

Developing Reflective Practices of Elementary School Teachers: A Collaborative Action

Research Study

* Hadiya Naseer

** Yaar Muhammad (Corresponding Author)

** Sajid Masood

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the development of reflective practices of elementary school teachers through interactive workshops. This study used a collaborative action research design, and five-day interactive workshop sessions related to reflective practices conducted to introduce the participants to reflective practices. Most specifically, these workshops focused on building their cognition, affection, and behavior about reflective practices. The Purposive sampling technique was used to select 20 elementary school teachers with at least 1.5 years' experience in elementary school. After the workshop, participants spend two months of reflective teaching practices. Then, interviews with the participants were conducted, and data were collected until saturation occurred. The analysis of the data revealed that the teachers developed positive beliefs and feelings towards reflective practices, but they lacked in some areas of practice because of the school environment. Implications of the findings are also discussed.

Keywords: Reflective Practice, Positive Attitude, Cognition, Affect, Behavior, Classroom Practice, Interactive Workshop.

Introduction

Reflection helps in developing critical thinking about one's values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. It is an important part of the learning process formally and non-formally and develops a new perception that improves one's future action. It helps in understanding our practices. The learning process involved in reflection leads to experiences, and these experiences build reflective observations that are an essential part of learning development. It can either be done after the event or during the event (Roberts, 2014). Reflection in education involved the readiness for self-development and distinction between routine action and modification in action. Reflection is a behavior that helps to think and look at all consequences required for action, implication, and consideration of a practice that leads to understanding ground support and further modification of the practice (Khan, Fazal, & Amin, 2014). In short, reflection provides the learner with feedback on their experiences for the betterment of future actions (Ghaye, 2011).

Reflective practice can be referred to as teachers' ability to get into a process of finding out the problems and identifying effective solutions that can persuade positive student learning outcomes in a healthy environment. It makes one the most effective teacher. However, it requires productive thinking, in-depth observation, and experience (Kaasila & Lauriala, 2012). Reflective teachers are those who are ready to learn from their own experiences for the betterment of the community. They can reflect on their experiences and act as a dominant part of the community entails the development of their selves and society. By this, they develop a communal practice, as reflection is not limited to teaching only but also all other professions (Killeavy & Moloney, 2009).

Teachers have to face a lot of challenges. They have the responsibility to find a secure path, a path worth taking to assist and encourage the students. A teacher takes the profession of teaching blindly despite knowing that sometimes teaching can be hard to grasp. Teaching requires mental exercises for emotional regulation, mindfulness, creativity, resilience, and conflict resolution capacity, due to its uncertain nature. As the teachers have to deal with many stakeholders, that is,

* University of Management and Technology, Lahore Email: hadiyanaseer3494@gmail.com

** University of Management and Technology, Lahore Email: edyaar2008@yahoo.com

*** University of Management and Technology, Lahore Email: sajid@umt.edu.pk

administration, students, colleagues, parents, and society, they must be skilled in effective mind and emotion regulation exercises. The teacher's first stakeholders are the students, and they must be flexible enough to be vigilant and actively present for all situations that can happen in the classroom. They have to treat their students equally while understanding each child's background, emotional state, and willingness for learning (Roeser, Skinner, Beers, & Jennings, 2012). All these teaching tasks might be exhausting and tiring. Therefore, the purpose of the teacher and teaching style matters remarkably. Reflective practice sometimes may seem difficult to grasp, but once grasped, it is easy to reflect on different educational aims and motives (Zeichner & Liston, 2014).

Reflective practice is a future-oriented process that encourages teachers to investigate experiences critically to generate new understanding and knowledge for gaining improvement in future actions. This skill requires consciousness, cognition, and emotions to function interactively. Besides, reflective practice helps to meet ongoing changes in the workplace. They help to train the mind for uncertainty and unwelcome high stress, and risks. It encourages the individual to learn from their experiences and helps in improving their practice by continually initiating learning developments, investigating their attributes, and changing them for self-improvement (Hetzner, 2013).

Elementary level education is considered the foundation building stage for students in Pakistan, and it is expected that it prepares the students to be critical thinkers and prepare them for career building. Therefore, teachers should be skillful in reflective practice to improve them for creating innovative and effective paths for the student learning process. If the teachers are trained to do reflective practice, and they are given the liberty to think of innovative ideas to improve their classroom only then the teaching-learning processes will be improved by challenging students to become critical thinkers.

