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Reimagining Professional Development: Teachers' Perceptions of Critical Portfolios in Language Education

Linguistics Society of Iran

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the perceptions of novice and experienced EFL teachers in Iran regarding the use of portfolios as tools for professional development. The research addresses a significant gap in the literature by exploring differences in how these two groups view critical portfolios, particularly as instruments for reflective practice and critical thinking. Utilizing a quantitative survey design, data were collected from 80 EFL teachers across Iranian institutes (Eslamshahr and Mashhad), with findings analyzed using SPSS. The results reveal that novice teachers are more inclined to view critical portfolios as valuable for showcasing their development, while experienced teachers appreciate their role in reflective practice and bridging theory with practice. Both groups recognize the portfolios' potential in promoting dialogic practices and addressing real-life concerns, though uncertainty remains in their application for empowering marginalized learners and transforming cultural perceptions. Despite concerns about the time required to compile portfolios, the findings underscore their perceived importance in enhancing teaching awareness and supporting long-term professional growth, with nuanced differences in perceptions based on teachers' experience levels. The research contributes to the ongoing discourse on teacher professional development, offering insights into the effective implementation of reflective practices within culturally diverse educational contexts.

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1. Introduction

The development and use of teaching portfolios have gained significant attention in educational research, particularly in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Recent studies underscore the positive effects of portfolio development on teachers' professional growth, as portfolios offer a comprehensive reflection of teachers' strengths and weaknesses. This reflective process encourages educators to actively engage in self-evaluation, modify their teaching beliefs, and enhance their pedagogical practices (Weshah, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000).

Despite the acknowledged benefits of teaching portfolios, there exists a significant gap in the literature regarding the differences in perceptions between novice and experienced EFL teachers concerning the use of critical portfolios as a tool for professional development and assessment. No current evidence clearly demonstrates whether these two groups perceive the role and impact of critical portfolios similarly or differently, particularly as instruments for critical thinking and teacher development. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the specific differences in perceptions between novice and experienced teachers regarding the use of critical portfolios. Specifically, it explores the following questions: What are the differences in perceptions between novice and experienced teachers in using critical portfolios? What are the intentions behind the reported practices of critical portfolio use among these groups, particularly in the context of English language teaching and learning? Do teachers, whether novice or experienced, view critical portfolios as essential for their professional development?

The significance of this study lies in its potential contributions to the fields of critical pedagogy and teacher education. In recent years, research has increasingly focused on the role of portfolios in promoting motivation, responsibility, and critical thinking in educational settings (Brown, 2004). While portfolios show promise in supporting the growth of novice teachers, they also present challenges in terms of time and resources for both teachers and administrators. Therefore, it is crucial to determine whether the use of portfolios truly aids novice teachers in becoming reflective practitioners, a quality highly valued in the teaching profession.

The findings may also have broader implications for critical pedagogy by illuminating how novice and experienced teachers perceive the use of critical portfolios. This study's novelty lies in exploring the interface between these two groups' perspectives, particularly in how critical engagement through portfolio use can be integrated into English language education. In this context, the concept of the critical portfolio, rooted in critical pedagogy, challenges teachers to empower themselves for social change, advance democratic values, and promote equality, all while enhancing their literacy and knowledge. By examining these issues, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the

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role of critical portfolios in teacher professional development and English language education (Austin, Marini, & Desroches, 2005; Loughran & Corrigan, 1995; Mansvelder-Longayroux, 2006).

2. Empirical Studies on the Use of Portfolios in Different Countries

The use of portfolios in educational settings has garnered considerable attention globally, with numerous studies investigating their impact on teacher development, reflective practice, and student learning. These studies provide valuable insights into the role of portfolios across diverse educational contexts, highlighting their potential benefits and the challenges that educators face in implementing them effectively.

Teacher Development and Professional Identity

Portfolios have been identified as significant tools for fostering teacher development and shaping professional identity. For instance, Lee and Liu (2019) in Taiwan found that the process of compiling and reflecting on portfolio artifacts allowed student-teachers to critically assess their growth, ultimately helping them articulate and refine their professional identities. However, while the study underscores the importance of portfolios, it also reveals a critical gap: the need for structured guidance to fully realize the benefits of the portfolio process. Without adequate support, the transformative potential of portfolios may remain untapped, limiting their effectiveness in professional identity development.

