tilakaratna, 2024) to help students periodically assess their own or their peers' competence.

3. Method

The core components in this part include research design, literature search and identification, searching keywords, inclusion and exclusion as the selection criteria, data analysis procedures, data extraction, coding and categorising, synthesising and comparing and interpretation of findings.

3.1 Research Design

This systematic review research investigates the likelihood of cultivating reflective practice through the lens of published scholarly articles in Scopus and Web of Science-indexed journals from 2018 to 2024. Each scholarly article provides insights into the current knowledge and practice of the topic under research, including primary findings and pertinent phenomena (Newman & Gough, 2020). The main idea behind a systematic review is to present a clear and logical way of writing to develop necessary thinking skills and abilities. This method involves an objective and thorough review of the relevant literature, using evidence-based data to analyse existing studies and make connections and comparisons between them (Oliver, 2012).

The nature of this systematic review lies in using PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis) guidelines to ensure a well-structured framework for either conducting or reporting the review systematically. The PRISMA principles adhere to the review dimensions that link to replicability, credibility, transparency, recency, validity, objectivity (Oliver, 2012; Harris, 2020), topicality, breadth, comprehensiveness, relevance, availability, and authority (Efron & Ravid, 2019), allowing researchers to generate thorough analyses. Another primary consideration is that essential aspects of reflective practice can be measured through many scholarly articles using rigorous data collection, analysis, and extraction that coincide with the identified

topics, trends, themes and patterns. The following key aspects are applicable through a series of activities to support replicability, transparency and credibility.

3.2 Literature Search and Identification

Identifying the databases: The literature review data searches delineate vital concepts and terminologies related to reflective practice and writing through the Scopus and Web of Science-indexed journal databases. All the datasets were selected to provide a well-rounded identification of published scholarly articles in different disciplines which had been peer-reviewed (Goagoses & Koglin, 2020).

3.3 Searching Keywords

Pertinent keywords capturing the essential parts of the research topic included reflective practice, reflective writing, promotion and higher education. This combination of terms was tailored to the syntax of the particular dataset's search refinement using identified terms and Boolean logic (e.g., "AND," "OR," "NOT") (Oliver, 2012), aiming at narrowing down or expanding the search results simultaneously.

3.4 Selection Criteria

The selection criteria for including or excluding the published scholarly articles in the systematic review pertain to the guidelines set out by Bettany-Saltikov (2012), Jesson et al. (2011) and Machi and McEvoy, (2016) in the following table.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for the Scholarly Published Articles

No	Aspects	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1	Topicality and relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published scholarly articles must promote reflective practice and reflective writing in higher education. Focus on topic coverage and relevance to key aspects contributing to students' writing skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles that deviate from the intended topic and relevant substance. Auxiliary or supplementary sources such as literature reviews, editorials, and opinion pieces.
2	Research Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant primary studies published in the last six years. Use of qualitative, experimental, quasi-experimental, or mixed methods involving participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older publications that do not add new perspectives to research on reflective practice and reflective writing in higher education.
3	Publication Recency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles published between 2018 and 2024. Ensures comprehensiveness and inclusiveness for advancing knowledge across boundaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scholarly publications beyond the 2018-2024 recency coverage.

No	Aspects	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
4	Interventions or Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles must evaluate interventions connecting to reflective practice and reflective writing in higher education. Aim to compare studies on reflective practice, writing, and journal prompts or entries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy beyond the scoped intervention.
5	Language and Publication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles must be written in English. English is significant due to its global accessibility and acceptance. Articles must be rigorously peer-reviewed and indexed in Scopus or Web of Science journals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles written in languages other than English. Articles without peer-review processes. Articles published in conference proceedings, non-Scopus or Web of Science-indexed journals, and thesis or dissertation archives.
6	Availability of Full Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles must be available in full-text versions. If not openly accessible, availability through interlibrary loan or request from authors is necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles that are not accessible in full-text versions.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis in this systematic review research was as follows:

3.6 Data extraction

This was the most challenging phase in the systematic review because it primarily concentrated on checking 20 of 745 significant articles and highlighting them to answer the research questions (Bettany-Saltikov, 2012), mapping out findings, explicating research gaps, and stating their relevance to the topic under investigation (Goagoses & Koglin, 2020b). The data extraction focused on critical components in the studies, including topics, titles, publication dates, authors, research methods, sampling, and approaches or interventions closely connected to significant findings of published scholarly articles on reflective practice and reflective writing and their promotion in higher education.

