

Farkhanda Tabassum,
Sufiana Khatoon Malik
Pakistan

Teachers' Attitude towards Reflective Practice in Public and Private Sector at Higher Secondary Level

Abstract

The study was conducted to explore teachers' attitudes towards reflective practice in public and private sector at the higher secondary level. Objectives of the study were to investigate teachers' attitude about the need for reflective practice in teaching and to explore teachers' attitudes towards the use of reflective practice for understanding students' learning difficulties. It was a descriptive study done in the Pakistani context. For this purpose, the researcher developed a questionnaire to find out teachers' attitudes towards reflective practice. Data was collected through the stratified random sampling technique from 300 teachers teaching higher secondary classes of private and public sector higher secondary schools/ colleges. The analysis of the data was made by applying mean, SD (standard deviation), t-test and ANOVA (analysis of variance) through SPSS (statistical package for social sciences). The findings showed that teachers of both the public and private sectors did not realize the need for reflective practice at the higher secondary level for understanding students' learning difficulties. It was recommended that teachers of the public and private sector may be aware of reflective practice through training programs. Strategies of reflective practice are supposed to be used by teachers in the teaching learning process. It is suggested that reflective practice may be mentioned in the syllabus of the training course. The findings of the presented study have implication for teachers and curriculum developers of professional development programs.

Keywords: *reflective practice, learning difficulties, teaching skill, higher secondary level, teachers' attitudes, teaching learning process*

Introduction

The secondary and higher secondary level (HSL) of education plays a vital role in students' life from the point of view of the future. It has two aspects, firstly to provide skills to the market and secondly to enable students to enhance their abilities for further study in various fields. In Pakistan, the higher secondary level is not performing these functions because of lack of quality instruction (National Education Policy 2009). In Pakistan higher secondary school comprises grades 11-12. These are also referred to as the first year and 2nd year.

Reflective practice means pondering about various aspects of life. It has great importance in our daily routine. It can be very effective in the field of education for bringing quality. John Dewey (1933) presented the idea of reflection in the educational field. He focused on generating knowledge through reflective practice. He stressed that it was essential to identify a problem, think about the results and analyze the whole process. He insisted that reflective practice was about considering the matter with the reference of its ground and reasons to reach the conclusion. It helps in the analysis of the problem.

According to Dewey (1933), when teachers face such conditions in class, they behave either normally or in a reflective way. The teachers who accept the problems or the issues customarily, do no question or ponder on them, but the teachers with reflective attitudes rather than behaving habitually base their teaching on rational principles. Today teachers still need this approach to understand students' learning difficulties and they can enhance their abilities to improve their professional skills. Reflective practice in this process provides self-awareness and teachers try to find solutions to their professional problems.

Schon (1983) described reflective practice as advanced thinking, analysis, experience, critical response and thinking about the situation. According to his theory, reflective practice creates a link between theory and practice. It happens in the presence of the problem that is related to our thinking about the problem in a new way and after the occurrence of the happening. Practitioners apply his thinking in their actions.

Schon (1986) claimed that reflective practice can help the individual in different ways. According to him reflective practice is the basic skill which can enhance the teaching skill for understanding the student's learning difficulties (SLD) and to develop professional skills. Reflective practice makes teachers aware of appropriate teaching methods and enables them to evaluate their own performance.

Reflective practice creates a connection between new and existing information. The importance of reflective practice for teachers is that it guides them and inspires

their thoughts. They can gain a clear vision and can make their thoughts clear by understanding the situation that they have observed (Higgs, 1988).

Research in the last two decades has indicated that reflective practice is essential for continuous professional development (CPD). Through reflective practice practitioners can refresh their knowledge and expertise. They can learn new methods for professional development. They try to enhance the standard of their professional skills. Reflective practice provides a chance for practitioners to bring quality to their profession. They can improve their proficiency in their professional fields. It helps to get rid of old traditional professional attitudes. Reflective practice helps to move forward and improve skills (Harris, 1998).

