The Attitude of Teachers towards Reflective Practice at College Level: A Mixed-Method Approach

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to assess college teachers' attitudes towards reflective practice and knowing their beliefs about promoting reflective practice to improve institutional and professional growth. The study was mixed-method in nature. The population was comprised of 203 college teachers and a sample of 132 teachers was randomly selected by using a sample selection table. An adapted *Reflective Attitude Questionnaire (RAQ)* constructed by Young (1989) consisting of 15 Likert items was used to assess the attitude of the college teachers. Semi structure interviews were also taken from the 10 college teachers to know their beliefs about how reflective practice could be promoted for teachers' professional growth and institutional development. The *RAQ* had an alpha reliability of .90 which meant the instrument was reliable. Content validity was observed to verify the interview statements suggested by experts. Findings disclosed that teachers considered reflective practice useful for their teaching performance and professional growth. However, college principals did not facilitate reflection among teachers that impeded teachers' professional development as well as institutional growth.

Keywords: Reflective practice, Attitude, College teachers, Professional development

1. Introduction

Over the years the reflective practice has become pivotal for the professionals working in different fields especially in teaching, nursing, law, and management. The concept dominated since John Dewey (1910,1933) elaborated its importance in his scholarly work 'how we think' and got more fame when Donald Schon (1983,1987) came up with the concepts of reflection in action' and 'reflection on action' in his seminal work. After many decades since Dewey presented the term, reflective practice has become the changing agent that contributed to the improvement of teaching and its quality (Maksimovic & Osmanovic, 2019).

The term reflection that mostly used in teaching rooted in Dewey (1933) earliest work, who presented this concept as an "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed

form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends that constitutes reflective thought" (pp. 3-16). Moreover, reflection is a process of self-critique that leads towards pedagogical improvement and teaching practices (Walshe & Driver, 2019). Different studies suggested that reflection has become an integral part of teachers and their professional growth as Forde, McMahon, McPhee, & Patrick, (2006) stated: "reflection enabled professionals to go beyond their perspectives to see how their work has an impact on others" (p.70).

Currently, reflective practice has become a popular topic of discussion in seminal books and scholarly articles for individual and organizational improvement. It is considered as a source of obtaining and adjusting the experiences that someone gains during their practices. Several studies (Boud et al. 1985; Jarvis, 1992) stated that reflective practice is comprehended as the process of learning from experiences resulting in gaining new ideas. Helyer (2015) defined reflective practice as a crucial skill. Helyer further added that reflective practitioners acted as individuals who research on the relationship emerged between self and individual work, burgeon self-identification, personal integrity, and self-awareness. Although, the process of reflection is not easy to observe by the professionals as it needs more focus, control, and collaborative efforts to practice. Osterman & Kottkamp(1993) stated that "reflective practice is a challenging, demanding, and often trying process that is most successful as a collaborative effort" (p.2).Moreover, Farrell & Kennedy (2019) claim that reflective practice can be defined as to take responsibilities by the teachers for improving their professional practices, for examples what they are going to do, what they have done and how they perform it for making all these meaningful for their teaching practices (as cited in Farrell, 2014).

Besides, the increasing number of teachers in the system of education is not a surprise for anyone as it is the need of the time to have an appropriate number of teachers available to run the system of education. Despite this, the traditional teachers fail to bring new ideas that can foster their teaching capabilities up to the mark and grow them professionally. By using modern approaches and techniques the practicing teachers can achieve the laurels, bring novelty, and make their teaching career invaluable. One of the modern concepts that have become the hallmark for successful teaching is reflective practice as successful and effective teachers reflect throughout their teaching career (Brandenburg, Glasswell, Jones & Ryan, 2017). Hence, reflection is considered a key to success for the teaching and learning of teachers (Habib, 2017).

