

Journal of Peace, Development and Communication

10



Volume 06, Issue 02, June 2022
 pISSN: 2663-7898, eISSN: 2663-7901
 Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V06-I02-07>
 Homepage: <https://pdfpk.net/pdf/>
 Email: se.jpdc@pdfpk.net

Article:	Teachers' views and practices of reflective portfolio work in professional development of English language teachers
Author(s):	Sadia Ishfaq Lecturer, Department of Linguistics and Communications (DLC), University of Management and Technology (UMT), Lahore
	Sadaf Iftikhar Lecturer, Department of Linguistics and Communications (DLC), University of Management and Technology (UMT) UMT, Lahore
	Amina Shah Lecturer, Department of Linguistics and Communications (DLC), University of Management and Technology (UMT) UMT, Lahore
Published:	31 th May 2022
Publisher Information:	Journal of Peace, Development and Communication (JPDC)
To Cite this Article:	Ishfaq, Sadia., Iftikhar, Sadaf. & Shah, Amina. (2022). "Teachers' views and practices of reflective portfolio work in professional development of English language teachers" <i>Journal of Peace, Development and Communication</i> , vol. 06, no. 02, 2022, pp. 99–108, https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V06-I02-07
Author(s) Note:	Sadia Ishfaq is serving as Lecturer at Department of Linguistics and Communications (DLC), University of Management and Technology (UMT), Lahore Email: sadia.ishfaq@umt.edu.pk
	Sadaf Iftikhar is serving as Lecturer at Department of Linguistics and Communications (DLC), University of Management and Technology (UMT) UMT, Lahore
	Amina Shah is serving as Lecturer at Department of Linguistics and Communications (DLC), University of Management and Technology (UMT) UMT, Lahore , Pakistan.

ABSTRACT

The study explores teachers' views and practices of reflective journal keeping to attain professional growth. The study uses qualitative approach; the research instruments used are semi-structured interview guide and reflective journals that are provided to teachers for a period of one month. The result of the study revealed that although there is teachers' devotion towards achieving professional advancement and students' success but the lagging behind areas are teachers' awareness about state-of-the-art teaching. Also, there is paucity of financial resources at public sector schools that serves as an obstacle towards implementation of novel teaching methodologies in classrooms. The teachers at public sector schools need professional development coaching to implement modern teaching and unfollow the practice of traditional teaching. The practice of reflective journal keeping educated the educationalists about students' needs and the problematic areas that needed to be looked at. Reflective journal keeping aided the teachers to achieve improved instruction dexterity and served as a break from routinized teaching to look back at the classroom event and implement new methodologies.

Keywords: Professional development, reflective teaching, reflective journals, teachers' awareness, pedagogical skills.

INTRODUCTION

Reflective practice is a primeval concept. It has its origin in the Greek philosophy. The notion of 'critical thinking' was originated by the Greek philosopher Socrates, c.470-399. The Greeks practiced the idea of reflection and critical thinking in order to search for the truth. In the eighteenth century, there was a revolt against fallacy and superstition. The notions of critical thinking and reflection gained popularity in the enlightenment era.

Reflective teaching plays a fundamental role in the professional development of the teachers. The department of education (1999) stated that:

At the heart of becoming a teacher is, above all else, being a learner- a lifelong learner. To learn, one has to ask questions, of oneself and of others, and to know that this process is valued and shared across the school. Reflecting on teaching provides a focus for analyzing and developing learning and teaching (as cited in Pollard, 2006, p. 4).

Reflective teaching is imperative in enhancing professional development practices among teachers as it nurtures staff development and critical thinking abilities and leads to enhanced learner outcomes. Reflective teaching is innovative approach in pedagogy in which teachers ponder over their teaching experiences, carry out critical self-evaluation and receive other's critique open-mindedly. It is valuable to enhance professional progress and develop pedagogical skills. Reflective teaching makes a teacher capable of recollecting a past teaching event. It is noted vital foundation for professional progress is simply the teachers' private reflection on day-to-day classroom proceedings.

