

Contemplative Practices of Higher Education Faculty of Pakistan: Applications and Propositions

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Abstract

This research aimed to explore the use of Contemplative Practices (CPs) as a growing teaching pedagogy to cope with the challenges faced by the Higher Education. More specifically, to explore what CPs do the higher education faculty members of Pakistan use in their teaching intentionally or unintentionally. This quantitative survey research presented the findings from a survey outlining six major categories of CPs followed by their sub-practices. Data were collected through Survey Monkey from 502 faculty members of the Master Trainers Faculty Professional Development Program (MT-FPDP). For the analysis of data descriptive statistics (percentage analysis) was used. The results of this study showed that faculty members of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) did not incorporate stillness, creative, movement, and ritual practices in their teaching. Though, it was found that they use generative and relational practices in their class. They feel more confident and at ease to use practices of dialogues, discussions, perspective sharing, and storytelling. Based on the results of the study researchers recommend that to enable faculty members to use CPs in their class HEC, HEIs, and professional development organizations in Pakistan should plan conferences, training workshops, and seminars with the collaboration of HEIs.

Keywords: *Contemplative Pedagogy & Practices, Higher Education, Holistic Development, Inner Wellbeing*

1. Introduction

Quality teaching has become an issue of importance as the landscape of higher education has been facing continuous changes; greater international competition, increasing social and geographical diversity of the students, problem-based learning, community-based learning, introduction of information technology. The growing knowledge economy and information exchange have driven the HEIs to focus more on transferring the information and somehow

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neglecting the inner development of students. As the supplier of information current higher education system failing in the inner and spiritual development of students, which matters in today's world where educational institutions highly emphasize external success i.e., wealth and social status (Miller, 2019). According to Mushtaq and Kiyani (2013), the poor intentions towards the spiritual and holistic development in Pakistan cause intolerance, extreme and non-resilient behaviors, and poor self-awareness among youth—which momentarily results in unrest and violence in educational institutes and in the society. Involvement of students in the murder of teachers and their fellows because of their indifferent views and fights between student groups on religious and ethnic grounds reported by electronic and print media (Ahmad & Jafri, 2020; Ahmed, 2019; Sahoutara, 2019). Students, especially those in HEIs display enormous intolerant and violent behaviors against their peers and teachers and create unrest in the society.

In this rapidly developing world, the 21st century demands certain transformational changes in the role of higher education. In response to these demands the government of Pakistan identified character building and holistic development of students in the draft of National Education Policy (NEP). The emphasis proposed on physical, social, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and cognitive development under the main objectives of this policy (NEP, 2017). The role of HEIs was not limited merely to uplift the economic conditions of a country rather, it demands to foster the “deep learning” among students by providing them opportunities to be creative, connected, collaborative, and life-long problem solvers.

Merely proposing and documenting such holistic development areas without focusing on the corresponding transformation in teaching learning processes is not possible to achieve. Khaled (2014) accentuated that the teachers question their traditional pedagogies with advent of every policy initiative, and they are eager to learn more about new pedagogies. The corresponding pedagogies demands to provide teachers’ professional development opportunities that help them in enabling students to be critical thinkers, creative-minded, analytical person, tolerant, balanced, resilient, and empathetic individuals. Hence, teacher educators, policymakers, and reformists may think about the alternative framework of pedagogies for teachers to educate students more effectively according to the changing needs of the contemporary world. In this context, to develop a peaceful, tolerant, compassionate, and resilient society, teachers must foster social, moral, and spiritual qualities within their students.

Re-emergence of Contemplative Pedagogy in education facilitate teachers to cultivate such qualities in students. Activities and techniques such

as journaling, dialogues, beholding, meditation, visualization, and discussions come under the umbrella term of Contemplative Practices (Comstock, 2015). By incorporating “first person” approach in class, Contemplative Pedagogy enable students to grow in their content understanding, develop a sense of calmness, compassion, and altruistic behaviors as well as enhanced critical thinking, it also reduces negative emotions and foster empathy among them (Bagshaw, 2014; Kemeny et al., 2012; Sable, 2014; Sanders, 2013; Shapiro et al., 2011; Zajonc, 2013). Its biggest contribution in education is to help students and teachers become more aware and connected to them, others, and the world through self-awareness and engagement (Barbezat & Bush, 2014).

