Reviewer A:

Paper Number:

4218-13421-1-RV

Purpose - Comments

Goals, Objectives, Rationale, Research Question, Hypothesis

:

Very good

Background - Comments

Theoretical Framework, Literature Review

:

Should be very useful to JoSoTL readers. Formed an adequate underpinning for the study.

Methodology - Comments

Participants, instruments, data collection, data analysis

:

Simply but completely described. Methodology could be easily replicated.

Findings - Comments

Data summaries, Statistical significance, assertions, themes

:

Themes were well-described. Sufficient examples were provided to make conclusions about the reasonableness of the assertions made.

Conclusion - Comments

Discussion, Implications

:

Conclusion-next to last paragraph. “GTA trainers can obtain information to better inform their decisions concerning the creation of new and more effective opportunities for GTA mentoring.” Because you did not report on how you used this information to change your GTA training, you might strengthen this assertion by providing some examples, connected to some of your specific findings, of how the trainer would use the information gleaned from study of the reflections. What specifically will the trainer gain from doing the analysis?

*This was intended as a suggestion for further research. While I indeed (as a researcher, and the GTA trainer) gained insight as to how to better help the GTAs with their professional development, this was not documented in the data. It is therefore rephrased to clarify this aspect (page 19)*

Presentation - Comments

Format, style, organization

:

These comments are meant to help the author minimize distractions that

might be caused by style.

*I appreciate all of the style comments, they have helped tremendously. I provide a detailed description of all the changes made.*

Coverage - Comments

Manuscript has sufficient/not excessive detail and length to develop basis for conclusion and contribute to SoTL literature

:

Presentation –Abstract-Try to use terms that the reader will understand

without having read your article. What do R1, R2, and R3 mean? It would also be good style not to use a cite in the abstract. The abstract should entice the reader. Except for these items, you have provided the necessary details.

*The abstract has been re-worded to eliminate abbreviations and citations. It clarifies the concepts more in depth.*

Consider also this sentence from the end of your background section:

Research that documents reflective journaling conducted by GTAs is rather

scarce. The current study investigates the outcomes of reflective journaling among foreign language GTAs during their first semester of teaching at the university level.

*I changed it and incorporated the suggested sentence (page 4)*

Presentation-Introduction-This may be my own opinion, but it’s probably a

good idea to avoid using the word “vast” because it can so easily be

mistaken for hyperbole, which invites immediate disagreement with what you are saying. So try “sizeable” “growing” which hints at the idea. Or

say “most of the increasing number of studies of….focus on….” In

fact, this sentence was preparing me to read something about the gaps in

these studies. But this paragraph is not about that. Consider beginning the paragraph with “Despite efforts…”

*Agreed, one whole sentence was eliminated and I reworded based on the last suggestion. The whole Introduction section was also revamped, as suggested by Reviewer 2.*

Presentation-Introduction-“proven” is another one of those words to

avoid, and if used, needs strong evidentiary support. So “shown” or

“demonstrated” are some words to use that lower the bar a little.

Presentation-Introduction-interplay is better used as a noun. Better to use interact.

*Both word choices were corrected based on the suggestions.*

Presentation- Results- (under Table 1) call me old fashioned, but with

regards to is not correct. With regard to. Or just say that they “were

able to raise self-awareness of their own learning processes.” Consider

substituting simple prepositions such as on, of and so on.

*Included the suggested sentence.*

Presentation-Results- You use “I” in paragraph beginning, “On the

other hand.” This usage jumped out at me because it was the first time you used it. Everything else is in the third person.

*Done. Since the section was also revamped, this paragraph was modified accordingly.*

Presentation-Conclusion-Try using “presents” instead of “posits.”

The latter means “assume as a fact” “advance as an argument.”

*Changed to “presents”.*

Reviewer B:

Paper Number:

4218

Purpose - Comments

Goals, Objectives, Rationale, Research Question, Hypothesis

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In the abstract, R1, R2 and R3 should not be used as they are not meaningful without reading the paper.  Change the language to be more explanatory about reflectivity levels.

*The abstract has been re-worded to eliminate abbreviations and citations. It clarifies the concepts more in depth.*

The rationale and research questions are clearly explained, but could be tied more closely to the background.  The title and background information has a focus on professional development.  The research questions, however, are aimed at gathering data about common themes and levels of reflection in journaling.  It is not clear how these research questions will close the loop in professional development of the participants or whether the aim is to foster development during the journaling process.  Will these data be used to enhance the training and professional development of new cohorts?

There is some indication of improvements made during the journaling processing the results section.  This reviewer suggests that the goals of the project be explained more clearly in the introduction /background section.

Background - Comments

Theoretical Framework, Literature Review

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The introduction calls for better GTA preparation and then sets up the current study as looking at reflective journaling, which happens during the teaching process.  The authors might consider making a stronger link between the two or modify the intro focus to formative professional development rather than preparation prior to the teaching experience.