However, reflective practices are not encouraged in most elementary schools. This is so because it requires effort and time. Besides, some teachers believe that they are perfect and they are not willing to update their knowledge to improve their teaching practice as it takes effort and time. Also, the stressful nature of the teaching job may hinder teachers to adopt reflective practices. The highly stressed profession stress recognized is categorized into three domains. Firstly, it is the demands and pressures that teachers had to handle. Secondly, it is emotional behavior, either positive or negative, depending on the experience and demands. Thirdly, it is the expectations of the teacher without keeping in noticing the resources and liberty that the school provides to deal with demands that s/he needs to perform effectively (Kriyacou, 2011). All these domains can trigger stress, which can cause a lack of interest in work and enthusiasm for innovative teaching.

Theoretical Framework in Brief

This study is based on the tripartite theory of attitudes (Fabrigar, MacDonald, & Wegener, 2005), which explains attitudes as three dimensions of the psychological processes: cognition, affection, and behavior. In the cognition dimension, personal beliefs and knowledge are the sources of information. In the affection dimension, the positive and negative feelings are perceived. This theory values both the feeling. The behavior dimension takes account of the practices of the individual. This theory also claims that all three domains are important and have an influence on each other. Nonetheless, individuals may lack in one the domain according to the situation and surroundings. Usually, the cognition does create an influence on feelings, but the individual lacks practical implementation due to the situation or environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of interactive workshops in developing elementary teachers' positive attitudes towards reflective practices. More specifically, this study introduced and prepared teachers for reflective practices through interactive workshop sessions. The researcher felt that the teachers should be trained for this in a normal school setting so that they could effectively sustain their practice. Elementary teachers need to reflect on their teaching and become critical thinkers because only then will they be able to look at all the aspects of teaching with logic and innovations. This study focuses on developing improvement in three aspects in teachers; cognition, affection, and classroom practice; this ultimately gives us the view of how reflective practice improves their professional life and how it affects them individually.

Methods and Material

For addressing the questions, collaborative action research was used, employing qualitative interpretive methodology and interactive workshop sessions with 20 teachers. This helped the researcher to gather in-depth data from the participant teachers. The activities and presentations during the workshop built a healthy discourse that encouraged the teachers to build their interests and desire for learning, to implement, and to reflect on innovative teaching skills. Workshops were conducted as a collaborative activity. After conducting the workshop sessions, interviews were conducted with the participants about the lived experiences of different participants regarding workshop sessions. Participants narrated their multiple experiences about the phenomenon to be studied in detail.

The interpretive approach helped the researcher to welcome the different perceptions of participants in a particular environment. The interpretive study focuses on the actions of humans. It does not focus on objectives and facts presented in theories, but it helps the researcher in getting viewpoints of the participant about a certain phenomenon. It helps in-depth knowledge of a particular phenomenon that can be generalized to a population that works in a certain natural setting (Rowlands, 2005). It is a platform of the naturalistic approach of data collection by conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews based on lived experiences because from this researcher is going to know about the perceptions of elementary teachers about the development of reflective practice through interactive workshops.

Collaborative action research is a systematic collection of data that supports and influences change (McKernan, 2006), contributing to resolving problems that can lead to a quality life. It is a study of an educational setting that helps the researchers to understand and resolve the educational problems by implementing certain actions. Action researcher focuses on changing their actions, the environment in which they act, conditions in which the action in practice and change their understanding about the action while practice-based reflection helps in extracting the knowledge that is generated from the actions that are practiced for future creative actions (Kemmis, 2009). Thus, it helps in increasing the effectiveness of the actions to be performed. Besides, it helps the practitioner to perform critically, intelligently, and skillfully.

Research Sites, Sampling, and Participants

For this study, the researcher chose a private school in Lahore. It is situated in a 4 Kanal area with a purpose-built building and segregated camps for boys and girls. It aims to provide quality education, character development through keeping the students connected with their culture and values by indulging them in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. It is a secondary school comprising of 43 classrooms, 1200 above students, and 90 teachers (Akbari, 2015).