Religion views contemplation as a source of connection with God and inner self, which aid humans in overcoming negative emotions or destructive mental traits that damage them as human beings. In a country like Pakistan, which has made multiple headlines for its religious paradox, volatility, and resilience CPs in HEIs can serve to be a favorable response. In Islam contemplation is known as “*tafakkur*” (تفكر) and “*tadabbur*” (تدبر) and meditation as “*Muraqabah*” (مراقبه) (Munsoor & Sa’ari, 2017). The Holly Quran and Hadith have emphasized and encouraged self-reflection, inquiry, and contemplation. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) loved to spend time in silence and contemplation, throughout his life; he often sought silence and contemplation prior to make important decisions. Ibrahim Canon stated that Muhammad (PBUH) said “My lord has commanded my silence to be contemplation” (Hadis Ansiklopedisi, xvi 252/5838, as cited in Pasa, 2021).

In the field of education, use of CPs are not discipline bound although, they can be adapted according to the requirements of different disciplines. Barbezat and Bush (2014) stated that the use of CPs covers the disciplines from Sciences to Humanities, Professional to Art’s subjects, Languages to Psychology, and Medical to Religious studies. Being equally useful and effective in all disciplines enhance the value of CPs in education all over the world. However, it is still under researched in the context of Pakistan. The research conducted in the field of CPs was experimental which measures the effects of the CPs on students’ academic achievements, attitudes and on mental health. There is limited research which explores the use of CPs through a survey. The researchers designed this study to fill this gap in the field of CPs.

1.1 Objective of the Study

Keeping in view the use and importance of CPs in higher education, this study was designed to explore the use of CPs by the higher education faculty members of Pakistan.

1.2 Research Question

To achieve the objective of the study the following research question guided the research.

1. What contemplative teaching practices do higher education faculty members use in their classrooms?

1.3 Significance of the Study

In every community violence, conflicts, suffering, and unrest pose a challenge that calls for social change. In this situation, the idea is to bring teachers and students to a stage of self-awareness and mindfulness where silence can work as a treatment. There have been a growing number of studies that support the integration of CPs into education, but literature indicate that more research needs to be conducted to explore CPs in education as well as in the personal lives of educators in different contexts. Even though, contemplative pedagogies have gained popularity there is not yet literature that provides specific guidelines for implementing them in specific disciplines or institutional contexts (Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Franzese & Felten, 2017; Kinane, 2019; Wamsler, 2018; Wamsler, 2019a, 2019b). This research study may play a small part in fulfilling the literature gap by documenting the use of CPs in the higher education of Pakistan. Moreover, this study may serve as a guide for other researchers in the field of contemplative education because in the Pakistani context this is the first study that deals with CPs and their use in higher education. This study may aid in the transformation of education and foster the flourishing of the human spirit through the holistic development of individuals/students.

2. Literature Review

Various philosophical and religious institutions from Buddhism, Christianity to Islam have contributed to the development of CPs in education from ancient times and continue to do so in providing various CPs to educators (Komjathy, 2017; Morgan, 2015). Throughout history there have been various forms of contemplation such as in *Bhavana* [Buddhism], *Yoga* [Hinduism], *Saint Theresa of Avila* [Christianity], *Kabbalah* [Jews], and in *Tafakkur*, *Tadabbur*, and *Muraqaba* [Islam]. Meditation, breathing exercises, journaling, freewriting, movement, beholding, visualization, contemplative reading, deep listening, yoga, retreats, centering, and visiting spiritual sites etc. all comes under the category of CPs including not just traditions-based techniques but also include specific discipline-based practices, such as art, dance, music, and theater, as well as secular, spiritualist, and therapeutic approaches (Impedovo & Khatoun, 2016; Komjathy, 2017). Since CPs comprise a set of diverse practices the experts in the field of research and education feel the need to classify these practices into major

categories and subcategories according to their nature and use. In response to this, The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (CMind, 2015) categorized these practices into following categories and sub-categories.