3.7 Coding and Categorising

As a specific rule, coding and categorising extracted data are necessarily concerned with the emergence of critical topics, themes or concepts. This notion centred around reflective practice, reflective thinking skills, language development, reflective writing and higher education. Coding and categorising processes were relevantly undertaken to provide an in-depth data analysis.

3.8 Synthesising and Comparing

The selected data was identified to stipulate constituent parts and essential elements by synthesising and comparing to seek out connections, strengths, and weaknesses (Oliver, 2012) of key findings as well as variations, identifying patterns and comprehensive similarities or differences in wide-ranging methods, outcomes, interventions and sampling sizes across disciplines.

3.9 Interpretation of Findings

This data analysis was critical to interpreting key findings, aiming to answer the research questions and the purposes of the systematic review. The research findings were identifiable themes that can be well-communicated to the audience and academia. Pertinent information from the selected studies was critically reviewed to get insights into empirical evidence, analysis and investigation that lead to disclosing data-driven meanings or messages. The data interpretation should be obvious (Harris, 2020) to enable readers to digest the findings from the authors' ideas that permeate scholarly voices, authority and authorship.

4. Results and Discussion

This part examines the results and discusses essential aspects of reinforcing reflective practice through reflective writing and the contributions of reflective practice to the praxis of the students' reflective writing skills in higher education.

4.1 Essential Aspects in Reinforcing Reflective Practice through Reflective Writing in Higher Education

Essential aspects in the 20 of 750 Scopus and Web of Science-indexed articles (2018-2024) published in peer-reviewed journals delineate reflective writing activities that foster engagement and social and interpersonal connections. Despite this typical feature, reflective practice embedded in every reflective writing session brings a new dimension of self-awareness for acquiring greater creativity, problem-solving and personal development.

Modelling the power of learning to write, Or (2018) contends that core components of reflective practice are closely connected to reflective journal writing, along with its new contributions to ponder. Reflective journal writing, laden with reflective thinking skills, has long developed students' academic achievement in higher education institutions. Through this intellectual tradition, students actively participate in writing reflective journals that can boost their academic performance by 80 percent, contributing to their personal growth supported by constructive comments in the reflective journals. This evidence provides a sound argument to construct the thinking process and develop critical ideas. They can produce more appropriate combinations of words, phrases or sentences representing their reflective writing skills.

Sanchez et al. (2019) highlight important factors that support the growth of reflective practice, including reflective writing, metacognition, and experiential learning. Through these methods, students learn how comments in reflective essays can increase cultural awareness. Reflective practice helps students understand people with different cultural beliefs, values, and practices. It encourages recognizing diversity, social identities, and sensitivity to cultural

events. This cultural sensitivity teaches students to appreciate differences, promote inclusivity, and interact considerately, while reducing conflicts, stereotypes, stigma and misunderstandings. This process challenges students to develop self-awareness and multicultural understanding, gaining cultural insights through reflective essay comments.

Assessment of reflective writing can be seen as incremental (Ono & Ichii, 2019), focusing on gradually monitoring and evaluating students' writing progress. This method involves breaking down learning activities into manageable assignments and assessments, with continuous monitoring and feedback to improve performance in reflective writing. Reflective practice is maintained through these writing tasks using detailed rubrics (Tilakaratna, 2024). This approach helps uncover the true meaning of learning and its connection to cultural practices in business. Incremental assessment allows students to develop critical thinking while also enhancing their academic writing skills.

Lefroy et al. (2021) provide new insights into how reflective writing helps medical students engage in their learning and receive workplace feedback. Reflective practice supports these writing activities by fostering both internal and external motivations. Internal motivation involves deep thinking about learning activities through reflection and discussion of feedback. External motivation comes from outside sources that drive students to complete reflective writing tasks in the workplace.

Ekelin et al. (2021) highlight that daily written reflections are part of students' learning and progress. Reflective practice is a creative process. Monitoring helps students manage time, organises support systems and provides clear instructions by means of feedback. This evidence shows how reflective practice enhances students' metacognitive awareness of learning processes. Reflective writing also helps students develop self-regulated learning, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for professional skills in the twenty-first century (Zarestky et al., 2022).

