

Reflective Practice Makes Teacher Professional Identity Revisable: A Conceptual Model for Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT

Teacher professional identity is widely treated as a determinant of teacher quality and policy enactment, yet teacher education and school-based professional development often position its formation as an implicit by-product of training, practicum, and accumulated experience rather than as something deliberately designed. This article proposes a conceptual model specifying the mechanisms through which reflective practice contributes to professional identity formation, and tests that proposal against competing accounts. An integrative conceptual review synthesised literature on reflection, teacher identity, situated learning, and Islamic self-examination, with the basis and boundaries of the source corpus reported in Table 1. Five mechanisms are proposed: cognitive-epistemic sense-making, affective-moral positioning, dialogic-social recognition, agentic experimentation, and muhasabah as accountable self-examination. The article argues that reflection is necessary but not sufficient for identity formation, and specifies the conditions under which socialisation, mentoring, and structured induction produce identity change without explicit reflective inquiry. A reflective identity formation cycle is offered as an original theoretical proposal, distinguished element by element from the models of Rodgers and Mezirow. The risks that reflective practice carries when institutionalised are examined in dialogue with the existing critical literature rather than raised independently. The model is conceptual and has not been empirically tested; it is offered as a design heuristic for teacher education and professional learning in Islamic educational settings, together with an account of the conditions under which institutionalised reflection produces professional growth rather than compliance.

Keywords: identity, muhasabah, reflection, teachers, professionalism

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher education invests heavily in what teachers know and can do, and comparatively little in how teachers come to understand who they are professionally. The assumption underlying this allocation is that identity follows competence, that a teacher who masters content, pedagogy, and assessment will in due course come to inhabit the professional role.¹ This article argues that the assumption is mistaken, and that where it holds, it holds for reasons the assumption does not name.

The objection to this argument is immediate. Teachers plainly do develop professional identities without anyone designing the process, and have done so for as long as teaching has existed. The response is that undesigned identity formation is not the same as unmediated identity formation. Something converts experience into self-understanding, and that something is available for examination. The question is what it is, and whether it can be designed for.

Three gaps follow from the existing literature. First, teacher identity research has described identity as dynamic, relational, and narrative but has largely stopped short of specifying the mechanisms by which experience becomes identity; the descriptive account is well established, the causal account is not.² Second, the reflective practice literature has concentrated on reflection as a route to improved practice, with identity treated as a by-product rather than an object, and the two literatures rarely address one another directly.³ Third, work situating reflective practice within Islamic educational thought remains at the level of terminological analogy, invoking muhasabah as a parallel to reflection without examining whether the two share a structure.⁴ The novelty of this article is correspondingly threefold: it proposes a mechanism-level account rather than a descriptive one, it treats identity rather than practice improvement as the dependent construct, and it develops muhasabah as a structurally specified mechanism rather than a cultural gloss.

The claim advanced here is that reflection is necessary but not sufficient for professional identity formation. This is weaker than the claim that reflection is the essential mechanism, and the weakening is deliberate. The stronger claim is vulnerable to a circularity objection: if reflection is defined broadly enough to encompass any process by which biography, culture, policy, and experience acquire professional meaning, then any factor shaping identity can be redescribed as an instance of reflection, and the claim becomes unfalsifiable. To avoid this, reflection is here defined narrowly as the deliberate, effortful, and at least partly articulated examination of one's own practice, assumptions, or commitments, undertaken in response to a perceived discrepancy.⁵ Processes that shape identity without meeting this definition are not reflection.

¹ Carol Rodgers, 'Defining Reflection: Another Look at John Dewey and Reflective Thinking', *Teachers College Record*, 104.4 (2002), 842–66 (pp. 848–55).

² Rodgers, pp. 848–55.

³ Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (Basic Books, 1983), pp. 49–69.

⁴ Nadeem A. Memon, Mohamad Abdalla and Dylan Chown, 'Laying Foundations for Islamic Teacher Education', *Education Sciences*, 14.10 (2024), 1046.