Currently, reflective practice is also closely linked to the professional growth of the instructors. It has been observed that teachers' professional development has been expanded beyond the pre-service or in-service training, job courses, and workshops as it has become vital for self-professional development. The teachers of the twenty-first century realize that professional development has become a symbol of success as mention by Forde et al., (2006), "a teacher engaging with professional development linked to a career pathway, which will result in either a new position or title" (p. 148). Sharil & Kyriacou, (2015) mentioned that it is important to admit that reflective practice plays a significant role in increasing the professional development of future teachers. Hence, the purpose of reflective practice is teachers' ongoing professional growth. Lima (2014) concludes that ongoing professional growth aligns with reflective practice is the right track to enhancing teacher's development. Hence it is assumed from the discussion above that reflective practice and teachers' attitude has a direct connection with professional growth as Dewey (1933) also claims that attitude plays a significant role in the reflective process that leads the professionals towards growth and excellence. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate teachers' attitude about reflective practice and their beliefs about promoting reflection at the colleges of Dera Ghazi Khan.

1.1. Statement of Problem

Reflective practice has become one of the fundamental elements of successful teaching. It has not only played its role in teachers' professional development but institutional improvement as well. Dewey and his contemporaries and even the later researchers agreed that the 'attitude' has a significant influence on teachers to perform their reflective activities and desire to become a professional practitioner. Therefore, the current study addresses the need to assess college teachers' attitude apropos of reflective practice and exploring their beliefs to promote reflective practice for professional and institutional growth.

1.2. Objectives

The current research was carried out to meet the following objectives:

- 1. To explore college teachers' attitudes towards reflective practice.
- 2. To ascertain college teachers' beliefs in promoting reflective practice for professional and institutional growth.

1.3. Research Questions

- 1. What are college teachers' attitudes towards reflective practice?
- 2. What are college teachers' beliefs about promoting reflective practice for professional and institutional growth?

1.4. Significance

Concept of reflective is valuable that shares many benefits in the professional development of the teachers. It develops a sense among teachers to understand their actions and grow professionally. Additionally, this concept leads teachers towards innovation to exalt their teaching careers. The findings of the study could be significant for the college administration, policymakers (especially at higher education level), educationists, researchers, and curriculum experts to realize the importance of 'attitude' towards reflective practice and its practice for growth and development of college teachers.

1.5. Limitations

- 1. The current study was conducted at the college level and the results of this research could not be generalized at the school level.
- 2. The perception and attitude of the teachers towards reflective practice were limited to their personal and professional experiences.

2. Literature Review

Various studies have been carried out on the attitude of teachers and their professional growth as these are one of the modern concepts that bring innovation in teaching. The findings of the few studies have been discussed in this literature review section. Sibahi (2016) conducted a study at the college level in Saudi Arabia. The results of Sibahi's study showed that teachers at the college are well informed of the importance of reflective practice. The study also added that reflective practice should be part of in-service teachers' professional training for their professional development. A comparative study conducted by Tabassum and Malik (2014) revealed that higher secondary school teachers did not feel the need for reflective practice. Additionally, their study also discovered that teachers were unable to utilize reflective strategies to solve the learning problems of the students. Moreover, Rayan (2014) ascertained about math teachers' reflection linking to their teaching effectiveness. The findings of Rayan's study indicated that math teachers mostly reflect on their teaching practices. Bleach (2014) concluded in the study that vibrant