Reflective practice is not only an idea, but it is a prominent part of academic work, which can bring revolution to the educational field. Different techniques of reflective practice can enhance the quality of the teaching learning process. It can mobilize the whole system of education. Some scholars have claimed that reflective practice creates discipline in teaching, learning and administrative matters of the educational field. It has the ability to organize different aspects of instructive matters. It enables the teacher to become an efficient teacher. It has a link with experience and it is a professional strategy used to deal with problems which the teacher faces in class. When he reflects upon them, he can find solution. Thus, reflective practice makes the teacher a competent professional.

Reflective practice has become the need and essential professional skill for the teaching learning process (TLP). Instead of traditional teaching methods, teachers adopt new strategies of reflective practice and ponder over their own teaching methods. They think about the areas in which they can improve their skills for effective teaching. It helps them understand students' learning difficulties. They can identify the reasons for students' different approaches towards learning and their response in classroom. Teachers can reflect upon their teaching techniques for better results. They can judge students' behavior through reflective practice (Carlo, D.D., Hinkhouse, H., & Isbell, L. (2010).

Teachers reflect on their teaching techniques and approaches to improve their performance and get cognitive awareness of their reflective processes, which is actual professionalism (McAlpine, Weston Berhieueme& Fairbank, 2004).

Statement of problem

Reflective practice in teaching is required for effective teaching. Reflective practice enables teachers to improve their professional skills, bring quality to their

teaching and solve learning difficulties of students. Therefore, the presented study aims to explore teachers' attitudes towards reflective practice in the public and private sector at the higher secondary level (HSL).

Study Objectives

1. To investigate teachers' attitudes towards the need for reflective practice in teaching in the public and private sectors at the higher secondary level (HSL).
2. To measure teachers' attitudes towards the use of reflective practice for understanding students' learning difficulties.

Study Hypotheses

H. 1 There is no significant difference in the teachers of the public and private sectors concerning the realization of the need for reflective practice in teaching.

H. 2 There is no significant difference in the views of the teachers of the private and public sectors concerning the use of reflective practice for understanding students' learning difficulties.

Research Design

Descriptive research methodology was used in this study to explore teachers' attitudes towards reflective practice in the public and private sector at the higher secondary level.

Population and Sample

The teachers of the higher secondary level in the public and private sector of Murree (Punjab, Pakistan) were chosen as the population of the study. A stratified method of sampling was adopted. The teachers of 7 public and 3 private sector schools/colleges teaching only higher secondary classes were chosen as a sample.

Instrument

A questionnaire was developed based on a five- point Likert scale. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part concerned the demographic information of the respondents, whereas the second part consisted of 75 items that were developed in keeping with the objectives of the presented study.

Analysis and Results

Hypothesis – 1: There is no significant difference in the teachers of the public and private sectors concerning the realization of the need for reflective practice in teaching.

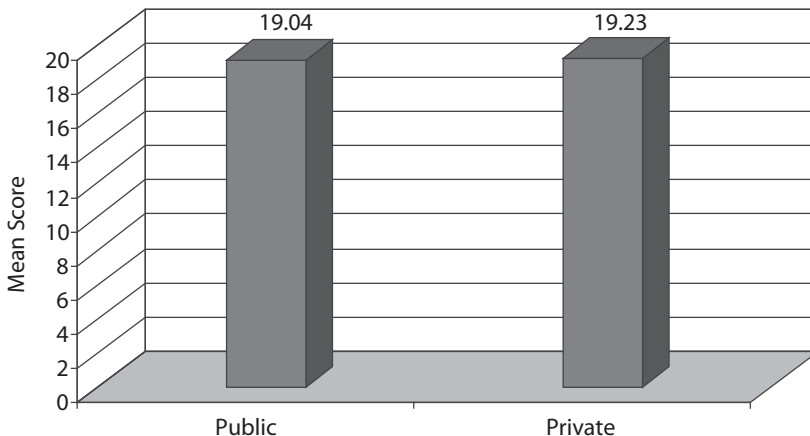
Table 1. Mean difference and t-value of the scores of public and private sector teachers concerning the need for reflective practice in teaching

Sector	N	df	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Public	167	166	19.04	2.065	-.718	.473
Private	133	132	19.23	2.688		

*Significant t-value at 0.05

Table1 shows the mean difference and t-value of the scores of reflective practice in teaching of the public and private sectors. The table shows that the teachers of the private sector have a higher mean score as compared to the teachers of the public sector. The mean of the private sector teachers is 19.23 and the mean of the public sector teachers is 19.04. The mean difference, i.e. 0.19, is not statistically significant as P is not less than 0.05. Graph 1 also shows the same score. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between the teachers of the public and private sectors about the realization of the need for reflective practice in teaching is confirmed.