Similarly, Babaei and Abednia (2020) in Iran explored the role of critical portfolios in EFL teacher education. Their findings suggest that portfolios are effective in promoting critical thinking and reflective practice among both novice and experienced teachers. However, the study critically highlights that the success of portfolios is not inherent but is heavily dependent on the institutional support and resources provided. This dependency raises concerns about the equity of portfolio implementation across different educational settings, where such support may vary widely. The implication is clear: for portfolios to be more than just a procedural exercise, they must be integrated within a well-supported professional development framework, a condition that is often lacking.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is another area where portfolios have shown significant promise. Nguyen (2017), in a study of Vietnamese EFL teachers, reported that portfolios enabled deeper reflection on teaching practices, which in turn led to improved instructional strategies and better student outcomes. However, Nguyen also identified significant barriers, such as time management issues and lack of institutional support, which critically impede the effectiveness of portfolios in fostering reflective practice. This finding is echoed in the work of Kabeta et al. (2013) in Ethiopia, where despite the recognition of portfolios' positive contributions to professional development, the actual implementation fell short due to time constraints, insufficient continuous training, and attitudinal

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barriers among teachers. These studies collectively suggest that while portfolios have the potential to enhance reflective practice, their success is contingent upon overcoming substantial logistical and attitudinal challenges.

Autonomy and Self-Directed Learning

Research has also focused on the role of portfolios in promoting autonomy and self-directed learning. Yildirim (2013) conducted a study at Cukurova University in Turkey, revealing that portfolios significantly fostered both personal and professional autonomy among student-teachers. The study participants reported enhanced self-awareness and a deeper understanding of their teaching practices, yet the findings also highlighted a critical shortfall: while portfolios helped in self-reflection, they were less effective in encouraging student-teachers to take on new responsibilities. This suggests that while portfolios can be instrumental in developing autonomy, their impact may be limited unless accompanied by explicit training in self-directed learning and responsibility-taking.

Challenges in Portfolio Implementation

Despite the potential benefits, several studies have highlighted common challenges in portfolio implementation. Kabeta et al. (2013) and Nguyen (2017) both identified time constraints and lack of institutional support as significant barriers. In the context of digital portfolios, Benson and Huang (2021) explored their use in online teacher education programs in China, finding that while digital portfolios offered flexibility and accessibility, they also introduced new challenges related to technical issues and the need for digital literacy. These findings underscore a critical point: for portfolios to be effective, particularly in digital formats, there is a pressing need for adequate training and ongoing technical support. Without addressing these challenges, the potential of portfolios to contribute to teacher development may be significantly undermined.

Portfolios in Diverse Educational Contexts

Portfolios have also been used to foster intercultural competence, particularly in bilingual and multicultural settings. Torres and Mejía (2022) studied the use of portfolios in bilingual teacher education programs in Colombia, finding that portfolios were effective tools for helping student-teachers reflect on their cultural experiences and how these influenced their teaching practices. This reflective process encouraged culturally responsive teaching practices, yet it also highlighted the complexity of implementing portfolios in diverse educational contexts. The study suggests that while portfolios can promote intercultural competence, their success is closely tied to the educators' ability to navigate and integrate cultural dimensions into their teaching.

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Comparative Analysis and Contextualization

When comparing these studies, a global trend emerges: portfolios are consistently valued for their ability to promote reflective practice, autonomy, and professional identity development. However, the success of portfolios is not uniform and is highly dependent on several critical factors, including institutional support, continuous training, and the availability of resources. In the context of Iranian EFL institutes, these insights are particularly relevant. The challenges identified in studies from Ethiopia, Vietnam, and Turkey—such as time constraints and lack of support—are likely to resonate in the Iranian context as well. Moreover, the unique cultural and institutional dynamics of Iranian EFL education may present additional challenges or opportunities for portfolio implementation that have not been fully explored in existing literature.