⁵ John Dewey, *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process* (D. C. Heath, 1933), pp. 6–9.

So defined, identity formation without reflection is readily described. A novice teacher absorbing the norms of a department through observation and gradual participation, without ever articulating those norms or examining them, is forming a professional identity. The account of legitimate peripheral participation describes precisely this: identity as an outcome of changing participation in a community of practice, with no requirement of explicit inquiry.⁶ Mentoring relationships and structured induction programmes likewise produce identity change through modelling, correction, and graduated responsibility, none of which necessarily involves the reflective operation defined above. The argument for necessity is therefore narrower than the original formulation. It is that these alternative routes produce identity that is adaptive to the setting in which it formed but poorly equipped to survive dislocation from it, whether through curriculum reform, a move to a different school culture, or a policy that contradicts absorbed norms. What reflection contributes is not identity as such but the capacity to reconstruct identity when circumstances render the absorbed version unworkable.

This framing carries particular weight for Islamic education, where the professional identity of the teacher is inseparable from a moral and spiritual account of the vocation⁷, and where a developed tradition of structured self-examination exists that the international reflective practice literature has not engaged. Three questions guided the study. First, which dimensions of teacher professional identity require reflective mediation, and which do not? Second, what mechanisms connect reflective practice to identity formation? Third, under what design conditions does institutionalised reflection produce professional growth rather than compliance?

This last statement is a proposition rather than an established finding, and it is presented as such. The argument requires that identity formed without reflective mediation proves less durable under dislocation than identity formed with it, and no study known to the author has compared the two directly. The proposition is nonetheless falsifiable, and the design that would test it is straightforward: a comparison of teachers matched on experience but differing in reflective history, followed through a curriculum reform or a change of school, with professional self-understanding assessed before and after. Until such a study exists, the claim advanced here should be read as the hypothesis the model generates rather than as a result it rests upon.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is a conceptual synthesis rather than an empirical study. It draws on four bodies of literature, namely foundational theories of reflection, teacher professional identity research, situated and social learning perspectives, and Islamic literature on self-examination, and proceeds in three analytic stages: extraction of concepts describing how experience acquires professional meaning; mapping of those concepts into mechanism categories; and synthesis of the categories into a proposed cycle and a set of design implications. The primary data sources are therefore secondary, consisting of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic monographs,

⁶ Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 29–43.

⁷ Memon, Abdalla and Chown, p. 1046.

and classical Islamic texts, with the basis and boundaries of the corpus reported in Table 1 so that readers can assess the grounds on which sources were selected.

The synthesis is interpretive, and its validity rests on conceptual coherence, fidelity to the sources synthesised, and usefulness for designing professional learning, not on statistical generalisation. Thematic analysis was selected over discourse analysis⁸ because the object is the conceptual content of the sources rather than their rhetorical construction, and over systematic review procedure because the aim is theory building rather than effect estimation. The model produced has not been tested against any dataset, and the article does not claim otherwise; the limitation this imposes is stated in the conclusion rather than deferred.

Table 1. Basis and Boundaries of the Source Corpus

Element	Specification
Mode of selection	Purposive rather than exhaustive. Sources were selected for their conceptual contribution to the argument, not assembled through a protocol-driven search.
Basis of inclusion	Foundational statements of a position on reflection or identity; empirical studies reporting mechanisms rather than outcomes alone; and works establishing the critical case against institutionalised reflection.
Literatures drawn upon	Theories of reflection; teacher professional identity research; situated and social learning; Islamic literature on self-examination.
Languages	English and Indonesian, with classical Arabic sources consulted in the editions listed in the bibliography.
Deliberate inclusion of counter-evidence	Four sources advancing the critical case against reflective practice were included specifically to test the argument rather than to support it.
Acknowledged limitation	A purposive corpus cannot demonstrate that the literature as a whole supports the argument. The synthesis is offered for assessment on its internal coherence and on the adequacy with which it addresses the strongest objections, not on the representativeness of its sample.