Graph 1. Mean score of public and private sector teachers on score of need for reflective practice in teaching



Graph 1 indicates that 19.4% of the teachers of the public sector and 19.23% of the teachers of the private sector feel the need for reflective practice. There is no major difference in the views of the teachers of the private and public sectors about the need for reflective practice. They have equal opinions.

Hypothesis – 2: There is no significant difference between the views of the teachers of the private and public sectors concerning the use of reflective practice for understanding students' learning difficulties.

Table 2. Mean difference and t-value of the scores of public and private sector teachers concerning the use of reflective practice for students' learning difficulties

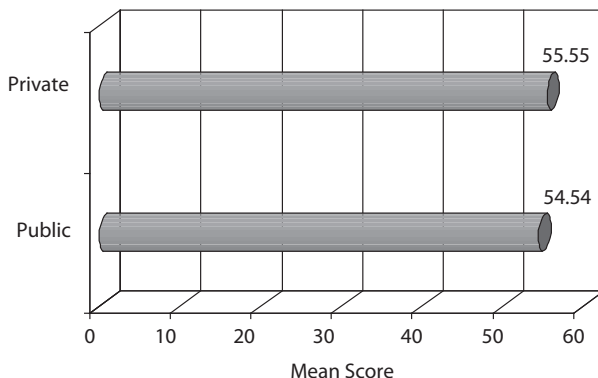
Sector	N	df	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Public	167	166	54.54	6.107	- 1.160	.247
Private	133	132	55.55	8.850		

*Significant t-value at 0.05

Table 2 indicates the mean difference and t-value of the scores concerning the use of reflective practice for the learning difficulties of the students of the public and private sector higher secondary schools and colleges. The mean of the public sector teachers is 54.54 and of the private sector teachers 55.55. The mean difference, i.e. 1.01, is not statistically significant as P is not less than 0.05. Graph 2 elaborates on the figures of Table 2.

Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference among the views of the teachers of the private and public sectors concerning the use of reflective practice for understanding students' learning difficulties is confirmed.

Graph 2. Mean score of public and private sectors concerning the use of reflective practice for students' learning difficulties



Graph 2 shows that 55.55% of the teachers of the private sector and 54.54% of the teachers of the public sector use reflective practice to understand students' learning difficulties. It shows that the teachers of the private sector attach more importance to reflective practice for understanding students' learning difficulties than the teachers of the public sector.

Findings of inferential analysis

Teachers' attitudes towards the need for reflective practice in teaching

It was found that the teachers of both the public and private sectors did not realize the need for reflective practice at the higher secondary level. There were 167 teachers from the public sector higher secondary schools with mean score of 19.04 and 133 teachers with mean score of 19.23 from the private sector higher secondary schools. The mean difference of 0.19 is not statistically significant because the p value is not less than the t value 0.05 (Table 1, Graph1).

Teachers' attitudes towards the use of reflective practice in understanding students' learning difficulties

The results of data analysis showed that the teachers of the public and private sectors did not use reflective practice to understand students' learning difficulties. The mean score of the public sector teachers was 54.54 and the mean score of the private sector teachers was 55.55. The p value was not less than the t value at 0.05 (Table 2, Graph 2).

Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of the presented study was to explore the attitudes of teachers towards the need for reflective practice in the public and private sectors at the higher secondary level. The following conclusions were made on the basis of the findings of the study.

1. It was concluded that the teachers of both the public and private sectors did not realize the need for reflective practice at the higher secondary level (Finding 1). There may be two reasons for this finding. Firstly, teachers in colleges are not provided with any pre-service training in teaching skills. Secondly, teachers in colleges and higher secondary schools generally teach with the use of traditional methods and they rely on covering the course content only through lectures. They are not required or advised by the administration to do any innovation in teaching. The teachers who cover the course content in time are considered most effective.