To sum up, the reviewed studies collectively underscore the ongoing relevance of portfolios in teacher education across different cultural and educational contexts. However, they also highlight significant challenges that must be addressed to fully harness the potential of portfolios. For both novice and experienced teachers to benefit from the portfolio process, it is essential to provide adequate support, address logistical barriers, and ensure that portfolios are integrated within a comprehensive professional development framework. By incorporating these critical insights, this study on critical portfolios in Iranian EFL institutes aims to contribute to the broader understanding of how portfolios can be effectively implemented to enhance teacher development and student learning.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative survey design to explore the perceptions and responses of novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers towards the use of critical portfolios as a professional development tool. The research involved a carefully constructed questionnaire, which was distributed to 40 novice and 40 experienced English language teachers in Eslamshahr and Mashhad Institutes. Snowball sampling was utilized to identify participants, leveraging the existing networks of teachers to recruit individuals who had experience with portfolio use. While this sampling method facilitated the recruitment of a substantial number of participants, it also introduced potential bias, as the sample might not fully represent the broader population of Iranian EFL teachers.

The questionnaire, adapted from Schonberger (2000) and aligned with the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy, was designed to capture comprehensive data on teachers' views regarding critical portfolios. It consisted of three sections: personal background information, components of a critical portfolio, and open-ended questions exploring the teachers' reactions to portfolio use in their professional practice. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed through a pilot study, yielding Cronbach's Alpha values of .89 for experienced teachers and .75 for novice teachers, indicating a satisfactory level of internal consistency.

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Data collection was conducted through the distribution of this questionnaire to the selected teachers, with an emphasis on ensuring that the data gathered was both reliable and relevant to the study's objectives. The data were analyzed using the SPSS Graduate Package, a statistical software tool commonly used in social science research. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the findings, providing a clear and concise overview of the data collected. The quantitative nature of the research allowed for the empirical investigation of the teachers' attitudes and opinions, ensuring that the results could be generalized to a broader population with a degree of statistical certainty.

4. Analytical Report on Teachers' Perceptions of Critical Portfolios

The analysis examines the perceptions of novice and experienced teachers regarding the use of critical portfolios across various aspects of teaching practice. The responses were categorized into eleven items, each exploring a different dimension of critical portfolios.

Critical Portfolio as Teacher Assessment Practice (C1)

As tables 4.1. & 4.2. Indicate that 55% of novice teachers and 42% of experienced teachers agree with using critical portfolios as a component for teacher assessment.

Table 4.1. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C1 (Novice Teachers)*

C1					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	13	32.5	32.5	32.5
	2.00	22	55.0	55.0	87.5
	3.00	4	10.0	10.0	97.5
	4.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

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Table 4.2. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C1 (Experienced Teachers*)

C1					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	18	45.0	45.0	45.0
	2.00	17	42.5	42.5	87.5
	3.00	4	10.0	10.0	97.5
	4.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The higher agreement among novice teachers suggests they may see critical portfolios as a structured method to showcase their development and competency. In contrast, experienced teachers might prefer other assessment methods, possibly due to familiarity with traditional evaluation approaches or confidence in their established teaching practices.

Critical Portfolios as Review & Reflective Practice (C2)

About 50% of novice teachers and 55% of experienced teachers, according to table 4.3 & 4.4 agree with using critical portfolios as tools for review and reflection.

Table 4.3. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C2 (Novice Teachers)*

C2					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	11	27.5	27.5	27.5
	2.00	19	47.5	47.5	75.0
	3.00	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.4. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C2 (Experienced Teachers)*

C2					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	12	30.0	30.0	30.0
	2.00	22	55.0	55.0	85.0
	3.00	5	12.5	12.5	97.5
	5.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0

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	Total	40	100.0	100.0

Both groups recognize the value of critical portfolios in fostering reflective practices. The slightly higher agreement among experienced teachers could indicate their appreciation for ongoing self-reflection to refine their teaching practices over time.

Critical Portfolios as Dialogic Practice (C3)

The following tables show that 55% of novice teachers and 57.5% of experienced teachers view critical portfolios as promoters of dialogic practice.