Table 1

Categories of Contemplative Practices

S#	Categories	Sub-Categories
1.	Stillness	Silence, meditation, quieting the mind, deep breathing
2.	Generative	Loving kindness meditation, beholding, visualization
3.	Creative	Music and singing, arts, journaling, improvisation
4.	Relational	Deep listening, storytelling, dialogue, council circles
5.	Movement	Walking meditation, yoga, dance, labyrinth walking
6.	Ritual/Cyclical	Retreats, establishing a sacred/personal space, ceremonies and rituals based on spiritual or cultural traditions.

Wholeness of the human being is an ancient vision found in various cultures all over the world, such as Greek, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islamic culture, and etc. (Miller, 2005). The purpose of holistic education is not just to impart knowledge, but to engage both the teacher and student on a deeply meaningful level. The goal of holistic education is to educate the whole person by promoting cognitive and affective development simultaneously (Miller, 2019). A person's education should be geared towards developing mind, body, and soul along with analytic, reasoning and language skills. The timely reflection is vital to the ability to make good decisions, respond accurately and creatively to bad situations, and behave compassionately. According to Miller (2019), holistic education is about relationships between thinking, instinct and the connections between students and the community, natural world, and spirituality. In the theory of holistic education, Miller (2000) discussed the wholeness at five levels from individual level to community, society, planet, and cosmos level. The use of different CPs supports the students and teachers at different levels of wholeness such as stillness practices at individual and cosmos level and relational practices at community and society level (Zajonc, 2013). Multiple research studies reported the positive effects of CPs on students' academic achievement, inner wellbeing (individual level), character building, and on social interactions (society and planet level) (Phillips, 2012; Roche et al., 2014; Shapiro et al., 2011).

The time spent in higher education is particularly important and decisive in one's life, regardless of whether it is at a college, university, or professional institute. Higher education is about learning innovative ideas and building new skills and connections to achieve both personal and professional goals. Contemporary higher education system ignores the aspects of character building, fostering social relationships, self-awareness, and sensitizing students about the

importance of human equality (Tibbitts, 2020). In short, these HEIs are neglecting the inner life of the students. In his book *Excellence without a Soul* Harry Lewis (2007) illuminated that universities have forgotten their basic purpose of producing a good human being with empathetic behaviors and self-awareness. He further stated that “students are not soulless, but their university is” (p.18).

The HEIs ignore social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of learning in favor of academic learning, consequently students are ill-prepared to contribute positively to the society and be emotionally stable in the future (Chickering et al., 2006; Rendon, 2009). To cope up with the societal needs different approaches have been used by the higher education faculty members in their teaching to promote critical thinking, compassion, empathy, and to develop peaceful and just societies. However, these methods did not yield desired results, as previous researches have reported lack of patience, violence, religious extremism, sectarianism, and non-resilient behaviors among students (Ahmad & Jafri, 2020; Nadeem et al., 2021).

Though, researchers and educators place considerable value to CPs by noting that these “Metacognitive Practices” have multiple benefits for teachers and students. It includes increased concentration, reduced stress, improved interpersonal relations, improved awareness of themselves and others, decrease in addictive and destructive behavioral patterns, enhanced performance in sports and learning, and emergence of creativity and logical changes in the brain. Most importantly it develops a greater connection to the course content—in the teaching-learning process (Bagshaw, 2014; Comstock, 2015; Gunnlaugson et al., 2014; Impedovo & Khatoon, 2016; Kemeny et al., 2012; Komjathy, 2017; Lrwin & Miller, 2016; Sable, 2014; Sanders, 2013; Zajonc, 2013).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research was conducted under the positivistic paradigm and quantitative research approach was used to explore the use of CPs by the higher education faculty members of Pakistan. In this descriptive research, data were collected through an online survey questionnaire. After seeking the prior consent, an invitation email introducing the research, its objectives, and the role of the respondents along with the questionnaire was sent to all participants of MT-FPDP.