*The Introduction and Background sections were revamped to reflect this suggestion. They now put emphasis on the importance of implementing reflective activities to foster the professional development of GTAs.*

The authors state that journaling has “been proven beneficial to those in the teaching field” but only cite one paper from 1996.  Are there additional sources cited in the background section that would provide more support for this proven concept mentioned in the introduction?

*The paragraph, and the whole section have been revamped to better reflect this suggestion. Many papers in which the implementation of reflective journal was investigated are now cited.*

In the background section, the authors could be more descriptive about the four types/levels of reflectivity proposed by Hatton and Smith.

*A more detailed explanation of Hatton & Smith (1995) and Lee (2005 are now provided.*

The authors might also consider elaborating on the context of the participants and teaching discipline in the 2007 Maarof study.

*This paragraph was eliminated due to space constraints. Many of the other suggestions were included, and therefore, Maarof (2007) was not indispensable in the background section.*

The Lee levels of reflectivity are described, but could be expanded for deeper explanation, particularly as these set up the methods used in this study.

*The whole section was expanded.*

Methodology - Comments

Participants, instruments, data collection, data analysis

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How many male and how many female participants were in the study?  How many were teaching for the first time?  It is indicated in the conclusion, but make clear in the methods that participants wrote their journals during their language methodology class.

 Also indicate the level of Spanish being taught by GTAs (first year Spanish to undergraduates?). *Yes*

 Had the participants completed the two-semester discussion workshop prior to *the study? No, they had a week-long orientation prior to the study, and then the 2-semester long workshop was simultaneous with the study. This is now clarified.*

 Were the journals all written in English or the GTA’s native language? *Both, clarified both in text and footnote.*

The authors indicate participants volunteered their journals to be included in the study.  Were IRB approval and informed consent required, and if so, obtained?  Who carried out the qualitative analysis of the journal entries, that is, were there multiple raters and were they blind to the study?  *Yes, this is now clarified.*

*The Methodology section was expanded to include details based on the suggestion made.*

The authors indicate some participants were also taking a foreign language course at the time they were journaling as a GTA. It might be helpful in the results to indicate how many of the entries that were at each reflectivity level were written by students who might have external encouragement or requirement to journal through other courses or particular assignments.

*Since the entries were analyzed anonymously and I had no access to knowing how many of them were taking another language, and even though I can speculate that none of them were involved in journal writing for other classes, I eliminated this section from the paper, to avoid confusions.*

An explanation of the oral scaffolding methods would be helpful to

understand the process GTAs experienced along with their journaling.

*I provided a brief explanation of the oral discussions at the end of the Methodology section, however, due to page limit I did not expand in depth.*

Findings - Comments

Data summaries, Statistical significance, assertions, themes

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On page 14, the authors write that “results proved that GTAs were able to engage in reflection…”  This reviewer suggests they modified that to “some GTAs” as their data indicate only a subset of the entries were at R2 or R3.

*Done.*

 It is also not clear how many individuals were able to achieve the second or third reflectivity level in their journaling and how often that occurred or on which topics.  Expressing these data would give a better indication of the impact journaling had on the professional development of GTAs.

*Frequency was calculated as a total, not based on individuals. Before analyzing journals, the entries were randomized, therefore, I cannot count individuals, but frequency of R1, R2, or R3 per total entries.*

The author makes a case for the recall (level 1) representing some level of reflectivity as GTAs were in some cases able to establish connections to course material or interactions with students.  This reviewer would

encourage the author to expand the case for this claim with support from the literature and then show those data so the reader can learn how many of the R1 entries showed connections and with what.

*The claim is based on what the proponent of the categorization establishes. Lee (2005) defines the first level as a level already implying some degree of reflection.*

This reviewer questions whether speculating about GTA ability to achieve

higher levels of reflectivity due to factors of trust and comfort is

necessary (pg 15).

*Based on the suggestion, the paragraph was deleted.*

The author indicates several ways reflective journaling benefitted GTAs. Without a control group who did not journal and without data (self-report survey for example) measuring the skills listed at the bottom of page 15 and top of 16, this reviewer would caution that the GTAs may have been able to reflect on their teaching without the element of journaling. The author does offer some comments from GTAs about the perceived value of journaling, but did not survey the entire group.

*As per lack of survey, this is now listed as a limitation.*

Conclusion - Comments

Discussion, Implications

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There is support from the data for the conclusion where it focused on answering the research questions related to themes and reflectivity level within the journals. The other benefits to GTAs discussed in the conclusion are less well supported by the data, other than through selected excerpts from the journals. The future directions might include a control group in addition to the ideas presented.

Presentation - Comments

Format, style, organization

:

The manuscript needs some changes in punctuation along with some copy edits and word choice changes.

Coverage - Comments

Manuscript has sufficient/not excessive detail and length to develop basis for conclusion and contribute to SoTL literature

:

With revisions indicated, the coverage should be appropriate and these contextual data contribute to the SoTL literature.

The situation of GTAs is then peculiar for they could be considered in-service, however, many of them do not undergo the lengthy pre-service stage that most teachers-in-training are required to complete.