The participants in this study were full-time teachers in a private school in Lahore. Since this research aimed to investigate the development of reflective practices after participation in interactive workshops, a purposive sampling technique was used to select 20 elementary teachers from the school. Participants were selected through purposive sampling because the researcher chose only those teachers who had at least 1.5 years of experience of teaching in elementary schools.

Participant Inclusion Criteria

Following criteria were used to decide the inclusion of participants in this study:

- 1) The participants were a full-time teacher in a private school.
- 2) The participants had at least 1.5 years of experience in the current school.
- 3) The participants were elementary teachers.

Table 1: Demographic information of the participants

Participant	Teaching to Classes	Academic Qualification	Experience (in Years)
1	7-8	MA English Literature	2
2	5-8	BSc MA Islamiyat & B.Ed.	5
3	8	MA Urdu & M.A Islamiyat	5
4	5-7	MA in English & B.Ed.	2
5	6-8	MA Education	3
6	5-8	MA English	2
7	5-7	BS (Hons) Environmental Sciences	2
8	5-7	MSc Statistics	3
9	5-8	MA Urdu & B.Ed.	2
10	5-7	MA Urdu & B.Ed.	2

11	8	BS (Hons) Zoology	2
12	5-8	MA of Islamic History	4
13	6-8	MA in Political Science	3
14	5-6	BBA (Hons.)	2
15	5-8	MA History	2
16	6-8	BSc Math, Statistics & Computer	2.5
17	5-8	MSc. Applied Psychology	5
18	5-8	BS (Hons.) Economics & MBA	4
19	6-8	MA in English Literature & B.Ed.	5.5
20	5-7	M.Phil. Education	2

Data Collection Methods

The research design for this study revolved around developing reflective practices in teachers through interactive workshops. Workshop sessions and interviews were used as a tool in this study to address the research questions. A sample of 20 elementary teachers from a private secondary school was selected for the research. The workshops were arranged for one week, with a duration of 2 hours each day. These sessions included activities, presentations, and question-answer sessions to make it interactive and productive.

In this research design, the teachers learned through interactive workshops and activities. Historically workshop was “a place where things are made or repair” (Merriam-Webster, 2016). Now, it is a place where people gather to attain, create, build innovative knowledge about a specific situation. Workshop arrangements are made for a specific period with the targeted domain where participants gather to achieve, discuss, and solve the target. It helps the participants in goal attainment in the area of their interests. Workshops are used as a research methodology to answer specific research questions by encouraging participants to participate and produce valid and reliable data. It is designed to fulfill the requirement of the research criteria to gather rich information (Levinsen, 2017).

The ultimate goal of the workshop was to train teachers to utilize reflective practice in their classroom behavior, enhancing cognitive ability and to help them to be positive, energetic, and motivated towards personal and professional life. It was kept flexible to facilitate and accommodate teachers’ requests and demands regarding the sessions. The session was planned according to the availability and comfort of teachers.

On the first day, the workshop session began with an introduction of the researcher and teachers. Then the researcher started the session by explaining the word “reflection.” The researcher then wrote the word reflection on the board and asked all the teachers to write and share their perspectives about what they think about the word reflection, and each perception was discussed. Then the researcher later discussed with them reflection in education, its importance, positive and negative experiences regarding reflection, and introduction to reflective practice. Then the researcher asked teachers to briefly reflect on their professional careers in the present school and share with their colleagues. Then the researcher introduced them to reflective journals for free writing about their day to day reflection. This helped the researcher to explain the teachers’ importance to integrate reflection into their daily routine. At the end of the session, the question and answer round were conducted to enhance the knowledge of teachers and the researcher.

For the second day session, the seating arrangement was made in the form of a group of four teachers. The session started by discussing group reflection, kind of group reflection, and listening exercises with the teachers. Then the researcher provided the teachers with worksheets to be done in the form of the group about how they could evaluate their teaching with their colleagues, and how group reflection could help them to improve their teaching skills and lesson planning. Then the researcher explained to the teachers what evidence-based reflection is, what are the barriers to reflective practice, and barriers to being a reflective practitioner. To make the workshop session interactive, the first researcher asked the teachers about their perceptions about how to overcome those barriers. The session ended with a question and answers round.

