

Video Reflection Supports Beginning Teachers Implementing the Competency-Based Approach in An Algerian Induction Programme

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Abstract: *This study explores how structured video reflection supports beginning English teachers in Algeria to interpret, adapt, and enact the Competency-Based Approach during their induction year. Fifteen beginning teachers in Batna Province participated in six video reflection sessions integrated into the mandatory 200-hour induction programme under Executive Decree 25-54. An interventionist collective case study design was employed, and data were collected through interviews, reflective journals, classroom video recordings, and focus groups, and were analysed using Korthagen's Onion Model. Findings indicate that video reflection facilitates teachers' movement from surface-level behavioural reflection to deeper identity-level questioning. Teachers demonstrated creative adaptation of Competency-Based Approach principles despite structural constraints, including large class sizes and curriculum pressure. Collective witnessing within facilitated groups created psychological safety, transforming reflection from an individual cognitive act into a social practice. The study concludes that video reflection is a scalable, low-cost tool for enhancing teacher agency in resource-constrained contexts, though its effectiveness remains shaped by systemic barriers. Implications for policy reform, mentor training, and induction curriculum design are discussed.*

Keywords: Algeria, Competency-Based Approach, reflective practice, teacher induction, video reflection.

INTRODUCTION

Educational reforms often fail not because of poor policy design but because of implementation gaps at the classroom level. In Algeria, the adoption of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) in 2003 required a fundamental shift from teacher-centred instruction to student-centred learning. However, as noted by Bellalem (2014), the initial rollout of the CBA faced significant pedagogical and infrastructural hurdles that have echoed through the system. More than two decades later, beginning teachers continue to struggle with translating this visionary policy into everyday classroom practice. Recent studies confirm that these challenges persist, with Melouka and Saadia (2020) documenting ongoing difficulties in implementing the CBA in Algerian schools due to rigid curricula, traditional assessment methods, and a lack of continuous professional development.

This implementation gap is particularly acute during the induction phase, when new teachers face what the literature describes as "*reality shock*": the jarring collision between university training ideals and the daily demands of overcrowded classrooms, scarce resources, and high-stakes probationary evaluation (Lortie, 1975; Feiman- Nemser, 2001). Derrahi (2021) highlights that Algerian teacher education has historically struggled to bridge the gap between theoretical university-level coursework and the practical, often chaotic realities of the public school classroom. Consequently, the Algerian induction programme, now standardised under Executive Decree 25-54 (2025) as a mandatory 200-hour pedagogical training course, remains heavily theoretical in its design. It offers limited structured opportunities for evidence-based reflection on actual classroom practice. As a result, beginning teachers frequently revert to traditional, transmissive methods simply to maintain classroom control, which directly undermines the core goals of the CBA reform.

Reflective practice is widely recognised as a vital mechanism for bridging the theory-practice divide in teacher education (Schön, 1983; Korthagen, 2004). However, conventional reflection methods rely heavily on memory, which is inherently selective, subjective, and prone to self-justification. Video reflection addresses this limitation by providing an objective, revisable record of classroom interactions, enabling teachers to notice critical discrepancies between what they intended to do and what actually happened in their lessons (Sherin & van Es, 2009; Tripp & Rich, 2012). Whilst video reflection is well-established and extensively researched in Western teacher education contexts, there is limited empirical evidence regarding its utility within resource- constrained, hierarchically structured induction environments such as Algeria.

This study addresses that critical gap by investigating how a structured video reflection intervention shapes beginning teachers' reflective practice and their adaptation of the Competency-Based Approach. Three research questions guide the inquiry: first, how does video reflection shape the depth of beginning teachers' reflective practice; second, how do teachers use video reflection to adapt CBA principles within contextual constraints; and third, what contextual factors enable or constrain video reflection as a form of professional learning?

LITERATURE/THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

The theoretical foundation of this study rests on two interconnected frameworks: Korthagen's (2004) Onion Model of core reflection and Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson's (2015) ecological framework of teacher agency.