2. It was concluded that the teachers of the public and private sectors did not use reflective practice to understand students' learning difficulties (Finding 2). The reason may be that due to lack of awareness of reflective practice, they do not use it in the teaching learning process.

Reflective practice enables the teacher to think about what he/she is doing in class and to reconstruct and renovate his/her knowledge and skills of teaching. Dewey (1933) and Schon (1983) expressed their views about the effects of reflective practice on teaching in relation to students' learning. With the help of reflective practice the teacher can make decisions to improve the teaching learning process and can understand students' learning difficulties. Reflective practice is essential for the development of teaching skills and it is a milestone for mature professional development.

The first objective of the study was to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the need for reflective practice. It was found that the teachers in both the public and private sectors did not realize the need for reflective practice at the higher secondary level. The majority of the teachers were not aware of the term of reflective practice. Moon (2006) claims that reflective practice is the basic need of teachers and they should practice the reflective strategies. There may be two reasons for this finding. Firstly, college teachers are not provided with any pre-service training in teaching skills. Secondly, teachers in colleges and higher secondary schools generally teach with the use of traditional methods of teaching and they rely on covering the course content only through lectures. Generally, it is observed that they are not required or advised by the administration to introduce any innovation in teaching. Only those teachers who cover the course content in time and whose students get good marks are considered the most effective teachers.

The presented study is very close to the real situation of reflective practice. Dewey (1933) stressed that reflective practice dealt with the problems related to the teaching learning process. It was also the objective of the presented study to measure teachers' attitudes towards the use of reflective practice in understanding students' learning difficulties. The results showed that the teachers of both public and private sectors did not use reflective practice to comprehend students' learning difficulties. It means that they stress traditional teaching methods and they do not incorporate modern methods in their teaching skills. Dewey (1933) explained the differences between teachers' traditional teaching methods and reflective practices. The analysis of the data revealed that the teachers did not use reflective practice to deal with students' learning difficulties for diverse reasons. It is observed that teachers do not reflect to handle the problem on their own. At the higher secondary level we deal with teenagers who need teacher guidance for the solution of their learning

problems. Reflective practice helps teachers to deal with the learning difficulties of the students and facilitate them in the teaching learning process.

Girija (2001) claimed that reflective practice helped the teacher to improve himself and play an important role in students' educational, moral, and social growth. The results of the presented study showed that the teachers did not try to use reflective practice to understand students' learning difficulties. It may be due to their lack of knowledge of or training in reflective practice. Mainly reflective practice enables the teacher to understand his/her own skills to become an effective teacher. He/she can reflect upon his/her own teaching methods. Teachers become proficient in creative work to deal with classroom problems. He/she can understand the diversity of students' learning difficulties and social backgrounds (Farrell, 1998). Raelin (2002) expressed his views about reflective practice; it mainly provides an opportunity of research which leads to understanding the occurrence. The national teacher certification board (USA) (2010) stated that teachers can think systematically about their practices and learn from experience through reflective practice. There is a need to make teachers familiar with the concept and procedures of reflective practice for understanding students' learning difficulties.

Recommendations

Based upon statistical analysis and the findings and conclusions of the presented study, the following recommendations have been made.

1. The importance of reflective practice has been well established through educational research all over the world. However, in Pakistan the term reflective practice is new for the majority of the teachers in the public sector as well as in the private sector. The findings of the presented study show that the teachers do not realize the need for reflective practice in their teaching. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should be made aware of the use of reflective practice through professional development programs. Educational administration can organize workshops and seminars to enhance teachers' awareness of the importance of reflective practice.
2. It is recommended that teachers should be provided with guidance through training sessions concerning the use reflective practice in solving students' learning difficulties resulting from diverse backgrounds. They may have the opportunity to think before, during and after teaching about the learning difficulties of students and make decisions aiming at better results. It is

observed that few strict and inflexible rules are followed in our schools/colleges in student learning and teachers do not reflect on handling problems on their own. At the higher secondary level we deal with teenagers who need teacher guidance. So it is suggested that teachers should be provided with power for decision-making to deal with students' learning difficulties.

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