reflection and evaluation of self helped towards gaining novel ideas about teaching as well as self. Moreover, a reflective study conducted by Tok & Dolapçioğlu (2013) stated about many reflective attributes practice by the teachers. The study concluded that teachers implemented self-appraisal, learner center instruction, decision making, and problem-solving. Additionally, the teachers foster a reflective climate and professional development. The study also revealed that the teachers did not keep reflective diaries to note their daily teaching activities because of the lack of knowledge about the effectiveness of reflective diaries. Additionally, a study conducted by Pandey (2012) entitled Reflective Practice: a gateway of professional development concluded that RP was the main tool of enhancing teaching skills, altered instructional practices, and improve the professional growth of teachers. A study initiated by Shaheen (2012) proposed two approaches for the sake of professional development and the advancement of the teachers. First, imitating an expert teacher, this approach considered an old or traditional approach. A second approach was a new approach that allowed teachers to attend training, workshop, seminars, and self-professional development. All these initiatives were highly dependent on teachers' personal will to foster reflective practice, research capabilities, and self-learning. Hobbs (2007) stated that Reflective Practice was one of the important concepts for self-development and should apply in the fields of health, management, and the people who work together in different fields. A study conducted by Richardson (2004) in the colleges of United Arab Emirates stated the possibility of technical reflection in teaching that encouraged the trainee teachers to reflect on their teaching strategies, assessment process, and classroom management skills. Karaaslan conducted a study in 2003 to explore teachers' understanding of their professional development. The study investigates teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards professional development and activities for professional development. The study concluded that professional development activities were highly rated by female teachers, younger teachers, teachers with less teaching experience as well. The study further concluded that workload, lack of self-motivation, and less support from the institution were the main factors that hinder in the way of teachers' professional growth. Ferraro (2000) conducted a study on reflection and its relation to professional development. The researcher concluded that reflective practice was beneficial for in-service as well as pre-service teachers.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design and Participants

A mixed-method design was applied for better description of the research problem. The population of the present research consisted of 203 teachers working in public colleges of D.G Khan District. The detail of the participants was obtained from the office of directorate colleges Dera Ghazi Khan Division. A sample of 132 subjects was randomly selected by following Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample selection table. Furthermore, for the qualitative part of the study 10 college teachers were purposively selected.

3.2. Instruments and Procedures

The researcher used an adapted reflective attitude questionnaire (RAQ) originally devised by Young (1989). The RAQ consisted of 15 Likert items consisting of questions regarding the usefulness of reflective practice, reflective activities, and frequency of the reflective activities. For the qualitative part of the study, the investigator carried out semi-structured interviews with the college teachers. The basic questions of the interview were about teachers' beliefs regarding reflection, beliefs about professional development, reflection and achievement, reflection linking with college improvement, and beliefs about strategies of reflective practice. For pilot testing, instruments were distributed among those teachers who were not included in the sample. For this purpose, teachers who represented the same characteristics were selected. In the original *Reflective Attitude Questionnaire (RAQ)* Young reported a value of 92 alpha reliability which showed that the instrument was reliable over a period of time in assessing the attitudes and beliefs of reflection (Creswell, 2008). The RAQ had an alpha reliability of .90 that showed the consistency between the items of instrument. Additionally, the researcher observed content validity recommended by experts for the clarity and verification of the interview statements.

4. Data Analysis

The researcher visited personally to establish multiple contacts with the respondents for data collection. Porter (2004) considered multiple contacts, a successful technique to get a high response rate. Descriptive statistics were applied for the quantitative part of the study and, for this purpose Reflective Attitude Questionnaire (RAQ) data was entered into SPSS to analyze percentages, counts, mean and standard deviation. Additionally, qualitative data were analyzed by

using MaxQDA 18, as Kuckartz and Rädiker (2019) considered it a good qualitative software that analyzed extensive interview data. Later, Interviews were transcribed and themes were taken with MaxQDA.

4.1. Findings of Reflective Attitude Questionnaire (RAQ)

Teachers' attitude about usefulness of reflective practice was analyzed in table 1. Mean score of the above table showed that teachers considered reflective practice very useful for their teaching. The majority of college teachers thought that reflective practice was extremely useful in gaining new ideas for their teaching (Mean = 4.67). Teachers considered reflective practice very helpful to enhance their teaching practices (Mean = 4.24). Moreover, teachers also admitted that reflective practice was useful in knowing what was going on while teaching the class, useful to categorize, discovered their weaknesses and strength, encouraged them to plan and evaluate their teaching with the mean score of 4.13, 4.09, 4.07, 4.02 and 4.10 respectively.