3.2 Population and Sample

Participants of thirty-five (35) batches of the MT-FPDP were the sample of the study. According to the contact information data provided by Learning Innovation Division (LID), the total number of participants was one thousand and

nine (1009) faculty members. The whole population was the sample of the study as all (1009) participants were approached through an email invitation using the Survey Monkey link of the questionnaire for data collection. Whole population sampling is most practical when the total population is of manageable sizes, such as a well-defined subgroup of a larger population. Participants who positively responded to the survey were five hundred and two (502). The participants who took the survey were 49% of the whole population, which was considered appropriate for the generalization of results (Creswell, 2003).

3.3 Instrumentation

In the process of developing a questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale (*Always Used=5 to Never Used=1*), researchers consulted existing questionnaires, inventories, observational checklists, and interview protocols in the field of contemplative pedagogy (Buchheld et al., 2001; Lau et al., 2006; Walach et al., 2006). By using survey questionnaire, the phenomenon of CPs was explored and identified common responses concerning the use of various CPs and generalized these results to a wide audience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The validity and reliability analysis of the survey was conducted, and the survey was found to be valid and reliable. Six experts (three from the USA and three from Pakistan) validated the survey. The reliability score for the survey questionnaire (N=50) was 0.782, indicating good internal consistency of the survey questionnaire (Field, 2009; Taber, 2018).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Participants in the representative sample provided their consent, as it is imperative for researchers to proceed in their data collection/research (Roberts & Allen, 2015). The competent authority of the researchers' institute issued an institutional support letter to get contact information of the study participants from the Higher Education Commission (HEC). An introductory email providing information about the study was sent to potential study participants so they could decide whether to participate in the study or not (Clark & McCann, 2005).

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Respondents rated their usage of CPs on a five-point Likert scale, with *Never Used=1, Rarely Used=2, Sometimes Used=3, Often Used=4, and Always Used=5*. The descriptive statistics (Percentage analysis) were used to analyze responses in relation to six CPs. The results were presented in the form of charts.

4.1 Stillness Practices

The following chart displays the results regarding the use of stillness practices by the higher education faculty members of Pakistan.

Figure 1
Use of Stillness Practices

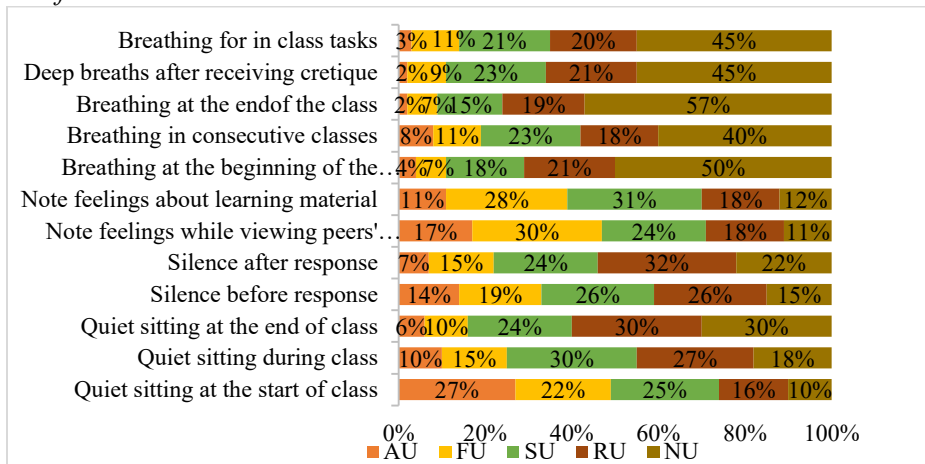


Figure 1 indicated that most of the higher education faculty members (61-77%) did not use breathing practices in their teaching whereas, the subcategories of quiet sitting and silently noticing have mixed responses from the faculty. They used these practices in their classes more often as compared to the breathing practices. The overall response about the use of these practices was negative from the higher education faculty members.