Table 4.5. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C3 (Novice Teachers)*

C3					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	9	22.5	22.5	22.5
	2.00	22	55.0	55.0	77.5
	3.00	7	17.5	17.5	95.0
	4.00	1	2.5	2.5	97.5
	5.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.6. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C3 (Experienced Teachers)*

C3					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	12	30.0	30.0	30.0
	2.00	23	57.5	57.5	87.5
	3.00	3	7.5	7.5	95.0
	4.00	1	2.5	2.5	97.5
	5.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

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The consensus across both groups highlights the role of critical portfolios in encouraging dialogue and collaboration between teachers and learners. The higher rate of undecided responses among novice teachers might reflect uncertainty in applying these portfolios effectively for dialogue, possibly due to their limited experience.

Critical Portfolios as Real-Life Concern Practice (C4)

Both novice and experienced teachers agree that critical portfolios help incorporate real-life concerns into teaching, though about 28% of novice and 30% of experienced teachers remain undecided.

Table 4.7. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C4 (Novice Teachers)*

C4					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	12	30.0	30.0	30.0
	2.00	15	37.5	37.5	67.5
	3.00	11	27.5	27.5	95.0
	4.00	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.8. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C4 (Experienced Teachers)*

C4					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	8	20.0	20.0	20.0
	2.00	17	42.5	42.5	62.5
	3.00	12	30.0	30.0	92.5
	4.00	2	5.0	5.0	97.5
	5.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The agreement underscores the relevance of critical portfolios in contextualizing teaching with real-world issues. The significant level of indecision could point to a lack of clarity or confidence in how these portfolios translate theoretical concepts into practical, real-life scenarios.

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Critical Portfolio as Empowering Practice for Marginalized Learners (C5)

As the tables show that 50% of novice and 55% of experienced teachers believe that critical portfolios raise awareness of issues faced by marginalized groups, with around 20% of each group undecided.

Table 4.9. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C5 (Novice Teachers)*

C5					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	7	17.5	17.5	17.5
	2.00	20	50.0	50.0	67.5
	3.00	8	20.0	20.0	87.5
	4.00	5	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.10. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C5 (Experienced Teachers)*

C5					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	4	10.0	10.0	10.0
	2.00	22	55.0	55.0	65.0
	3.00	9	22.5	22.5	87.5
	4.00	4	10.0	10.0	97.5
	5.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Teachers generally acknowledge the potential of critical portfolios in addressing social justice issues. However, the undecided respondents may be uncertain about the effectiveness or implementation of such portfolios in empowering marginalized students, particularly if they lack experience in dealing with these issues.

Critical Portfolio as Transforming Practice on Local and International Cultures (C6)

According to the following tables, 42.5% of novice and 50% of experienced teachers agree that critical portfolios can transform students' perceptions of local and international cultures, though both groups have a significant portion of undecided responses.

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Table 4.11. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C6 (Novice Teachers)*

C6		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	7	17.5	17.5	17.5
	2.00	17	42.5	42.5	60.0
	3.00	14	35.0	35.0	95.0
	4.00	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.12. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C6 (Experienced Teachers)*

C6		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	5	12.5	12.5	12.5
	2.00	20	50.0	50.0	62.5
	3.00	12	30.0	30.0	92.5
	4.00	1	2.5	2.5	95.0
	5.00	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The results indicate that experienced teachers are more confident in the potential of critical portfolios to impact cultural perceptions. The indecision among both groups may reflect challenges in integrating global and local cultural contexts into teaching through these portfolios.

Critical Portfolio as Facilitating Practice (C7)

The results indicate that 37.5% of novice and 40% of experienced teachers agree that critical portfolios facilitate professional development. However, a substantial portion of teachers are undecided.

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Table 4.13. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C7 (Novice Teachers)*

C7		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	14	35.0	35.0	35.0
	2.00	15	37.5	37.5	72.5
	3.00	10	25.0	25.0	97.5
	4.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.14. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C7 (Experienced Teachers)*

C7		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	14	35.0	35.0	35.0
	2.00	16	40.0	40.0	75.0
	3.00	8	20.0	20.0	95.0
	4.00	1	2.5	2.5	97.5
	5.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The responses suggest a recognition of critical portfolios as professional development tools, with experienced teachers slightly more confident in this role. The indecision among novice teachers might indicate a lack of understanding or experience with the professional growth that can be derived from using such portfolios.