Table 1. Usefulness of Reflective Practice: Teachers' Attitude

S No	Statements	EU %	VU %	SU %	U %	EU %	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	Help you to investigate what is happening while teaching a class	49.2	26.5	14.4	7.6	2.3	4.13	1.07
2.	Gain new ideas relating to teaching	81.1	10.6	4.5	2.3	1.5	4.67	.796
3.	Help you to categorize about what happening while teaching experience	42.4	41.7	3.0	8.3	4.5	4.09	1.09
4.	As a teacher, RP helps you discover your weaknesses and strength	43.9	33.3	13.6	3.8	5.3	4.07	1.10
5.	Help to encourage for evaluating your own teaching	29.5	55.3	6.8	3.8	4.5	4.02	.965
6.	Helping you for good planning in teaching	44.7	32.6	14.4	4.5	3.8	4.10	1.05
7.	Improve teaching	50.8	34.1	6.8	5.3	3.0	4.24	1.00

EU= Extremely useful VU=Very useful SU=Slightly useful U=useless EU=Extremely useless

Table 2 showed teachers' attitudes regarding the usefulness of reflective practice in increasing their performance. The analysis revealed that reflective practice was extremely useful in fostering the performance of teachers because reflection provided opportunities to think about their teaching when they alone (Mean score = 4.34). Teachers found reflection useful to improve

their teaching practices when they reflected on special tasks (Mean score = 4.27). The data also showed that reflecting on the teaching of other teachers was worthwhile to improve the performance of college teachers (Mean score = 4.19). The analysis also indicated that reflecting within a group about own teaching considered useful to enhance the teaching of the teachers (Mean score = 3.54). The mean score of 3.31 also revealed that reflecting on every task to improve teaching was also useful for college teachers.

Table 2. Teachers' attitude towards Reflective Practice usefulness in increasing their performance

Sr. No	Statements	EU %	VU %	SU %	U %	EU %	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	Reflect within a group about your own teaching	43.2	15.9	8.3	16.7	15.9	3.54	1.55
2.	Reflecting on every task in order to improve teaching	34.1	15.9	15.9	15.2	18.9	3.31	1.53
3.	Reflecting on special tasks only to improve teaching	60.6	18.2	12.1	6.1	3.0	4.27	1.08
4.	Reflect upon own teaching for betterment	37.1	48.5	6.8	5.3	2.3	4.13	.920
5.	Reflect upon the teaching of other teachers/colleagues or friends	56.1	22.7	9.8	6.8	4.5	4.19	1.15
6.	Reflecting alone on your teaching	55.3	28.8	12.1	2.3	1.5	4.34	.890
7.	Reflecting with others	32.6	18.2	6.8	12.9	29.5	3.11	1.67

EU= Extremely useful VU= Very useful SU=Slightly useful U= useless EU= Extremely useless

In Table 3 frequency of teachers' reflective activities were analyzed. College teachers asserted that they reflect at the end and midst of their lessons every time with the highest mean score of 4.29 and 4.23 respectively. The teachers reflected formally and informally almost every time with a mean score of 4.14. Additionally, college teachers with the means score of 4.12 reflected on their past and current teaching experiences to build a lesson strategy for implementation almost every time. The mean score of 2.93 indicated that teachers' never remained successful to execute the teaching plans made during reflecting on their teaching. Results showed facilitated reflect teaching that teachers never to on their their were principals/administrators/heads (Mean score = 2.05).

Table 3. Frequency of Teachers' Reflective Activities

Sr. No	Statements	ET %	AET	ST %	AN %	N %	Mean	Std. Dev
1.	How frequently you try to reflect during or midst of your lesson	54.5	28.0	9.1	3.0	5.3	4.23	1.09
2.	How frequently do you reflect in a formal or informal way?	52.3	20.5	18.2	6.8	2.3	4.14	1.08
3.	How frequently you try to reflect at the end of the lesson	62.9	18.9	9.1	2.3	6.8	4.29	1.16
4.	How frequently do you reflect on past and current teaching experiences in order to build a lesson strategy for implementation.	54.5	22.7	10.6	4.5	7.6	4.12	1.23
5.	How frequently you remain successful to implement the teaching plans made during reflection. How many times does your college	23.5	14.4	8.3	39.4	14.4	2.93	1.44
6.	administrator facilitate you to reflect?	6.8	11.4	12.9	18.2	50.8	2.05	1.31