4.2 Generative Practices

The use of generative practices by the higher education faculty members in Pakistan presented in the chart below.

Figure 2
Use of Generative Practices

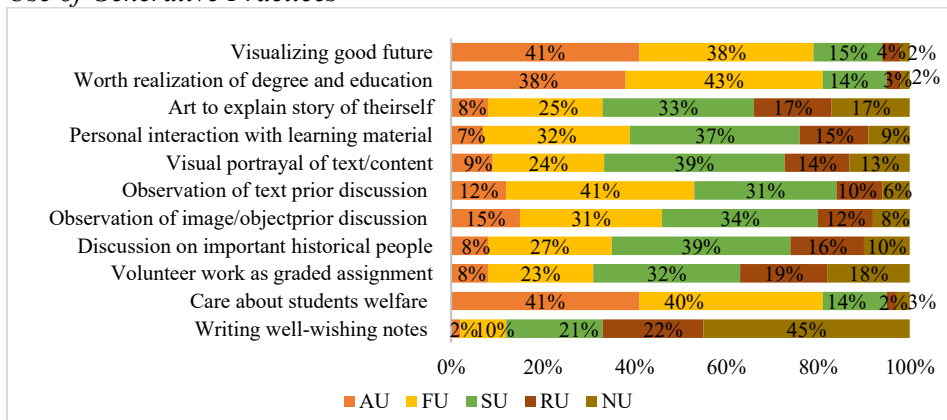


Figure 2 showed the use of generative practices by the higher education faculty members. Most of the faculty members i.e. (79-81%) care for their students, motivate them and make them realize the worth of their degree. The data showed that the faculty members also know the importance of careful and comprehensible responses to any question or topic and use the practices to train their students. The least reported practice by the faculty is writing well-wishing notes and only 12% of teachers considered it important and used it in their teaching. Overall, the chart indicated that the faculty members feel easy to incorporate practices related to the course content as compared to the practices of writing well-wishing notes and art practices.

4.3 Creative Practices

The following chart displayed the result of subcategories of creative practices used by the higher education faculty members in their teaching.

Figure 3

Use of Creative Practices

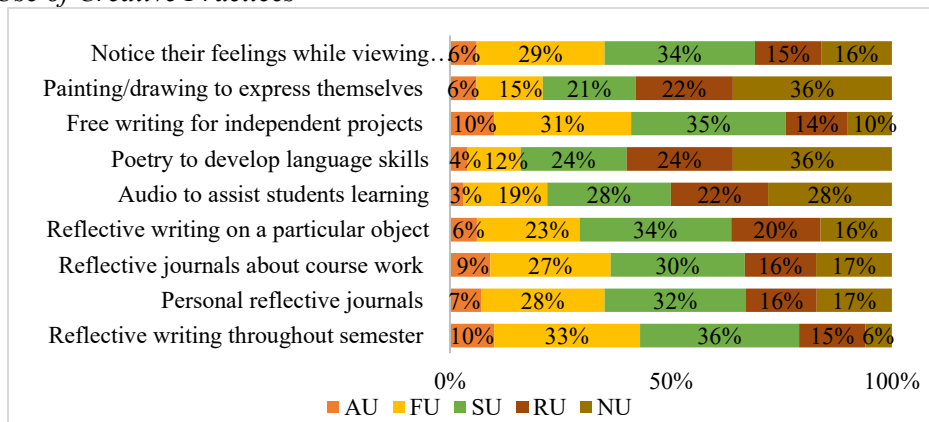


Figure 3 depicted that the sub-practices of audio sounds, reciting poetry, and drawing/painting are the least used practices by the higher education faculty and only (16-21%) of faculty members always or frequently used these practices. Practices related to reflective writing and reflective journals used by over 50% of the faculty either frequently or sometimes. Faculty members did not give importance to the creative practices and did not use these techniques to develop creativity among their students.