Table 1 states the basis on which sources were selected rather than a search protocol, because none was applied. This is disclosed directly: a reader assessing whether the sample was chosen to fit the thesis is entitled to know that selection was purposive, and the deliberate inclusion of the critical literature is offered as the principal safeguard against that risk.

⁸ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, 'Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11.4 (2019), 589–97.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mechanism One: Cognitive-Epistemic Sense-Making

Reflection converts classroom events into interpretable material. A lesson that does not proceed as planned is, before interpretation, simply an event; it becomes evidence only when a teacher asks what it indicates about their assumptions regarding learners, task design, or subject matter. This is the operation Dewey described as the consideration of belief in light of grounds and consequences⁹, and it is what distinguishes experience that accumulates from experience that informs. The outcome for identity is knowledge held as revisable rather than fixed. The mechanism is easily misread as a claim about cognition alone, so its identity consequence is worth stating precisely. A teacher who has repeatedly converted discrepant events into evidence about their own assumptions comes to hold professional knowledge under a particular description: as something arrived at, and therefore as something that could have been arrived at differently. A teacher who has not performed this operation may hold the same propositions while regarding them as simply how teaching is done. The propositional content can be identical; what differs is the teacher's relation to it, and that relation is an identity matter rather than a cognitive one.

Mechanism Two: Affective-Moral Positioning

Teaching implicates the self. Teachers' self-understanding involves vulnerability, because teachers invest themselves personally in work whose outcomes they cannot fully control. Reflection on affect, on frustration, satisfaction, disappointment, or unease, is therefore not therapeutic indulgence but access to the value commitments that produced the emotion. A teacher troubled by having silenced a student is encountering a commitment to voice that may never have been articulated. The outcome for identity is a set of professional commitments that can be stated and therefore defended. This mechanism is the one most vulnerable to the criticism that reflective practice slides into therapeutic self-examination¹⁰, and the distinction requires care. The object of attention is not the emotion but what the emotion indicates about a commitment that was operating without being articulated. A teacher who examines their irritation at a persistently late student in order to feel better about it is doing something other than what is described here; a teacher who examines it in order to determine whether they are committed to punctuality as a disciplinary norm or as a condition of learning, and whether that commitment survives scrutiny, is performing the mechanism. The difference lies in whether the inquiry terminates in the self or in a professional position.

Mechanism Three: Dialogic-Social Recognition

Identity is not constructed in isolation. Teacher identity is dialogical, comprising multiple positions in ongoing negotiation.¹¹ Collegial dialogue supplies both the external perspective that private reflection cannot generate and the recognition that consolidates a position as professionally legitimate rather than merely personal. The outcome for identity is a

⁹ Dewey, pp. 6–9.

¹⁰ Kathryn Ecclestone and Dennis Hayes, *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education* (Routledge, 2009), pp. 1–22.

¹¹ Rodgers, pp. 848–55.

position recognised by others as belonging to the profession. Two features of this mechanism distinguish it from the first three. It cannot be performed alone, which makes it the mechanism most dependent on institutional conditions and therefore the most readily lost when those conditions are absent. And it is the mechanism through which a private judgement becomes a professional one: a teacher may reason carefully and arrive at a defensible position, but until colleagues have engaged with it the position remains an individual conviction rather than a contribution to a shared practice. This is why reflection conducted solely through written journals assessed by a tutor is structurally incomplete. The tutor supplies evaluation but not recognition, and the two are not the same thing.

Mechanism Four: Agentic Experimentation

Insight that does not alter practice does not consolidate into identity. The mechanism is completed when a revised understanding is translated into a deliberate change in action, the results of which become material for further reflection. The outcome for identity is a sense of professional efficacy grounded in evidence of one's own effect. The mechanism also supplies the corrective that the preceding three lack. Sense-making, affective positioning, and dialogue can all proceed to conclusions that are coherent, felt, and collegially endorsed, and still be wrong about what will happen in a classroom. Experimentation is the point at which a reflective conclusion meets a result it did not choose. Without it, the cycle is capable of producing a teacher with an articulate, emotionally grounded, socially validated professional position that does not work, and such a teacher is arguably worse placed than one who never reflected at all, because the position now has the authority of having been examined.