Korthagen's (2004) Onion Model conceptualises professional reflection not as a flat, linear process, but as a spiral moving through six concentric layers. The outermost layers consist of the Environment (the external classroom context) and Behaviour (observable actions). Moving inward, the layers encompass Competencies (skills and knowledge), Beliefs (underlying assumptions about teaching and learning), Identity (the teacher's professional self-concept), and finally, Mission (the teacher's deepest sense of purpose). The model posits that sustainable professional change occurs when structured cycles of noticing and dialogue enable teachers to move from surface-level descriptions of behaviour toward deep, belief- and identity-level questioning.

Complementing this, Priestley et al. (2015) argue that teacher agency is not merely an individual capacity or a trait possessed by certain teachers, but an ecological phenomenon. Agency is achieved when teachers navigate the interplay between their personal resources (beliefs, skills) and the structural, cultural, and material conditions of their environment. In hierarchical, resource-constrained contexts, agency often manifests not as overt "structural resistance" (e.g., refusing to follow the curriculum), but as "contextual translation", the subtle, creative adaptation of policy ideals to fit local realities.

While video reflection is proven to enhance "professional vision" (Sherin & van Es, 2009), its application in non-Western contexts requires careful theoretical consideration. In environments characterised by top-down accountability and inspection cultures, the "Environment" layer of Korthagen's model may exert a uniquely powerful influence, potentially blocking deeper reflection. Furthermore, the social dynamics of video reflection must be understood through a Vygotskian (1978) lens, where learning is socially constructed. In hierarchical cultures, the "Zone of Proximal Development" for reflective practice may only function effectively when institutional authority actively validates and protects the reflective space.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs an interventionist collective case study design (Stake, 1995). Video reflection was not a pre-existing component of the Algerian induction framework. Instead, it was designed and introduced as a contextually inserted professional learning intervention to explore its potential as a reflective tool for beginning teachers navigating CBA implementation within resource-constrained classrooms. A constructivist-interpretivist paradigm guides the inquiry, positioning teachers' experiences as socially constructed meanings rather than objective, measurable outcomes.

Context and Participants

The study was conducted in Batna Province, Algeria, during the 2025/2026 induction cycle. Participants were fifteen beginning English teachers, fourteen female and one male, all recent graduates of the Écoles Normales Supérieures, recruited under the mandates of Executive Decree 25-54. They were placed across urban, rural, and remote schools throughout the province. Class sizes ranged from 28 to 45 students in urban settings and 14 to 25 in rural ones. Each teacher managed approximately four different classes per week across varying streams and year groups, ensuring that rich contextual diversity was embedded in the study from the outset.

The Intervention

The intervention consisted of six video reflection sessions integrated into the existing induction training between December 2025 and January 2026. Sessions strictly followed Korthagen's (2004) spiral model: Plan, Record, Reflect, Revise.

Teachers recorded 15–20 minute lesson segments using their personal mobile phones.

To ensure ethical compliance, teachers were instructed to position cameras to capture their own practice and general classroom dynamics while avoiding clear, identifiable close-ups of students' faces.

Group sessions lasting 60–90 minutes were facilitated using layered prompts specifically designed to scaffold movement across Korthagen's six reflective layers, guiding teachers from surface-level observations of Environment and Behaviour toward deeper explorations of Beliefs, Identity, and Mission. An orientation session was held prior to the first video session to explain the study's purpose, data security protocols, and ethical guidelines. Crucially, an official regional mentor attended all sessions. He provided institutional legitimacy without adopting an evaluative or grading role, which proved essential for establishing the psychological safety required for honest reflection.

Data Collection and Analysis Data were collected through four complementary sources to ensure methodological triangulation: thirty semi-structured interviews conducted before and after the intervention, thirty-eight handwritten reflective journal entries, twenty-two classroom video recordings, and one focus group transcript held after all six reflection cycles were complete.

Data were analysed using hybrid thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involved an initial round of deductive coding derived directly from Korthagen's Onion Model, followed by inductive coding to capture emergent themes directly from the participants' lived experiences. Trustworthiness and rigour were ensured through data triangulation, member checking during post-intervention interviews, and sustained researcher reflexivity throughout the fieldwork period (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Depth of Reflective Practice

Video reflection facilitated observable, documented movement across Korthagen's reflective layers. At the outset, teachers focused almost entirely on the surface-level Environment and Behaviour, describing what they could literally see on screen (e.g., "*I talked too fast*," "*The students were noisy*") rather than questioning the beliefs behind their actions. Over the course of six sessions, the majority moved toward examining their Competencies and Beliefs, and several reached profound Identity and Mission levels.