For the third day, the researcher explained to the teachers about four kinds of reflections (reflection in action, reflection for action, reflection on action, and reflection with action) and some important tips for reflection. Then the researcher asked the teachers about a recent incident/activity from their class and how they handled it, keeping in mind the four kinds of reflection. The researcher explained to the teachers about the nature and principle of reflection. The researcher also explained to the teachers how to indulge in a reflective conversation. After this, the researcher provided teachers

with a worksheet with a quote regarding reflection and discussed questions regarding it with them. The session ended with a productive question and answer session. The tea break was given in between the session.

For the fourth day, the seating arrangement was made in the form of groups, and the researcher started the session by explaining to them a strength-based reflection. The researcher then asked the teachers to share their favorite/funny memory from the teaching career. Also, they were asked to share their fear and ways of overcoming those fears or any work-related problem that could be solved by group reflection. Then the researcher told them about reflection for classroom practice. In which two aspects were focused on classroom management, lesson planning, and teaching skill. Besides this, a reflection/feedback column was introduced in their lesson planners. Then the researcher asked teachers to share their experiences from the present week. What were their highs and lows in the classroom/school during the week? In this way, all the teachers found common ground to lift each other. The researcher gave teachers further a tip to start a discussion from the worst thing that happened to them to the best thing that happened to them. At the end of the session, the question and answer round were conducted to enhance the knowledge of teachers and the researcher.

On the last day of the workshop sessions, the fifth day, the researcher emphasized reflective writing and dos and don'ts of reflective writing. For this, the researcher asked the teachers to share their thoughts about what they thought the reflective practice was, and now what they thought about it and how effective they thought it would be. Then the researcher explained to them the feedback process. To make the feedback process clear, the researcher asked the teachers to open their lesson planners from the previous day and answer a few questions regarding it. The questions included the topic they were teaching, activities planned for students, how successful they were in making the lesson fun for students, how would they rate their success in meeting the objectives, what innovations were required for making their lesson relaxing and fun. A tea break was given between the session, and a question-answer session was done. The researcher also taught teachers different exercises to control their stress. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback after the session.

After the workshop, teachers were given three weeks to practice reflective practices. During the practice, the researcher gave a free hand to the teachers to contact the researcher for any query or help required in practicing reflective practice.

After two months of workshop sessions, a semi-structured interview was used as a preferred instrument for collecting data about teachers' attitudes towards reflective practice and their teaching experiences regarding reflective practice. Interviews were organized as "active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results" (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Data were collected by the first author. The interview guide included 22 open-ended questions with some probing questions. Interviews were conducted at the time and the place where participants felt free and comfortable to talk about their experiences (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016). During the interviews, participants were asked a series of open-ended questions, and all the responses were audio-recorded with the permission of participants.

Data Analysis Methods

Reflexive thematic data analysis (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2019) was used to analyze interview data. This method of data analysis is conducted in six steps, which are shown in figure 1 below:

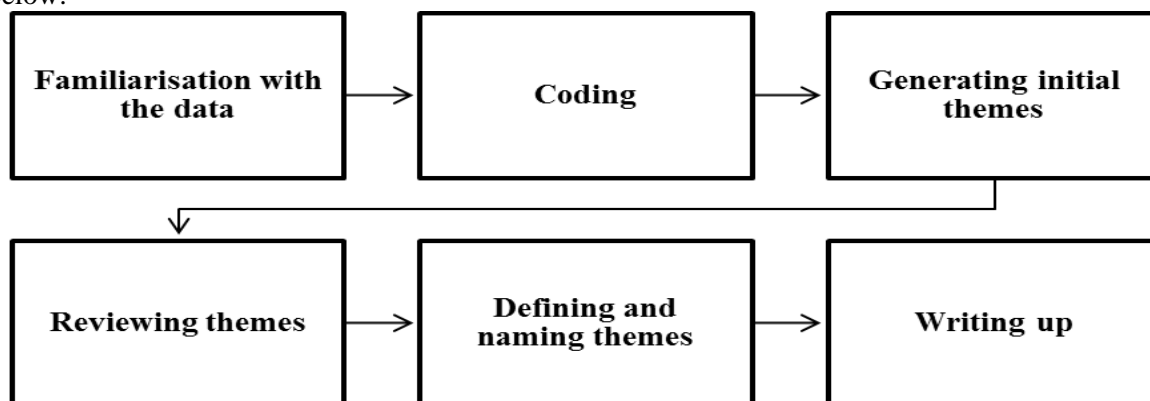


Figure 1: Steps in reflexive thematic data analysis.