4.4 Relational Practices

The chart below presented the results of the survey about the use of relational practices by the faculty members of HEIs in Pakistan.

Figure 4
Use of Relational Practices

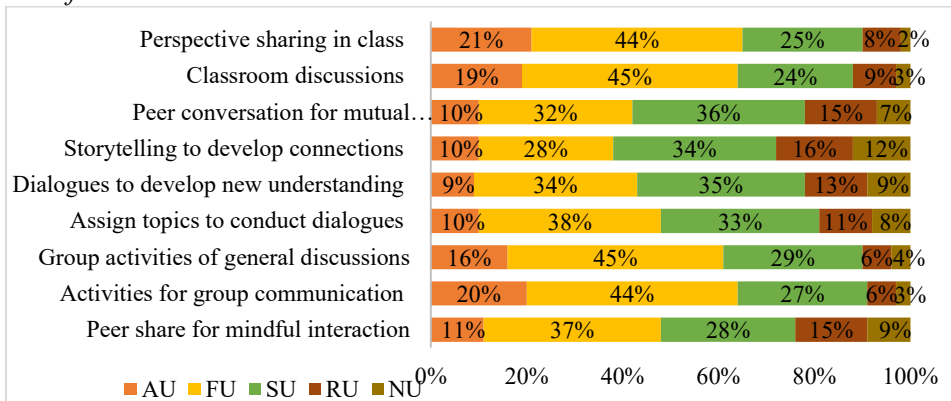


Figure 4 showed that almost all relational practices are used by (38-65%) of the higher education faculty members. Moreover, it also indicated that the teachers arrange group discussions, dialogues, group activities, and create opportunities for sharing perspectives in their class. It showed the positive intentions of higher education faculty towards the use of relational practices in their teaching.

4.5 Movement Practices

The chart given below exhibited the results about the use of CPs that comes under the category of movement practices.

Figure 5
Use of Movement Practices

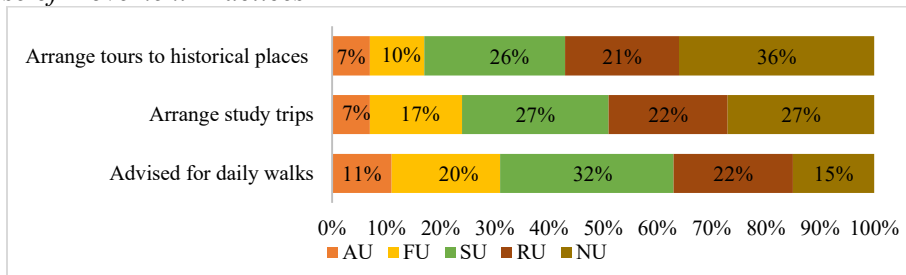


Figure 5 with the results of movement practices depicted that the higher percentage of the faculty members, almost over (50%), never or rarely arrange study tours and retreats for their classes. Even a higher number (37%) of them never or rarely advised their students for daily walks. The negative response towards these practices indicated the lack of interest from faculty members towards the use of extracurricular and physical activities in their teaching.

4.6 Ritual Practices

The chart given below contains the information about the use of ritual practices by the higher education faculty members in their teaching process.