Reflective practice, as a key part of reflective writing, not only enhances students' ability to think deeply about course topics but also develops their cognitive skills. Reflective journals are essential for starting discussions with mentors and developing ideas through written reflections (Gadsby, 2022). This aligns with other studies by Donohoe et al. (2022) and Heron and Corradini (2023), which show that reflective writing can encourage structured reflections using prompts and idea development in a specific module. In using a guideline for professional reflective writing, students can identify rhetorical and linguistic features in various texts.

In line with such findings, Pereira et al. (2023), Christensen and Wårnsby (2023) and Bowman (2021) highlight the importance of reflective practice that motivates students to participate and develop ideas through reflective writing. The mediating role of monitoring is to ensure that reflective writing tasks are tailored to the guidelines, namely the depth of the reflection, self-awareness, logical ideas,

coherence and clarity. Other vital aspects are worth considering when it comes to reflective practice, including positive feelings, analysis, reflective tasks, critical reflection (Tilakaratna & Szenes, 2024) and feedback. A thoughtful self-reflection also delves into scaffolded reflections that require guidance, prompts and reflective activities.

Reflective practice is likely to enhance the student teachers' reflective writing skills as they work on iterative drafts to improve the quality of reflective writing (Colognesi et al., 2021; Birello & Font, 2020; Ezezika & Johnston, 2023) with a pre-existing condition that students write consistently, and the learning environment is conducive.

To support the previously-mentioned findings, Lucas et al. (2019), Akhmetova and Khaliullina (2023) and Björktomta and Tham (2024) underscore that reflective practice is intertwined with reflective writing activities, allowing students to explore their personal experiences, feelings and knowledge proficiency. While concentrating on personal growth, they can engage in self-reflection to examine learning processes, particularly when it comes to decision-making, shared beliefs and values, self-awareness and professional development. These notions coincide with other related studies (Li et al., 2023; Mjølstad & Getz, 2023; Tlali & Lefoka, 2023), signifying that reflective practice supports students' attempts to build an understanding of values, beliefs and assumptions that link self-reflection to critical thinking, each of which leads to personal growth and better problem-solving skills.

4.2 The Contributions of Reflective Practice to the Praxis of the Students' Reflective Writing Skills in Higher Education

Reflective practice in higher education mainly contributes to the praxis of students' reflective writing skills, including self-reflection and personal experiences. According to Or (2018), reflective practice can enhance students' abilities to communicate ideas, analyse concepts and reflect on their attitudes, actions and personal development in applying reflective writing skills. Students are encouraged to undertake self-reflection, which is critical to sustaining self-awareness, a cognitive condition of increasing reflective writing to express ideas and feelings (Sanchez et al., 2019) more decisively.

Other studies by Ono and Ichii (2019), Lefroy et al. (2021), Ekelin et al. (2021) reveal that reflective practice in various contexts can increase reflective writing skills vis-à-vis reflective thinking, self-evaluation, collaboration and engagement in connecting theory with practice. The praxis of self-reflection enables students to reflect on pertinent issues surrounding activities to solve problems and communicate ideas well. Reflective practice allows students to appreciate other people's diverse experiences. Reflective practice effectively hones reflective writing skills through written reflections, discussion, peer learning and discussion. Most importantly, reflective practice triggers motivation, supervision and deep reflection through concrete writing events.

In line with such insights, Zarestky et al. (2022), Gadsby (2022), Donohoe et al. (2022) and Pereira et al. (2023) underscore that reflective practice contributes to

the development of reflective writing skills, influencing the impacts of writing for collaborating, acknowledging self-determined learning, peer learning and professional development. The growing concern is that reflective practice not only facilitates students in giving feedback to their peers but also initiates dialogic reflections, which are assumed to be a higher level of reflective writing because they involve sound reasoning and critical thinking skills. Descriptive reflection necessarily entails the consideration of empirical literature relevant to reflective practice that deepens their understanding of complicated topics they need to write about. It also demystifies the genre-analysis of events, writing features and challenges.

Regardless of the oscillation between the theory and the practice, reflective practice in the framed views of Christensen and Wårnsby (2023), Bowman (2021), Colognesi et al. (2021), Birello and Font (2020) and Mjølstad and Getz (2023) reinforce the contributions of reflective practice to reflective writing skills in real-life situations. First, students can shift their ideas development processes from a reporting model to a reflective writing style. Reflective practice helps students improve their metacognitive skills, analysis, active learning, and academic literacy by developing their ideas, understanding deeply, and communicating effectively. Additionally, being reflective in their writing helps them build writing skills and see the benefits of connecting theory with practice, mastering concepts, and improving language proficiency. Reflective practice often involves detailed descriptions and expressions, using images and sentence structures to enhance meaning and provide clear reflections based on extensive information. In health-related fields, students find reflective writing useful for handling clinical challenges, uncertain situations and sensitive issues.