In the first stage, ‘familiarization with the data’ the interview transcripts were reviewed by studying, again and again, to create an in-depth understanding. In the first coding stage, the whole extracted data were coded for further analysis. It helped in identifying the important features of the content related to the study. In the next stage, initial themes were generated by organizing data according to the themes. The data of each participant was set according to each theme. In ‘the reviewing themes’ step, the relevance of the data was checked and refined by discarding, splitting, or combining the data received. In the ‘defining and naming themes’ step, the data of each theme were combined in the form of a story. It gave a focus of the theme by a detailed description. In the ‘writing up’ stage, the write-up of the analytical description was given about existed literature.

Findings

Experience in Becoming a Reflective Practitioner

Most of the participants felt very positive after incorporating reflective practices in their teaching, and they became more energetic. It helped them to reduce negativity and made them feel relaxed. For example, a participant said,

I was a much stressed person. Something was going on in my mind all the time, but reflective practice helped me to be calm and positive. It helped me to build my character as well as now I write my diary. Now I have learned to focus on one thing at one time. Now I love my job. (Participant 7)

Some felt they think and work more efficiently and effectively. They also felt that it had helped them in becoming more aware of themselves, and now they observed and reacted in certain situations more critically and wisely. For example, a participant said,

I had a very dumb class. I didn’t like going to that class. I used to feel irritated because they never used to give me a good response. But now, after doing this practice, I have started looking at their positive points. I ignore their weaknesses and try to make them positive. Now when I go there, I enjoy their class. I have changed my attitude towards them. I politely try to understand them. (Participant 3)

Most participants had a good experience while doing this practice. They encountered learning and interesting experience in their lives. It helped them in recognizing their areas of improvement and review their personal and professional life. As one participant said, “*The workshop experience was good. I learned a lot. I started reflecting right after the workshops. I made sure that I keep on reflecting, even though sometimes I have a busy schedule. So, this was beneficial for me*” (Participant 11). As one of the participants said, “*This helped me in reviewing the areas that need to be improved. It gave me a wider perspective on how to manage our routine and our behavior with others. It helped me in dealing with other’s attitudes with us*” (Participant 14).

Some of the participants said that it helped them in building confidence, and it helped them to think calmly. They stopped overreacting and overthinking in every situation. As one of the participants said, “*Reflective practice developed my confidence. Before this, I couldn’t explain my points openly and couldn’t admit my mistakes. After this reflective practice, now I can listen to other people and give them importance*” (Participant 20).

Identifying Hurdles in Reflective Practices and Overcoming Them

All participants faced some hurdles initially when they started with the practice, and they were able to overcome these hurdles gradually. The participants reported that the biggest hurdle was time management; they were not able to set free time for reflection. Furthermore, initially, it was stressful because identifying their weaknesses and strengths was very tough. To this, they added that identifying weaknesses and accepting them was very tough. It was a challenge for them to think of all the aspects of their routine and improve or sustain certain activities. Moreover, it was time taking with hectic routines and responsibilities. They also faced obstacles in writing their reflection in the lesson planner and planning the next day’s plan accordingly. The participants shared their hurdles and ways of overcoming the hurdles. A participant said, “*Yes, initially it was hard for me to bring a change in my life, like writing a planner, improving myself, changing my habits and bringing a change in my teaching style*” (Participant 7).

The solution for the obstacle that was given by the participant was: “*Now I try to teach my students how to maintain a good class environment even after lecture time over and when the teacher is still standing in the class. I started organizing myself and work* (Participant 7). Another participant said, “*My hurdle in following reflective practice was to think about my inner self. It was the major*

problem because we never review about our self before, but when start thinking, we will surely find our mistakes. (Participant 20). For overcoming this issue, the participant said, *“When start thinking, we will surely find our mistakes* (Participant 20).