What the Four Mechanisms Do Not Explain

Stating what a model does not account for is a condition of taking it seriously, and three limits are apparent. The first concerns the initiating condition. All four mechanisms presuppose a discrepancy that registers as such, and the model says nothing about why some teachers notice discrepancies that others do not. A teacher whose lesson fails may experience it as a failure of the class rather than as evidence about their own assumptions, and no amount of subsequent reflective machinery will engage if the initial attribution forecloses it. Whatever determines that attribution operates prior to reflection and is not described here.

The second concerns duration. The mechanisms describe how a single episode might contribute to identity, but identity is not built from single episodes. What converts a series of discrete reflective occasions into a durable self-understanding is not specified by any of the four, and it is for this reason that the cycle proposed below adds a terminal stage the existing models do not contain.

The third concerns the source of the standard against which reflection evaluates. Each mechanism involves judgement — whether an assumption was warranted, whether a commitment survives scrutiny, whether a colleague's reading is more defensible, whether an experiment succeeded — and in each case the criterion is supplied by professional norms held by the community in which the teacher practises. This is unproblematic where those norms are sound. Where they are not, reflection conducted entirely within them will reproduce them with

greater conviction¹², since the teacher will have examined and endorsed what they might otherwise merely have absorbed. This is the structural point at which the critical literature locates its objection¹³, and it is the point at which the fifth mechanism becomes relevant rather than merely additional.

Mechanism Five: Muhasabah as Accountable Self-Examination

The four mechanisms above derive from a literature that is almost entirely Western and Anglophone. Islamic educational thought contains a developed tradition of structured self-examination that bears directly on the same problem and is not reducible to those categories. Muhasabah, literally the taking of account of oneself, is treated systematically in the classical literature: al-Muhasibi, whose name derives from the practice, developed it as a discipline of continuous self-scrutiny¹⁴; al-Ghazali devotes a book of the *Ihya* to muraqabah and muhasabah, distinguishing vigilance during action from reckoning after it¹⁵; and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya treats it as a station on the path of moral development.¹⁶

The structural comparison with Schön is instructive. Schön distinguishes reflection-in-action, occurring during practice, from reflection-on-action, occurring afterwards.¹⁷ The classical distinction between muraqabah and muhasabah maps onto this division closely: muraqabah is awareness maintained during the act, muhasabah is reckoning conducted after it. The two traditions differ in what the reflection is answerable to. For Schön the criterion is professional adequacy, established by the practitioner community; for muhasabah the criterion is moral accountability before God, with the practitioner community secondary. This difference is not merely theological. It changes what reflection is for and who may declare it complete, and it carries a specific implication for the risks discussed below: reflection answerable to an authority outside the institution is less readily captured by institutional surveillance than reflection answerable only to professional norms.

The Reflective Identity Formation Cycle

The cycle presented here is an original theoretical proposal, not a finding derived from the literature synthesised above, and it has not been tested against any case or dataset. It is constructed by integrating stages present in existing models, and its contribution lies in that integration rather than in the identification of new stages. The proposed sequence is: experience, disturbance, description, interpretation, dialogue, re-commitment, experimentation, and narrative consolidation. Four of these stages require comment because their function is not self-evident from the label. Disturbance is separated from experience because most experience does

¹² Feriyanto Ismail and others, 'Enhancing Excellence: Analyzing Quality Management in Islamic Boarding Schools', *Al-Tanzim*, 7.3 (2023), 848–62; Muhammad Khoirul Fatihin, Nur Asnawi and Muhammad Fahim Tharaba, 'Transforming Islamic Education', *Al-Tanzim*, 7.4 (2023), 1145–60.