Critical Portfolios as Prospective Practice (C8)

40% of novice and 42.5% of experienced teachers agree on the importance of critical portfolios for future development, with novice teachers showing more indecision.

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Table 4.15. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C8 (Novice Teachers)*

C8		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	11	27.5	27.5	27.5
	2.00	16	40.0	40.0	67.5
	3.00	9	22.5	22.5	90.0
	4.00	3	7.5	7.5	97.5
	5.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.16. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C8 (Experienced Teachers)*

C8		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	13	32.5	32.5	32.5
	2.00	17	42.5	42.5	75.0
	3.00	7	17.5	17.5	92.5
	4.00	2	5.0	5.0	97.5
	5.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The agreement reflects an acknowledgment of the long-term benefits of critical portfolios in career development. Novice teachers' indecision could stem from their limited exposure to career-long professional development practices.

Critical Portfolio as Dynamic Practice to Bridge Theory into Practice (C9)

Table 4.17 and 4.18 show that 32.5% of novice and 57.5% of experienced teachers agree that critical portfolios help apply theoretical knowledge to practice, with novice teachers predominantly undecided.

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Table 4.17. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C9 (Novice Teachers)*

C9					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	8	20.0	20.0	20.0
	2.00	13	32.5	32.5	52.5
	3.00	14	35.0	35.0	87.5
	4.00	5	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.18. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C9 (Experienced Teachers)*

C9					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	9	22.5	22.5	22.5
	2.00	23	57.5	57.5	80.0
	3.00	5	12.5	12.5	92.5
	4.00	2	5.0	5.0	97.5
	5.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The greater agreement among experienced teachers suggests they see a clear connection between theory and practice facilitated by critical portfolios. In contrast, novice teachers' indecision may reflect challenges in applying theoretical concepts early in their careers.

Critical Portfolio as Awareness Raising Practice (C10)

According to the following findings, 45% of novice teachers and 37.5% of experienced teachers agree that critical portfolios increase awareness of the teaching process, though experienced teachers more strongly agree.

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Table 4.19. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C10 (Novice Teachers)*

C10					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	14	35.0	35.0	35.0
	2.00	18	45.0	45.0	80.0
	3.00	6	15.0	15.0	95.0
	4.00	1	2.5	2.5	97.5
	5.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.20. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C10 (Experienced Teachers)*

C10					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	1.00	18	45.0	45.0	45.0
	2.00	15	37.5	37.5	82.5
	3.00	4	10.0	10.0	92.5
	4.00	2	5.0	5.0	97.5
	5.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

The results show that both groups appreciate the role of critical portfolios in enhancing awareness, with experienced teachers possibly valuing this more due to their longer engagement with teaching. Novice teachers' higher indecision could indicate their ongoing process of discovering the complexities of teaching.

Critical Portfolios as Time-Consuming Practice (C11)

As tables 4.21 and 4.22 show that 42.5% of novice and 40% of experienced teachers agree that compiling critical portfolios is time-consuming, with experienced teachers more likely to be undecided or disagree.

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Table 4.21. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C11 (Novice Teachers)*

C11		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	10	25.0	25.0	25.0
	2.00	17	42.5	42.5	67.5
	3.00	7	17.5	17.5	85.0
	4.00	4	10.0	10.0	95.0
	5.00	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.22. *The Results of Frequency Analysis for C11 (Experienced Teachers)*

C11		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	4	10.0	10.0	10.0
	2.00	16	40.0	40.0	50.0
	3.00	10	25.0	25.0	75.0
	4.00	9	22.5	22.5	97.5
	5.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

In general, novice teachers appear more concerned with the time investment required for compiling portfolios, possibly due to their limited experience in balancing various teaching tasks. Experienced teachers may have developed more efficient methods or see the value outweighing the time cost.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the differences between novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers in their use of critical portfolios and their responses to the requirement of utilizing such portfolios. The findings reveal a shared recognition among both novice and experienced teachers of the value of critical portfolios, though significant differences in their perceptions were observed. Experienced teachers demonstrated a more positive attitude towards critical portfolios, viewing them as essential tools for enhancing teaching practices and supporting their professional growth. In contrast, novice teachers exhibited greater uncertainty, particularly in applying theory to practice and understanding

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the role of critical portfolios in their future development. This hesitancy likely arises from their limited experience and less familiarity with reflective practices.