Very few of the participants said that they did not face any hurdle while doing reflective practice. When the researcher inquired further, they said that they had a lot of experience in the field of teaching; hence they did not find it very tough to do. Moreover, they said that they had been doing this practice for a long, but they were unaware of the term. They also said that they had a lot of time at home for it as they did not have a lot of house responsibilities.

Reflective Writing

Most of the participants reported that they were unable to do reflective writing at all as it was a very time taking process. They could manage time for thinking, but writing a journal was too hectic. They also said that they had a very busy routine and a lot of tasks for their day, but they were working on their improvement by doing reflection mentally. As one participant said, *“No, I am not doing any writing, and I don’t have any specific reason. It’s just that I don’t have a habit of writing”* (Participant 08). Another participant added, *“I didn’t do the writing, but yes, I think and work on improvement. I am working on the thinking process but not writing as it is more time demanding”* (Participant 18).

Some said that they did not do reflective writing daily as it was a time demanding process. Nonetheless, they managed to do it on alternate days or weekends. They believed that it was sufficient to get their reflection done. As one of the participants said, *“Yes sometimes. I don’t get time for it daily”* (Participant 05).

However, few participants were able to do it daily as it helped them to organize in a better way, and it helped them in dealing with daily tasks, work stress, and managing their personal life. As one of the participants said,

Yes, a lot. I even write everything that I have cooked today or where I went today. This writing helps me to reflect and control myself to do the right thing, and I also look at my work and think about what I should do... As now I am alone with my only son, and I have to do a lot of things, so I have to reflect a lot to do the right things. As you advise us that think about ourselves, and I think I need to do this a lot, reflect on my every action. (Participant 10)

Peers Help in Teaching

All the teachers were very positive about how other teachers helped them in improving their teaching. For this, they sat together and discussed and planned lessons accordingly. They also helped each other in understanding student behavior and class handling. Their coordinator teachers and subject heads also helped them when required. All this helped them in improving their teaching. A few of the participants said, *“Yes, we have a friendly attitude towards each other. Instead of gossiping, we now talk about our students and lessons. We plan our lessons together”* (Participant 04). Another participant said, *“Yes, we have very much coordination with teachers. When we help each other, we decide to meet up in our spare time when we don’t have a free period”* (Participant 20).

Dealing with Negativity and Becoming Positive

All the participants except one felt that reflective practice had helped them in dealing with their negativity and made them positive. They said now they deal with students more patiently than before. They also said that there was a significant change in their anger problem over these two months of practice, and they had started to understand other’s perspective positively. They now could find a way to solve problems more comfortably and in an enjoyable way. As two of the participants said, *“Yes, we try to overcome our anger in a tough time like if there is a burden of work, we try to manage our stress and time”* (Participant 08). The participant further told about how reflective practice helped them in becoming positive and said,

Sometimes, I used to get angry with the continuous flow of questioning by students, but I can overcome it after attending the workshop... And I try to control my anger too that I should not make such a bad face or rude behavior when I am angry. (Participant 08)

Personal Improvement

The participants felt that they had improved personally. They said that now they did not look at one perspective of anything but both, and now they owned their acts. They also said that now they were more aware of their responsibilities towards their profession; for this, they maintained a calm mood. The participants felt improvement in their personal lives as one of the participants said,

If I talk about myself, it has been advantageous not only for me but for my children and family as well. In my family matters, I use this practice, where I try to think about and understand the situation before taking any step. I reflect upon things first...I should not get hyper or start scolding them. Therefore, I try listening to them first before I respond to their behavior. (Participant 09)

Some of the participants were still working on their relationships, but they have improved themselves professionally.

Continuing with the Reflective Practice and Encouraging Others

All the participants agreed that this was an effective practice, and they would continue with it. They found it very beneficial for them, and they said that such practices should be encouraged and more and more teachers should be aware of it. As one of the participants said, *“Yes, I will do it in teaching and personal life too”* (Participant 05).

Most participants said that they would encourage others around them as they found it effective for themselves. As a participant said, *“Yes, definitely because this is a very important thing for teaching”* (Participant 19). Some participants said that they were already encouraging others in their family or school. As one of the participants said, *“I encouraged my colleagues who did not attend the workshop”* (Participant 12). Few of the participants said that they might encourage others in the future, but for now, they were trying to build their understanding of reflective practices and self-improvement. As one of the participants said, *“I am still working on myself. I can’t encourage anyone for now. I want to improve myself fully”* (Participant 17).