¹³ Lynn Fendler, 'Teacher Reflection in a Hall of Mirrors: Historical Influences and Political Reverberations', *Educational Researcher*, 32.3 (2003), 16–25 (pp. 20–23).

¹⁴ Al-Hārith al-Muḥāsibī, *Al-Ri'āyah li-Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. by 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā (Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, tt,

¹⁵ Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Dār al-Ma'rifa, Kitāb al-Murāqabah wa-l-Muḥāsabah, iv.

¹⁶ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, ed. by Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī (Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, tt, i,

¹⁷ Schön, pp. 49–69.

not generate reflection; the stage marks the moment at which something registers as requiring explanation, and its inclusion makes explicit that the cycle has an entry condition rather than running continuously. Description is separated from interpretation because the tendency to explain before observing is the most common failure in novice reflection, and separating the stages is a procedural safeguard rather than a theoretical claim. Re-commitment names the stage at which a teacher either reaffirms or revises a professional value, and it is placed after dialogue because a commitment revised in isolation lacks the recognition that makes it professionally operative. Narrative consolidation is discussed separately below.

Table 2. Relation of the Proposed Cycle to Existing Models

Model	Structure	Relation to the proposed cycle
Rodgers	Four phases: presence to experience, description, analysis, experimentation	All four retained; disturbance added as explicit trigger, dialogue separated from analysis, narrative consolidation added as terminal stage
Mezirow	Transformative learning initiated by a disorienting dilemma proceeding to perspective transformation	Disturbance corresponds to the disorienting dilemma but is defined more weakly[[mezirow]]: it need not disorient, only register as discrepant
Korthagen and Vasalos	Core reflection addressing successive levels from environment to identity and mission	The proposed cycle is sequential rather than layered; the levels framework informs interpretation but is not reproduced[[korthagen]]
Distinctive element	Narrative consolidation	No existing model treats the connection of discrete reflective episodes into a coherent story of becoming as a separate stage

Table 2 sets out where the proposal claims to add something and where it restates existing work. The distinctive element, narrative consolidation, is also the stage most in need of empirical examination, and the one on which the value of the model chiefly depends.

Why Narrative Consolidation Matters

The stage on which the proposal chiefly rests is also the one existing models omit, and the omission is instructive. Rodgers, Korthagen and Vasalos, and Mezirow all describe reflective processes that terminate in a changed understanding or a changed practice. None describes what happens to the series of such changes over a career.¹⁸ Yet the teacher identity literature is emphatic that identity is narrative in form: teachers understand themselves through a story of who they have been and are becoming, not through an inventory of revised beliefs.

¹⁸ Rodgers, pp. 848–55; Mezirow, pp. 167–97.

The proposal here is that this narrative does not assemble itself. A teacher who has reflected productively on thirty separate occasions across five years possesses thirty local revisions, and whether those revisions cohere into a professional self-understanding depends on whether the teacher has at some point connected them. Narrative consolidation names that connecting operation. Its practical forms are unremarkable — a teacher describing their development to a mentee, writing a professional statement, or explaining to a colleague why they now teach as they do — and their unremarkableness is part of the argument¹⁹: the operation is available and cheap, and it is omitted from reflective programmes not because it is difficult but because no model asks for it.

Two consequences follow. For programme design, it implies that reflective activity distributed evenly across a course is less effective than the same quantity of activity punctuated by occasions requiring a teacher to give an account of their own trajectory. For research, it implies a testable prediction: teachers who have performed narrative consolidation should prove better able to articulate a professional position under challenge than teachers with comparable reflective experience who have not. That prediction is falsifiable, and the model should be judged partly on whether it survives the test.