Interestingly, both novice and experienced teachers agreed on the potential of critical portfolios to influence learners' attitudes towards local and international cultures. However, a notable portion of both groups remained undecided. This ambivalence suggests that while teachers acknowledge the potential of critical portfolios to foster cultural awareness, they may encounter challenges in effectively integrating such reflective practices into their teaching, especially in culturally diverse classrooms.

These findings are consistent with previous research. For instance, Chun-Mei Chou (2012) found that e-portfolio acceptance among Taiwanese technological and vocational school teachers significantly influenced evaluation effectiveness, mediated by computer self-efficacy. This aligns with our findings, where experienced teachers' acceptance of critical portfolios mirrors their recognition of these tools as vital for professional growth. Similarly, Klenowski et al. (2006) highlighted a shift from traditional portfolio use towards a learning-focused approach in higher education, resonating with the perceptions of experienced teachers in this study.

Furthermore, the current study's findings echo those of Tucker et al. (2003) and Schlig (2005), who emphasized the role of portfolios in teacher evaluation and professional development. Tucker et al. noted that portfolios support the accountability aspects of teacher evaluation while fostering professional growth, while Schlig highlighted the potential of portfolios to enhance teachers' professional development. These sentiments are particularly evident among the experienced teachers in this study.

Recent research continues to underscore the importance of reflective practices and portfolios in teacher development. For example, Pishghadam et al. (2021) emphasized the role of reflective teaching practices, such as portfolios, in fostering emotional literacy and resilience among EFL teachers. This suggests that portfolios contribute not only to professional development but also play a crucial role in enhancing teachers' emotional and social competencies.

In light of these findings, critical portfolios emerge as powerful tools for both novice and experienced teachers. However, their effectiveness may vary depending on the teachers' experience levels and familiarity with reflective practices. To maximize the benefits of critical portfolios, professional development programs should focus on helping novice teachers overcome their uncertainties and enhancing all teachers' ability to integrate reflective practices into their pedagogy. Additionally, as global educational contexts become increasingly culturally diverse, further research

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should explore how critical portfolios can be effectively utilized to address and navigate cultural differences in the classroom.

7. Critical Reflections

The nuanced differences between novice and experienced teachers' perceptions of critical portfolios highlight the complex interplay between experience, confidence, and the perceived value of reflective practices. While the overall positive reception of critical portfolios is encouraging, the hesitation and indecision among novice teachers suggest a need for more targeted professional development. Such training should focus on demystifying the portfolio process, emphasizing its practical benefits, and providing strategies to integrate it into daily teaching routines without it being seen as an additional burden.

Moreover, the mixed responses from experienced teachers—particularly regarding the portfolio's role in reflection and time management—suggest that even seasoned educators may benefit from ongoing support in refining their reflective practices. This could include opportunities for peer collaboration and mentorship, where experienced teachers can share their insights while also remaining open to new reflective techniques that portfolios might offer.

The study's findings also raise important questions for future research. For instance, how might different cultural or institutional contexts influence teachers' perceptions of critical portfolios? What specific aspects of portfolio development do novice teachers find most challenging, and how can these be addressed in teacher education programs? Additionally, there is a need to explore the long-term impact of critical portfolio use on teaching efficacy and student outcomes, particularly in diverse and multicultural educational settings.

In conclusion, while critical portfolios are widely recognized as valuable tools for professional development, their successful implementation requires a nuanced understanding of teachers' experiences, challenges, and the support systems available to them. By addressing these factors, educators and institutions can better harness the potential of critical portfolios to transform teaching practices and promote more reflective, culturally responsive pedagogy.

Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed significantly to the research process.

Declaration

We declare that this manuscript is original and has not been submitted to any other journal for publication

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Transparency Statements

The authors affirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article. Any additional data can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Consideration

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