Figure 6

Use of Ritual Practices

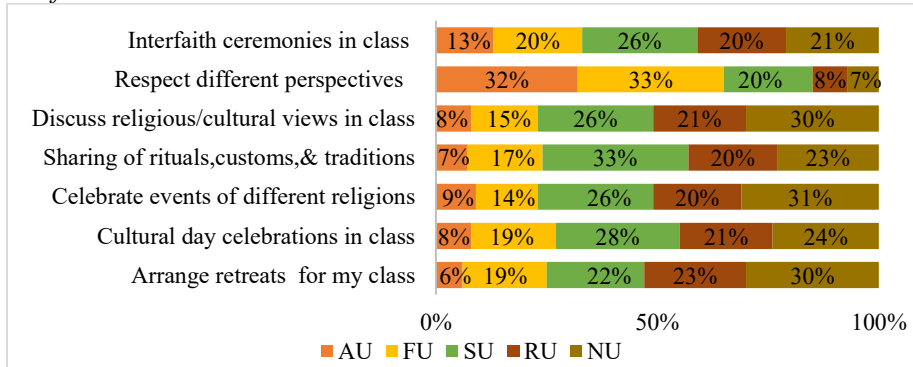


Figure 6 depicted that a higher percentage of faculty avoids incorporating ritual practices in their classes except for the practice of showing respect towards diverse cultural and religious perspectives. Over (40%) of the faculty never or rarely arranged cultural or religious celebrations in class, they also avoided arranging interfaith ceremonies, discussions, and retreats. Considering culture and religion a sensitive issue in Pakistan, the faculty avoided using these practices in their classes. Students did not get the opportunity to share and celebrate cultural and religious events in the class.

5. Discussion

This research study explored the use of CPs by the higher education faculty members in Pakistan. An online survey was conducted to find out the use of CPs under the six main categories of stillness, creative, generative, relational, movement, and ritual practices. Each category consists of subsets of different practices. Stillness the first category of CPs comprised of sub-categories of breathing, quiet sitting, and meditation practices. The results about the use of stillness practices showed that most of the higher education faculty members (61%-77%) did not use breathing practices in their class either at the start, during, or at the end of the class. Similar kind of results were found regarding the use of stillness practices in research studies conducted by Batada et al. (2017), Cigrand (2020), and Min (2015) in which higher number of the participants did not use these practices in their classes. However, these results were not akin to the previously conducted study by Britt et al. (2018) in which breathing practices were used by teachers in their class. In the stillness category,

the practice of quiet sitting was used by almost half (49%) of the higher education faculty members at the start of the class whereas, only (25%) used between and (16%) at the end of the class. Research conducted by Batada et al. (2017) supported these findings with over (50%) of participants mentioning the use of quiet sitting practices in the class.

Where stillness practices are “an undoing” by calming and pacifying our thoughts, generative practices are “a doing” by effectively producing positive feelings, thoughts, and actions. The generative practices—dialogues, discussions, and sharing perspectives were mostly practiced by the higher education faculty members in their class in Pakistan as (38%-65%) of the faculty members mentioned their use in the teaching-learning process. The results indicated that the faculty members were familiar with these practices or found these practices easy to incorporate in the class. Batada et al. (2017) also reported comparable results in which (71%) participants used generative practices—debates, open dialogue, and free discussions one or more times a week in their classes. However, the research findings of Cigrand (2020) had reported contrasting results as a smaller number of faculty members stated the use of generative practices in the teaching learning process.

The creative category of CPs in the study consisted of sub-practices of music (audio sounds), art, free writing, and journaling. The findings of the study affirmed that sub-practices of audio tunes and sounds, drawing and painting, and reciting poetry were not part of the teaching-learning process of higher education faculty members. However, some of the participants mentioned the use of reflective and free writing practices as part of their teaching pedagogy (Batada et al., 2017; Min, 2015; Vartuli, 1999).