Risks, in Dialogue with the Critical Literature

The case for reflective practice must be set against a substantial critical literature, and the risks identified below are restatements of established critiques rather than original observations. Teacher reflection has been analysed as a technology of self-governance, functioning to produce teachers who monitor themselves in terms the institution supplies²⁰; the risk of ritualistic reflection follows directly, since where reflection is mandated and assessed, teachers write what assessors expect. The argument has been extended in the contention that the reflective practitioner model can generate compliant rather than critical subjectivities.²¹ Separately, the limits of experiential reflection when context is neglected have been documented, showing that reflection detached from institutional conditions tends to individualise problems that are structural.²² A critical appraisal of reflective practice in language teacher education has further noted the gap between the claims made for reflection and the evidence supporting them.²³

Three safeguards follow. Reflection assessed on the depth of inquiry rather than on the sentiment expressed reduces performance. Reflection conducted collectively rather than confessionally distributes the interpretive authority that the critical literature identifies as concentrated in the institution. And reflection that explicitly distinguishes what a teacher can alter from what requires institutional change addresses the individualisation problem.²⁴ These

¹⁹ Rodgers, pp. 848–55; Mezirow, pp. 167–97.

²⁰ Fendler, pp. 20–23.

²¹ Ecclestone and Hayes, pp. 1–22.

²² David Boud and David Walker, 'Promoting Reflection in Professional Courses: The Challenge of Context', *Studies in Higher Education*, 23.2 (1998), 191–206.

²³ Ramin Akbari, 'Reflections on Reflection: A Critical Appraisal of Reflective Practices in L2 Teacher Education', *System*, 35.2 (2007), 192–207.

²⁴ Boud and Walker, pp. 196–200.

safeguards are partial, and it is worth being clear about the residue they leave. None of them prevents an institution from adopting the language of collective, inquiry-focused, structurally aware reflection while retaining assessment practices that reward the performance of insight. The critical literature's deeper point is that reflective practice is attractive to institutions precisely because it appears to produce teacher development without requiring institutional change²⁵, and a safeguard operating at the level of technique cannot reach that. What can reach it is the fifth mechanism. Where the criterion of adequacy lies outside the institution's gift — as it does when reflection is understood as muhasabah²⁶ — the institution retains the power to require the activity but not the power to define when it has been performed well. This does not dissolve the problem, but it relocates the authority the critique identifies as dangerously concentrated.

Design Implications and the Indonesian Context

If reflection is necessary for portable and revisable identity, teacher education should design for it across the learning pathway rather than appending it to practicum. The model proposed here requires three conditions that are not evenly available: scheduled time, a collegial forum in which disagreement is safe, and an assessment regime that does not reward performed insight.

None of these three conditions can be assumed in Indonesian schools and madrasah. Certified teachers carry a statutory minimum weekly teaching load, and where a teacher meets that minimum across several classes the discretionary time remaining is small and already committed to preparation, marking, and administrative reporting. The TALIS finding reported above is relevant here as a lower bound rather than as a direct comparison: if observation-based collegial feedback is reported monthly by fewer than one teacher in ten across systems with comparatively favourable staffing, there is little reason to expect a higher rate where teaching loads are heavier and preparation time scarcer.²⁷ Structures that might host collegial reflection exist in the form of the *Kelompok Kerja Guru* and the *Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran*, and their existence is often taken as evidence that the condition is satisfied. The more pertinent question is what these forums are used for. Where their agenda is set by administrative reporting requirements, they function as compliance mechanisms and reproduce precisely the dynamic the critical literature describes²⁸, in which reflection is performed for an audience that assesses it. Where their agenda is set by the teachers themselves, they can host the disagreement the model requires.²⁹

²⁵ Fendler, pp. 20–23; Ecclestone and Hayes, pp. 1–22.

²⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-Murāqabah wa-l-Muḥāsabah*, iv, [halaman].

²⁷ OECD, TALIS 2018 Results, Volume II: Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals (OECD Publishing, 2020), ch. 4.

²⁸ Fendler, pp. 20–23.

²⁹ Rusdi Ramli, Bahrani Bahrani and Ahmad Ramli, 'Building a Quality Culture in Islamic Educational Institutions', *Jurnal Inovatif Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 4.1 (2025), 50–61.