Reflective teaching is an innovative approach in teaching as it fosters ability to contemplate over one's teaching practices, to carry out modification in attitudes of teachers and spreads awareness about innovative pedagogical skills. The modes of reflective teaching are reflective journals, peer feedback, self-assessment but it can be time- demanding for teachers. Furthermore, reflective teaching is not so common pedagogical approach among teachers as it is time- consuming and also needs awareness about state-of-the-art pedagogical skills. The teachers in routine reactions to class-room setting occasionally miss the opportunity of reflective teaching. Sultana (2016) argued that the teachers more often than not tend to teach as they were taught. The educators tend to apply the traditional methodology of teaching based on their experiences. It has been referred to as 'apprenticeship of observation' (p. 251).

The teachers are in an ominous want of professional growth in Pakistani context. In Pakistan, reflective teaching is a novel approach as teachers face lack of awareness, dearth of pedagogical skills, and famine of financial resources at public sector schools. There are number of factors that serve as barriers towards achieving quality teaching practices of teachers. The Pakistani schools are equipped with less skilled practitioners to defend the role of educator as a nation creator. The public sector schools have 'inadequate financial support, lack of expert teachers, out-dated curriculum' that deter the effective teaching practices of teachers (Javed, et al., 2012, p.376). The public sector schools in Pakistan cater to the time-honored national curriculum. The time long teachers have been teaching with the same mind set persistently. The public sector schools teachers are bestowed with the teacher training B.Ed. degree. The B.Ed. degree is a prerequisite of teaching at public sector schools. The public sector school teachers do not pay much heed to the personal professional development as it is not mandatory for their job sanctuary.

There is lack of resources available to public sector schools in Pakistan. The classrooms are not equipped with audio and visual aids. The traditional practice of white board and marker is being followed. The teacher delivers the lectures that are mostly teacher- centered. The

teachers are not interested in professional development activities and complain about being deficient of resources and lack of language proficiency of the students. The teachers lack awareness about the effectiveness of reflective teaching and modes of reflective teaching practice that will lead to their professional development. The public sector school teachers do not take active part in professional development activities due to lack of passion and availability of teacher training programs. The government does not offer a shared vision in catering to professional development needs of teachers.

Reflective practice proves beneficial to improve the effectiveness of the teacher. Freidus in 1997 described a case study in which a teacher was unable to achieve quality teaching practices with the traditional methodology of teaching. The 'reflective portfolio work' enabled her to achieve teacher effectiveness. It is noted that portfolio keeping proves an important professional development tool in the teacher education programs both for in-service and pre-service teachers. It enables the teachers to reflect on their teacher experiences by noting down the event of the classroom. The professional development programs should not focus on teaching methodology only but the 'attitudes' of the teacher should be kept under consideration. The professional development program should also allow the teacher to attain enhanced managerial skills which enables them to reflect on teaching practices better than before.

Research Questions:

The research questions of study are

- 1) What is the current scenario of reflective teaching practices among English language teachers at Public sector schools?
- 2) What are the perceptions of English language teachers about reflective portfolio keeping?
- 3) What are the views of public sector English language teachers about professional development?

Methods:

Research Approach and Paradigm:

The researcher used qualitative approach to carry out study as it allows to produce 'in-depth accounts from individuals' via face-to face interaction with them, analyzing their behaviors and items such as diaries and manuscripts (Kuper, et al., 2008, p. 405). The qualitative research allows the researchers to carry out descriptive analysis of study. The inductive approach to data analysis is used that permits meaning to transpire from data rather than using deductive, hypothesis centered approach as used by quantitative researchers. The primary focus of inductive approach is to let research findings 'emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data without constraints of structured methodologies' (Thomas, 2003, p. 2).