For instance, Salima initially focused on the surface-level behaviour of error correction. Upon reviewing her video, she noted, "*I saw myself immediately correcting every mistake. It was a reflex, not a choice.*" Over the sessions, she shifted her perspective, recognising this as an automatic reflex driven by a deep-seated belief that a "*good teacher*" must prevent all errors to satisfy inspectors. Consequently, she began deliberately waiting three to five seconds before responding to student mistakes, actively creating space for peer correction. Similarly, Karim moved from seeing himself as a strict "*classroom controller*" to describing himself as a "*researcher in his own classroom*," representing a clear, transformative Identity-level shift. These trajectories align with Korthagen's (2004) model, demonstrating that structured cycles of noticing and dialogue enable movement from surface description toward belief-level questioning.

However, not all trajectories moved freely. Imane recognised that her students were disengaged, she explicitly pointed out a boy with his head on the desk in her video, but she felt entirely unable to change her practice. She cited overwhelming class size and a paralyzing fear of unexpected inspector visits

. Her case illustrates a critical finding: reflection depth is not solely a function of individual motivation or cognitive capacity; it is ecologically mediated. When structural pressure outweighs perceived control, the reflective spiral stalls not at a cognitive level, but at an institutional one.

Adaptation of the Competency-Based Approach Within Constraints Teachers used video reflection to adapt CBA principles creatively, though most adaptations remained small in scale and highly practical in nature. Fatima developed what she termed "*Algerian tasks*," asking students to translate local proverbs and sayings into English when she recognised, via video review, that the textbook's European-centric role-plays were culturally irrelevant and failing to engage her students. Karim rearranged his classroom seating to intentionally mix ability levels, using peer scaffolding as a low- cost, highly effective strategy for managing classes of over forty students. Meriem began allowing students to use Darija (the Algerian dialect) to unlock difficult vocabulary before transitioning to English. She made this shift only after video evidence clearly showed her that strictly prohibiting dialect use had silenced, rather than motivated, her class.

These adaptations demonstrate what this study terms "*contextual translation*": the capacity to find micro-spaces within rigid structures to act with pedagogical integrity, without attempting to eliminate the constraints themselves. This extends Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson's (2015) ecological agency framework by distinguishing contextual translation from structural resistance as a distinct and observable form of teacher agency. These teachers did not remove large classes, rewrite the national syllabus, or change inspector expectations. They worked thoughtfully within them.

However, these adaptations were consistently constrained by curriculum overload and the pervasive inspection culture. Teachers described feeling trapped between CBA ideals and systemic demands, a tension captured plainly by one participant who stated:

"*I am one teacher, not two.*" This suggests that professional development frameworks must account for structural constraints not as mere background conditions, but as active, powerful variables shaping what adaptation is possible, and for whom. Agency is not only about what teachers can do; it is equally about what the system allows them to attempt.

Contextual Factors Enabling and Constraining Video Reflection

The group dynamic emerged as the primary enabling factor across all three research questions. Teachers consistently reported that watching videos together significantly reduced their professional isolation. The WhatsApp community that emerged organically after the final session, with teachers sharing observations, lesson snippets, and coping strategies between formal sessions, extended the reflective space beyond the official programme. This suggests that digital peer communities can sustain professional learning at near-zero cost.