ET= Every time AET= Almost every time ST = Sometimes AN= Almost never N= Never

4.2. Thematic analysis and Interpretation

The researcher also conducted a qualitative analysis to investigate how the college teachers promoted reflective practice to improve institutional and professional growth. For this purpose, the researcher transcribed the interviews conducted from the college teachers and extracted the themes from the interview questions. Detail discussion of the emerged themes was given below:

Most of the college teachers who were participated in the interview held beliefs that reflective practice was extremely helpful for their professional growth. Teachers further added that reflective practice was a source for them to identify their weaknesses and further professional development. College teachers agreed that reflection helped to increase their knowledge that led them towards professional development. Moreover, the theme supported that student's performance and teachers' feedback on their teaching could only be increased by practicing

reflection. Teachers agreed that reflective practice provided chances to prepare lectures and reflect on their preparation.

The reflective practice helped the teachers to focus on the common goals of improving their institutions. Additionally, theme extracted from the interview supported that reflection foster the learning environment that had a direct effect on the performance of their colleges. Teachers promoted their teaching by reflecting during as well as at the end of the lecture. They further exemplified cognitive and peer coaching for promoting reflective practice at colleges. Furthermore, college teachers considered reflective time as the best reflective strategy. Theme extracted from the interview supported that peer observation was also a useful strategy to make the reflection more effective. Additionally, collaborative learning, reflective questions, reflective journals, and video reflection were the other reflective strategies that helped college teachers to increase professional growth.



Fig 1. Word cloud illustrating 'attitude' towards reflective practice and professional development of the college teachers

5. Discussion

The focus of this mixed-method research was to assess college teachers' attitudes towards reflective practice and how teachers promote the reflective practice to improve institutional and professional growth at the colleges of Dera Ghazi Khan District. The study revealed many important findings and one of them from the quantitative part showed that college teachers recognized reflective practice very useful for their teaching practices. The results further disclosed that reflective practice was extremely helpful to produce novel ideas for their teaching as stated in previous studies(Jarvis, 1992;Osterman, 1990&Pandey, 2012). The study also unveiled that

reflective practice found beneficial to understand the weaknesses and strengths of the teachers as mentioned in several studies (Davies, 2012; Gibson & Purdy, 2012; Seitova, 2019). The results also indicated that reflective practice found useful in evaluating the teaching of the teachers and this claim was also supported by (Brookfield, 1995; Finlay, 2008) research studies. Additionally, findings revealed that reflecting alone was extremely helpful to foster college teachers' performances. The results also indicated that college teachers reflected on the special assignments/tasks to improve their teaching. Another important finding revealed that teachers reflected in the midst (reflection in action) and at the end(reflection on action) of their lessons every time as supported by Schon (1983, 1987). The results showed that college teachers were never facilitated by their principals/administrators/heads in the process of reflection. Moreover, the qualitative findings also supported the quantitative findings by indicated that reflective practice was extremely useful to recognize teachers' strengths and weaknesses for professional development. Additionally, results found that reflective practice helped teachers to focus on the common goal of improving colleges. As far as the reflective strategies were concerned, college teachers considered reflective time a best reflective strategy as teaches needed time to reflect (McIntosh, 2017).

6. Conclusion

It was concluded from this mix-method research that teachers working at the colleges of Dera Ghazi Khan District considered reflective practice very useful for their teaching performance and professional growth. Moreover, the study also concluded that reflection was essential for teachers to identify their weaknesses and strength for further professional growth. Teachers generally, preferred to reflect during and at the end of their lectures to improve their teaching. Based on the results, teachers concluded that they needed time to reflect on their teaching performance. Thus, to achieve this purpose they chose a reflective time strategy to improve teaching performance as well as professional growth. However, college teachers showed concerns that their principals/heads did not facilitate reflection among teachers and if they did so, the process of reflective practice could be promoted in a better way.

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