Research Paradigm

The paradigm used for qualitative study is constructivism that allows the researchers to construct meaning through subsisted experiences with respondents. The mother of constructivism paradigm is 'interpretivist paradigm of philosophy'. The constructivism paradigm proves valuable in ascertaining the pedagogic practices of teachers and learning processes of students to accomplish desirable results. Confucius asserted that constructivism is based on notion that 'I hear and I forget, I see and I remember' reference. It allows the

researchers to escape from conventional modes of learning via 'chewing' whereas it allows constructing meaning of phenomenon through experiences (as cited in Adom, et al., 2016, p.1).

Sample

The sampling population comprises of ten English language teachers selected from two public sector schools of Lahore region in Pakistan. The researcher opted for convenient sampling of English language teachers selected from two public sector schools which provided education to Montessori, primary, elementary and secondary level students. Five English language teachers were selected from each public sector school.

Quality Criteria

The quality criteria of research were guaranteed by ensuring 'trustworthiness' of qualitative research as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Davis, 1995).

Credibility	Assembles reality through exhaustive account of experiences, prolonged engagement in field, triangulation.
Transferability	Makes study replicable via providing detailed account of study
Dependability	Makes study dependable via triangulation i-e collecting data through more than one source.
Peer -Debriefing, member checking	Evaluation of research methodologies by a peer, conforms findings from respondents

Research Tools:

The research tools are comprised of semi-structured interviews and reflective journals. The researcher conducted ten semi-structured interviews with English language teachers which lasted for half an hour to forty minutes. The reflective journals were provided to teachers for a period of one month. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed for analysis and themes were generated manually. The document analysis of reflective journals is carried out. Hefferman in 2013 asserted that document analysis is interpretation of data that is derived from "secondary sources like textbooks, magazines, and so forth that is relevant to a particular study" (as cited in Adom, et al., 2016. p. 4).

Discussion:

The findings of the study are as:

Teacher awareness:

The teachers at public sector schools are unaware of eminence of reflective teaching approach. There is lack of awareness among the teachers about usefulness of reflective teaching that leads to personal professional progress and enhanced learner outcomes.

Dearth of professional development practices:

The teachers at public sector schools are in a dire need of professional development. There is dearth of professional development practices at public sector schools as the environment is not learning supportive. The refresher courses of staff development are seldom held and are short-lived. Although the refresher courses spread awareness about teaching strategies but they do not focus on effective English language teaching strategies. The teachers were of view that there is lack of practice in the staff development courses held by Directorate of staff development.

Gaps in design and actuality:

The results of study showed that directorate of staff development (DSD) develops a plan to cater to professional development needs of English language teachers but there is deterred execution of them. The government takes an initiative to hire Assistant Education officers (AEOs) to cater to problems of teachers but problem is with the implementation of staff development policies.

Famine of financial resources

The Pakistani public sector schools suffer from a famine of financial resources such as lack of audio and visual aids in classrooms. The English language teachers at public sector schools are unable to practice ground-breaking pedagogical practices as there is lack of resources for equipping classrooms with better learning environment.

Unshared vision of teacher training program by government

The results of study reveal that Directorate of staff development does not possess a shared vision in catering to professional development needs of teachers. The refresher courses are held for primary level teachers only; the teachers teaching at elementary and secondary level do not get a chance to avail professional development courses.

Lack of skilled practitioners

The results showed that there is lack of skilled practitioners at public sector schools. The public sector school teachers do not possess formal qualification in the subjects that leads to lesser subject expertise. One of the respondents shared that she realized over the years that 'syllabus has changed but teachers' qualification is same'.

The results put forth that 40% of English language teachers could avail the opportunity to attend refresher courses of professional development. 40% of teachers did not avail professional development refresher courses. 20% of teachers replied that DSD organized refresher courses occasionally. 100% of teachers responded in no about inauguration of workshops related to professional development practices.