Reflective practice contributes to students' development of self-awareness, self-reflection and communication skills. This proposition aligns with Björktomta and Tham (2024), Lucas et al. (2019), Akhmetova and Khaliullina (2023), Mjølstad & Getz (2023), Li et al. (2023) and Tlali and Lefoka (2023), whose studies accentuate that reflective practice can contribute to reflective writing skills for several reasons. First, students can develop their metacognition and communication skills, improve their knowledge about reflective essays, and enhance self-reflection. Through reflective practices, they can explore ideas and nurture values, beliefs, and assumptions concerning social work while consistently using feedback to track their progress in re-articulating academic performance achieved through evaluations and peer collaborations.

5. Implications

This systematic review implies that the intertwined thoughts on aspects of reflective practice can be incorporated into reflective writing, concentrating on typical critical thinking skills, language development, autonomy and pedagogy. Reflective practice enriches the nuanced learning opportunities through which students in higher education keep writing reflective journals in diverse circumstances.

Reflective writing is an important skill in the twenty-first century. Lecturers should encourage students to use writing prompts for both in-class and independent learning. Reflective writing helps develop critical thinking by generating and organizing critical ideas. To be effective, reflective writing sessions should follow clear guidance from lecturers, helping students understand how to evaluate, analyse, and synthesise information from various learning experiences and sources.

Reflective practice also helps with language development, offering many chances to actively use words, phrases, and sentences in a reflective essay. Reflective writing allows students to improve their grammar, vocabulary, clarity, fluency, and organisation of ideas. It is important in many subjects and encourages self-regulated learning, sympathy, autonomy, self-awareness, and shared values. This makes it an essential part of teaching methods.

6. Conclusion

The main findings in this review show how reflective practice enhances reflective writing skills, even with challenges in critique, exploration, and self-reflection. Students can actively participate in reflective activities to boost academic performance, develop reflective thinking, and gain insights into self-directed learning, autonomy, and motivation. The learning process includes scaffolded activities that guide students in writing reflections, developing reflective skills, and creating a supportive learning environment

Reflective practice can be incorporated into reflective writing activities. Clear prompts and rich learning opportunities pave the way for cultivating sympathy, empathy, self-awareness, feelings and problem-solving skills, allowing students to foster metacognitive skills, personal development, diversity and socio-cultural identities. Addressing critical issues by means of reflective writing involves learning processes, evaluation, feedback and learning outcomes. Future researchers should explore essential factors in reflective practice and reflective writing in diverse learning contexts, focusing on academic performance, metacognition and language proficiency.

Reflective writing is a valuable means of promoting higher-education students' reflective practice that significantly contributes to motivation, self-reflection, and multicultural understandings while avoiding the dangers of cultural stereotyping, insensitivity and personal weaknesses closely related to learning challenges and opportunities. Students are eager to participate in deep reflections by referring to prompts and probing questions that lead to solutions to problems, alternative insights and interpretations. Ultimately, they can take risks in developing ideas, expressing personal opinions and pursuing knowledge through reflective journals.

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Appendix 1

Table 2. The Essential Aspects of Reflective Writing and the Contributions of Reflective Practice to Enforce Students' Writing Skills in Higher Education