Two implications follow, and they are modest. First, the model proposed here is a design heuristic for institutions able to protect a small amount of uncommitted collegial time³⁰, not a general prescription; institutions unable to protect that time should not adopt it, because a reflective requirement without the conditions for reflection produces ritual. Second, the more tractable intervention in resource-constrained settings is not to add a reflective activity but to change what an existing forum is for, which costs no additional time. Whether that change is achievable where reporting obligations dominate the agenda is an empirical question this article cannot settle.

International survey evidence indicates how rare the third mechanism is in practice. Across OECD countries participating in TALIS 2018, the two most frequently reported forms of teacher collaboration were discussing the development of particular students, reported by sixty-one per cent of teachers, and exchanging teaching materials, reported by forty-seven per cent. The more interdependent forms were substantially less common: only nine per cent of teachers reported providing observation-based feedback to a colleague as often as once a month.³¹ The distribution is instructive for the present argument. The two common activities are forms of information exchange that do not require a teacher to expose a judgement to challenge; the rare activity is the one that does. Dialogic-social recognition, as described above, depends on the rare form rather than the common one, which means that a school reporting high levels of teacher collaboration may nonetheless supply none of the conditions the mechanism requires.

A second finding from the same source qualifies this. Seventy-one per cent of teachers who did receive feedback from colleagues reported finding it useful for their teaching, and those receiving feedback through several different channels were more likely to report an effect on practice.³² The scarcity of interdependent collaboration is therefore not explained by teachers valuing it lightly. This points the diagnosis away from teacher disposition and toward institutional arrangement, which is where the design implications below are addressed.

Table 3. Summary of the Five Proposed Mechanisms

The table below summarises the preceding sections for reference. It restates material already presented and does not constitute an additional analytic layer.

Mechanism	Core question	Expected identity outcome
Cognitive-epistemic sense-making	What does this event indicate about my assumptions?	Knowledge held as revisable rather than fixed
Affective-moral positioning	What does this emotion reveal about what I value?	Articulated professional commitments
Dialogic-social recognition	How do colleagues read what I read?	Position recognised as professionally legitimate

³⁰ Hasyim Haddade and others, 'Madrasah Management Strategies through Madrasah Reform Program', International Journal of Educational Management, 38.5 (2024), 1289–1304.

³¹ OECD, TALIS 2018 Results, Volume II, ch. 4.

³² OECD, TALIS 2018 Results, Volume II, ch. 4.

Mechanism	Core question	Expected identity outcome
Agentic experimentation	What will I do differently, and what happened?	Sense of professional efficacy
Muhasabah	To whom am I accountable, and on what terms?	Ethical anchoring independent of institutional approval

Taken together, the five mechanisms describe a sequence in which experience is interpreted, evaluated against commitments, tested against the reading of others, acted upon, and referred to an account of accountability. The fifth mechanism is the one this article contributes to the literature.

CONCLUSION

Reflection is not the essential mechanism of teacher identity formation. Teachers form professional identities through socialisation, mentoring, and graduated participation without ever conducting the deliberate examination this article defines as reflection. The claim that survives scrutiny is narrower: reflection is what makes professional identity portable and revisable, and therefore what allows it to survive the dislocations that routine professional life reliably produces. That narrower claim carries a sharper design implication than the broader one it replaces. If reflection produced identity outright, any reflective activity would serve; if reflection produces revisability, its value depends on whether it rehearses the operation of reconstructing a professional position under challenge, which ritualised journaling and assessed self-evaluation do not.

The most distinctive element of the model proposed here is also the one most in need of examination. Muhasabah supplies something the Western reflective tradition does not, namely an account of accountability that is not institutional. Where reflection answers to professional norms, the institution defines adequacy, and the risk of capture follows; where it answers to a criterion the institution does not control, that capture is harder. Whether this holds in practice, and whether teachers in Islamic educational settings do in fact reflect differently³³, is an empirical question this conceptual article cannot settle, and it is the question that should follow it.

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