The findings of study revealed that 70% of teachers practiced reflective teaching through feedback from students, occasional contemplation over one's own teaching practices and peer feedback. On the contrary, 30% of teachers were unaware of significance of reflective practice and they mentioned about humble backgrounds of students, lack of resources and lack of audiovisual aids to contemplate on their teaching practices. 100% of teachers believed in importance of journal keeping as a professional development tool but teachers did not keep it as they felt it a time-consuming and challenging activity and there was ignorance about reflective journal keeping practice. Out of 100%, 60% of teachers took feedback from students, and 40% did not take feedback from students. 80% of teachers took peer feedback and 20% of teachers did not interact with colleagues for feedback on pedagogical practices.

Reflective journals:

The reflective journals were analyzed according to Taggart and Wilson's reflective teaching model. They described three levels of reflection such as technical level of reflection, contextual level of reflection and dialectical level of reflection (as cited in Derwent, 2015, p. 262).

Technical level:

In technical level of reflection, the practitioner is concerned with achieving lesson objectives in which he/she misses the opportunity to perceive underlying beliefs of students.

Contextual level of reflection:

In contextual level of reflection, the teacher seeks to discern essential beliefs of students. The teacher takes into consideration developmental processes of students and also takes into account social aspects of students.

Dialectical level of reflection

Collier in 1999, asserted that, dialectical level of reflection refers to broad-mindedness and tolerance of teacher. The teacher pays heed towards communal and ethical issues of students. The teacher plays the role of flexible practitioner and explores the political and moral concerns linked with teaching state of affairs (as cited in Derwent, 2015).

Table 2

Sample excerpts to code and organize data according to themes

Example excerpts	Analysis	Themes
I plan my lessons keeping in mind different teaching skills as well as syllabus to cover within time period.	Teacher focuses on achieving lesson objectives, focuses on various teaching methodologies to attain essential pedagogical knowledge	Technical level of Reflection pedagogical knowledge to become skilled practitioner
In this week, I completed effective short-stories in syllabus. So I planned a sketch of stories, of and will discuss it with my students.	Teacher pondered over pre-determined objectives of teaching related to narratives, focus on lesson planning.	meaningful and lesson implementation for students' grasp narratives.

<p>Class is very weak as far as of</p> <p>students are concerned. Students' awareness</p> <p>are from weak backgrounds, they do not learn from home.</p>	<p>Reflection on students' backgrounds, con-</p> <p>temptation on living conditions of students,</p> <p>focus on developmental process of students.</p>	<p>Contextual level reflection,</p> <p>of students' backgr-</p> <p>ounds.</p>
---	---	--

<p>The students are hardworking, learning</p> <p>but belong to very poor families, they have to manage home and</p>	<p>Reflection on hindrances faced by students</p> <p>that were a barrier towards their education-</p> <p>al performances.</p>	<p>Unfavorable environment for stu-</p> <p>dents.</p>
---	---	---

Example excerpts

Analysis

Themes

<p>The students do not practice at home. Their parents are careless about their studies. The students' moral development matters in progress of academic career.</p>	<p>Reflection on parents' attitudes in child's up-bringing & habit-formation.</p>	<p>Dialectical level of reflection,</p> <p>Consideration of issues related to teaching milieu.</p>
--	---	---

<p>Some students try to understand, capabi-</p> <p>Some students never understand due to lack of attention, there are some moderate students in class as well.</p>	<p>Reflection on students' level of understanding, and varied students capabilities.</p>	<p>Mixed ability students lities, awareness of students' complexities</p>
--	--	---

The teachers experienced technical, contextual and dialectical levels of reflection as proposed by Taggart and Wilson in 1988. The teachers underwent reflection-in-action that is action-present and practical form of reflection in classrooms. The teachers experienced

reflection-on-action as proposed by Schon for enhanced learning outcomes of students. It is narrated that reflection-in-action is action present i-e reflecting at the classroom event at present. The reflection-on-action refers to recollecting an event of past for the process of contemplation.