Initiating discussions, dialogues, storytelling, and assigning group works are some relational CPs that can be used in higher education (Brady, 2009; Rendon & Kanagala, 2017). The study reported that the majority of the higher education faculty members used almost all sub-practices under the relational category in the teaching-learning process—scoring always, frequently, and sometimes responses. The results of the study indicated that the faculty members considered all sub-practices of the relational category. More specifically, discussions, dialogues, and group work as important and useful in developing healthy relationships between students inside and outside the classroom and in communities and societies (Batada et al., 2017). The results of the study conducted by Min (2015) confirmed these results and showed that higher education faculty members were mostly inclined to use relational practices in their teaching to promote community, trust, and bonding among students.

Movement practices such as field trips, historical tours, and walks keep students physically and mentally fit by regenerating the energy sources a body needs (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). For fruitful meditation, a connection between mind and body is very important, and movement practices deal with both mind and body at the same time. The results regarding the use of movement practices indicated that most of the faculty members did not use movement practices in their class. They did not incorporate field trips, tours, and study walk into their teaching due to lack of time and security issues in Pakistan. The results have been supported by the studies earlier conducted by Batada et al. (2017), Min (2015), and Vartuli (1999) exploring the phenomenon of CPs in higher education.

The results regarding the use of ritual practices in the teaching-learning process also showed negative intend of higher education faculty members towards their use as over (40%) of the faculty members mentioned rarely or never used ritual practices in their class. Likewise, Hee Jung Min (2015) concluded that faculty members involved in the teaching of adults use CPs which had direct effect on the academic achievement of the students instead of practices which develops compassion and social-emotional behaviors. Results indicated that since the ritual practices contain sub-practices related to culture, religion, and communities the faculty members avoid incorporating these due to the sensitivity of these issues in Pakistan.

Overall, the results of the study demonstrate that CPs (stillness, generative, creative, movement, ritual) were not common among the higher education faculty members. The majority of the higher education faculty members did not incorporate these practices intentionally or unintentionally in their teaching.

6. Conclusion

International education encompasses CPs, whether it is to support teachers as they cope with stress, or to foster peace and cooperation between people, communities, and societies. However, the results of this research reported that the use of CPs among the higher education faculty members is not common in Pakistan. In the light of the results, it was concluded that to incorporate new teaching techniques (Contemplative Practices) higher education faculty members need professional training, relevant content, and facilities to feel confident and well equipped for the incorporation of CPs in their classes. Moreover, it can be concluded that the higher education faculty members in Pakistan used the CPs which appears directly connected with the learning material—discussions, dialogues, group activities, and peer share. However, did not incorporate breathing exercise, interfaith ceremonies, study tour/trips, art/drawing, and sound

since these practices did not have immediate effect on academic learning and required relevant training, time, and preparation. Based on the negative intentions towards the use of contemplative practices it can be concluded that there is a need to bring the change in the mindset/attitude of all the stakeholders in higher education of Pakistan more specifically, the faculty members of HEIs to adapt/adopt new and progressive techniques of teaching (Contemplative Practices) according to the continuously changing needs of the society and the world.

7. Recommendations

In the light of the results of this study, following recommendations are listed below;

1. The HEIs in Pakistan may be encouraged to formalize the recognition of CPs. For this formal recognition, higher education faculty members need institutional support, an access to relevant content, and monetary, and professional incentives for attending international and national conferences and training.
2. Given the strong positive association between CPs and students' holistic development—physical, mental, and spiritual, the higher education faculty should be encouraged to incorporate these practices into their teaching.
3. HEC, universities, and private professional development institutes may organize special training, seminars, and conferences to highlight the importance of CPs in the higher education.
4. Additionally, the government of Pakistan needs to allocate appropriate budget to the HEC so, they can issue fundings to universities to conduct research and trainings to introduce new pedagogies (Contemplative Practices).
5. Efforts should be made to include certification and adequate weighting in annual ratings and elevations of the university faculty to encourage teachers to participate in formal and informal professional development activities.

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Citation of this Article:

Zahoor, I., & Khan, S. N. (2022). Contemplative Practices of Higher Education Faculty of Pakistan: Applications and Propositions. *International Journal of Innovation in Teaching and Learning (IJITL)*, 8(2), 20-38.