Safety, however, was fragile and required deliberate, ongoing construction. Early sessions were visibly tense; full honesty did not emerge until Session 3 or 4, when teachers observed their peers being vulnerable about their teaching struggles without facing judgment or consequence. Furthermore, the video itself acted as what teachers described as a "*neutral referee*." When disagreements arose about pedagogy, the video evidence resolved disputes by showing what had actually happened in the classroom. This function of video, as a shared, objective referent that grounds collective discussion in evidence rather than opinion, is particularly valuable in contexts where top-down directives have historically silenced teacher voice. It supports and extends Sherin and van Es's (2009) claim that video enhances professional vision, adding that in non-Western, hierarchical contexts, video also facilitates collective meaning-making in ways that memory-based discussion simply cannot replicate.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study challenge the prevailing assumption that reflection is primarily an individual, internal cognitive act. In this Algerian context, reflection was inherently social. Psychological safety did not pre-exist as a condition; it was painstakingly constructed through the group process itself, session by session. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism but adds a crucial nuance: in hierarchical educational cultures, the Zone of Proximal Development for reflective practice functions effectively only when institutional authority validates and protects the reflective space. The official mentor's presence was not pedagogically directive, he spoke relatively little, but it was structurally decisive. Without his explicit endorsement of the process, peer dialogue would likely have remained polite, superficial, and ultimately unproductive.

Furthermore, these findings necessitate an extension of Korthagen's (2004) framework. The model demonstrates that in resource-constrained, high-stakes contexts, the outermost "Environment" layer carries significantly more blocking power than the model, which was developed primarily in supportive Dutch teacher education settings, originally anticipated. When the environment is characterized by punitive inspection and severe resource scarcity, it can actively prevent teachers from reaching the deeper layers of Belief and Identity, regardless of their individual motivation.

The concept of "contextual translation" further enriches our understanding of teacher agency. It moves the discourse beyond the unhelpful binary of "compliance" versus "resistance." The teachers in this study were neither passive recipients of policy nor active rebels. They were pragmatic agents, creatively translating the abstract ideals of the CBA into localized, sustainable practices that respected both the curriculum and the reality of their students' lives.

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The findings carry direct, actionable implications for both policy and practice. For practice, induction programmes must evolve to include mandatory, structured video reflection cycles. Crucially, these cycles must be formally and legally protected from inspector evaluation to maintain the psychological safety required for genuine reflection. Mentors must be specifically trained in facilitative, rather than directive, approaches, learning to ask probing, open-ended questions rather than prescribing immediate solutions.

Furthermore, dedicated time for peer reflection groups should be structurally built into induction schedules, not treated as an optional add-on. Digital communities, such as the organic WhatsApp groups observed in this study, should be deliberately seeded and lightly moderated by programme coordinators, rather than left entirely to chance. Given the "*mutation system*" in Algeria, which frequently places beginning teachers in geographically isolated settings, such digital solidarity is not a supplementary option but a professional necessity.

For research, this study provides a validated, ecologically sensitive framework for studying teacher agency and reflective practice in resource-constrained, hierarchical contexts. Future studies must treat structural constraints (class size, inspection culture, curriculum overload) not as background noise, but as active, central variables that shape the very possibility of pedagogical adaptation.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that video reflection is a highly viable, scalable, and low-cost tool for supporting beginning teachers in Algeria. When structured with theoretically grounded prompts and embedded within a psychologically safe peer group, it helps teachers move beyond surface-level compliance toward thoughtful, context-sensitive practice. However, its effectiveness is not automatic. It depends entirely on structured facilitation, institutional legitimacy, and the deliberate, absolute separation of formative reflection from summative evaluation.

Ultimately, becoming an effective teacher in Algeria is not about perfectly, rigidly following the Competency-Based Approach. It is about developing a thoughtful, context-sensitive practice that grows through support, dialogue, and honest reflection. Creating structured spaces for that reflection, using tools as simple and accessible as a mobile phone, may be one of the most practical, high-impact steps available for teacher development in resource-constrained contexts. The teachers in this study did not need more abstract theory. They needed a mirror, a safe group, and a mentor who asked questions rather than giving answers.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was conducted in a single province over a nine-week period, which inherently limits the transferability of the findings. Longitudinal research is urgently needed to determine whether the reflective shifts observed in this study become stable, enduring features of professional practice, or whether they are gradually eroded by the relentless pressure of the systemic environment over a teacher's first three to five years.

Additionally, the participant group was heavily skewed toward female teachers (14 female, 1 male), which, while reflective of the broader demographic of English language teachers in Algeria, warrants further investigation into how gender dynamics may influence the construction of psychological safety in peer reflection groups. Finally, comparative research across different geographic regions, subject areas, and mentor facilitation styles would help clarify which mechanisms of video reflection are universal, and which are highly context-specific.

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