The process of reflection enabled the teachers to know of their short-comings and spread awareness in them about teaching practices and students' needs. The technical level of reflection enabled the teachers to achieve lesson objectives. The contextual level of reflection enabled the teachers to know about underlying beliefs and assumptions of students. It also allowed teachers to know about the societal aspects of students. The dialectical form of reflection made the teachers capable of knowing the moral and ethical issues of students.

Conclusion:

Although all the research participants believed in importance of reflective teaching in determining the needs of the students and also the significance of reflective journal keeping in professional development of teachers. But some of the teachers were unaware of the notion of reflective teaching. The practice of reflective journal keeping during the process of research allowed teachers to know about the needs and difficulties faced by them. It helped the teachers to remove the obstacles faced by the students that served as barriers towards enhanced learner outcomes. The practice of reflective journal keeping proved beneficial in professional development of teachers as it spreads awareness among teachers about their teaching methodologies and students' difficulties. As a matter of routine, the teachers did not follow the practice of keeping reflective journals for the process of contemplation after the event of class as there was lack of awareness and also lack of keen interest in reflective portfolio work.

The data gathered from research participants revealed that there is need of subject specialists who possess subject expertise. The lack of formal qualification in the subject resulted in affected teacher effectiveness. Although, the government takes an initiative to promote professional development of teachers and DSD plans to hire 'subject specialists' who can cater to the professional development needs of teachers. But there are gaps in design and actuality by the government as the problem lies with the implementation of new educational policies to impart professional training to teachers. The teachers at public sector schools need to 'develop personality', 'need professional development training' to enable them to contemplate over their pedagogical skills. Also, the Pakistani public sector schools face dearth of financial resources to practice innovative teaching practices.

Implications, Limitations and Recommendations:

The government should provide classrooms with better teaching opportunities. The use of audio and visual aids, projectors and internet facilities will enhance the productivity of teachers and improve students' outcomes. The DSD should conduct teacher training programs that spread awareness among the teachers about innovative teaching methodologies. DSD should conduct staff development programs that make the teachers aware of importance of self-evaluation that will lead to professional growth. The present research is limited to two public sector schools only and qualitative approach is used. Therefore, future research could be conducted which uses a mixed approach to study and explores more than two research sites. The research incorporates the views of female English language teachers only, therefore the views of both male and females can be considered in future research.

References

- Adom, D., Yeboah, A., & Ankrah, A. K. (2016). Constructivism Philosophical Paradigm: Implication for Research, Teaching and Learning. *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*. 4(10), 1-9. <http://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Constructivism>
- Dervent, F. (2015). The effect of reflective thinking on teaching practices of preservice physical Education teachers. *Issues in Educational Research*, 25(3), 260-275. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier25/dervent.pdf>
- Davis, K. A. (1995). Qualitative Theory and Methods in Applied Linguistics Research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(3), 427–453. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588070>
- Javed, M., Juan, W. X., & Nazli, S. (2012). The Role of the Directorate of Staff Development in Teacher Training in Pakistan in the Public Sectors Schools. *Language in India Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow*. 12, 376-393. <http://www.languageinindia.com>
- Kuper, A., Reeves, S., & Levinson, W. (2018). An Introduction to Reading and Appraising Qualitative Research. *British Medical Journal*. 337 (288), 404-407. doi:10.1136/bmj. a288
- Pollard, A. (2006). *Reflective Teaching* (2nd ed.). India: Viva Books Private Limited.
- Schon, D. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action*. London: Temple Smith.
- Sultana, R. (2016). Reflective Teaching in ELT – Exploring Teacher's Belief, Practices and Classroom Processes. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*. 4(2), 248-252. <http://www.rjelal.com>
- Thomas, D. (2003). A general inductive approach for qualitative data analysis. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228620846_A_General_Inductive_Approach_for_Qualitative_Data_Analysis.