No	Sources	Essential Aspects of Reflective Writing	Method	Year	Field	Contributions of Reflective Practice
1	Or (2018)	Academic performance and thinking processes	Quasi-experimental	2018	Health	- Enhance students' abilities to communicate ideas and analyze thoughtful texts
2	Sanchez et al. (2019)	Reflective practice, reflective writing, metacognition, cultural awareness, and experiential learning	Qualitative	2019	Social work	- Foster experiential learning, reflective practice, self-awareness, emotions, and metacognitive skills
3	Ono & Ichii (2019)	An incremental assessment to monitor and assess students' writing progress	Qualitative	2019	Business Education	- Embody meaningful learning and incorporate knowledge into business practices
4	Lefroy et al. (2021)	A learning medium for engagement, reflective writing activities	Qualitative	2021	Medical Education	- Promote feedback or self-evaluation, assisting students in harnessing writing reflections
5	Ekelin et al. (2021)	Supervisory tasks, time management and organized supporting system.	Qualitative	2021	Midwifery education	- Support supervision. Students monitor their written reflections through positive and flexible feedback
6	Zarestky et al. (2022)	Metacognitive awareness of learning processes, self-regulated learning attitudes, critical thinking, and problem-solving strategies	Qualitative	2022	Science and Engineering	- Help students develop their metacognitive awareness and problem-solving skills. They are eager to initiate self-regulated learning behaviors
7	Gadsby (2022)	Improvements of the students' performances concerning the course topic coverage and knowledge, reflection and evaluation	Qualitative	2019	English as a Foreign Language (EFL)	- Encourage discussions and mentorships about reflective writing, pursue acknowledge and enhance the capacity to write reflective journals
8	Donohoe et al. (2022)	An educational approach that contains values such	Qualitative	2022	Medical Education	- Motivate medical students to pedagogically scaffold while

		as scaffolding and reflections				exploring ideas reflectively but critically
9	Heron & Corradini (2023)	Scaffolded reflections using prompts and the development of ideas, a guideline to support professional reflective writing	Qualitative	2021	Midwifery education	- Represent professional development and reflective teaching sessions, integral to professional reflective writing
10	Pereira et al. (2023)	Interconnected insights to reflective practice, providing spaces, a reflective practicum and critical thinking	Qualitative	2023	Teacher Education	- Make an initial attempt to understand reflective writing and acknowledge metacognitive skills and scaffolding
11	Christensen & Wærnsby (2023)	Learning progress, summative reflections, and formative feedback, writing skills, scaffolded reflections and self-regulated learning awareness	Qualitative	2023	Social work education	- Provide more space for students to learn lessons from reflective tasks, including professional literacies - Foster active learning, inclusion, and engagement in diverse classrooms
12	Bowman (2021)	The development of students' writing skills, closely related to academic reflective writing (ARW) tasks, analytical ability, description, feedback, feelings, scaffolding, and conclusion	Qualitative	2020	Dentistry	- Embark on critical reflection and technical reflection - Link ideas to reflective statements, expressing feelings (surprise, curiosity, wonder, etc.)
13	Colognesi et al. (2021)	Reflective writing skills, necessary tracks to the writing progress from drafts to the final products, lines of thought that show improvements	Qualitative	2021	Teacher training and education	- Enhance the student teachers' reflective writing skills. Several drafts count for the initial efforts to write reflectively.
14	Ezezika & Johnston (2023).	Reflective writing tasks, reflective practice, strengthening reflective but critical thinking	Qualitative	2023	Public health biology education	- Help students apply human biological concepts. Feedback provides comments and reflections.
15	Mjølstad & Getz (2023)	Reflections, constructed reflections, reflective essays, themes, different experiences	Qualitative	2023	Medical Education	- Strengthen students' reflective essays. Various reflections contain practical experiences and

						prompted instructions.
16	Björktomt & Tham (2024)	Theoretical knowledge, metacognition, learning experiences, reflective writing, constructed reflections	Mixed method	2024	Social work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Align with social activities, self-awareness, and self-reflection - Offer opportunities to summarize reflections and develop critical thinking skills
17	Akhmetova & Khaliullina (2023)	Acquired reflective writing, reflective skills, writing content, reading skills, thinking, writing, and revising reflective essays	Qualitative	2023	Social sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give responses to different facts (learning activities, reading materials, vocabulary, and chosen topics) and help students develop arguments well
18	Lucas et al. (2019)	Reflective learning, self-critique, writing skills, self-directed learning skills, self-confidence, reflective writing skills	Quantitative	2019	Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do reflective writing tasks to develop critical mindsets, self-critique, and deal with analytical data - Compare, reflect on, analyze, and comment on things
19	Li et al. (2023)	Reflectively connected parts, reflections, learning processes, goals, perspectives, and illustrations, experiences, feelings, descriptions, content-specific areas, and sustainable action	Quantitative	2023	Pharmaceutical education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage students to learn from experiences while thinking critically and reflectively - Specify details when setting goals and developing ideas in reflective essays
20	Tlali & Lefoka (2023)	Reflective writing, reflective thinking skills, specific themes of lessons, reflections	Qualitative	2023	Higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foster students to understand values, beliefs, and assumptions - Link self-reflections to critical thinking, personal growth, and problem-solving skills.