Improvement in Teaching

The participants observed change in their teaching over this period after reflective practices. Rather than delivering the planned lesson, they focused on student learning and understanding. Their lesson planning was improved. They also said that now they had a feedback session with students who were not normal practices in school and it has helped them a lot. As a participant said, *“My lesson planning has improved a lot now. If the lesson is properly planned, then everything is in your hands. Now, after getting student feedback, I have gotten the questions that have helped me in improving my lesson further”* (Participant 02). Another participant said, *“I felt changes in my beliefs. For instance, I didn’t use to assess previous knowledge of the students because I felt it is a time waste, or I won’t be able to complete the written or learning task planned for the day”* (Participant 05).

Some participants believed that their classroom management was better than before. They changed their seating arrangements in groups so that they could learn from each other too. Their command over classroom management had also improved the class results. As one of the participants said,

Yes, it helps a lot in classroom management like I now create student groups in class. Also, I give proper time to weaker students now. Before this, I used to give lectures, but now I also take feedback from students, so it helps a lot. (Participant 08)

Changes in Teaching Style

Participants also changed their teaching style for delivering a lesson to building understanding. They had started using different methodologies for better student understanding. For this purpose, they used the demonstration method, activity-based learning, role-plays, etc. They also assigned students pair work or group work as students learn more effectively when working in pairs and tried to understand the students’ needs and the amount of stress that they could take. For this purpose, they reduced their homework. As one of the participants said,

I used to give students work according to my comfort, sometimes an essay to learn or half of it. It was because I didn’t have experience in the teaching field. Now I started thinking about how students want me to perform. When I was a student, I always wanted to have very little homework. So, I started to unburden the students by giving them less work, and students took it well. I gave them two lines to learn rather than five, and they felt happy and relax. It helped get a response from weak learners too. Now students ask me to assess their learning. (Participant 04)

Some participants said that taking feedback from the students helped them to know their student understanding level. This also helped them identify the students who were shy to speak in class or students or those students who needed more attention to improving. As one of the participants said, *“I have changed my teaching style a lot. Now I explain to kids, listen from them to know if they have fully understood and asked them what they have understood and what not”* (Participant 10). Besides, through reflective practice, few participants identified that students learn more from

practically doing tasks or from the demonstration method. They changed their style to demonstration method, or they started to work on finding and creating activities to keep the students engaged towards learning productively.

Upgrading Knowledge

All the participants said they were working on updating their knowledge related to the subject as the book was not revised very frequently. Participants who were teaching language said that they searched for activities and methodologies related to their subject so that they could teach students more effectively. As one of the participants mentioned, *“Yes, I did it. As you know, books don’t change very frequently. But I keep changing and updating my teaching methodologies to help students learn better. This is the change I felt after reflection”* (Participant 03).

The participants teaching science and social studies said that they search a lot over the internet so that they could keep themselves up to date about new researches and inventions. They also said that they encouraged students to use the internet for this purpose too. As one of the participants stated,

I was doing it before, and I am doing it now too. As there is are continuous inventions and discoveries happening in science, we have to do it? I have installed apps on my phone for this purpose. In senior classes, you simply cannot dodge the students. They know if the teacher is unaware of certain information or if she is unprepared for the lesson. (Participant 05)

Few participants teaching Islamic studies said that they did not trust the internet for updating knowledge as it was not as reliable as books. They said that they have a collection of books that they used for updating the knowledge.

Group Reflection

Most of the participants reported that they practiced group reflection in school whenever they got time. The school did not provide formal time for reflection. They said that whenever they had the time and those teachers who were free, would sit together and plan. They also used social media applications for this purpose as they had formed a group on the applications, and they discussed tasks over it. A participant said, *“We, try our best to sit together and discuss whenever we have time. I feel that since we are learning about this practice more every day, we discuss it regularly. It’s not like we think or plan before discussing, it all just happens at the moment”* (Participant 09). Another participant said, *“Yes, but like we all math teacher cannot gather at one time due to the time table. So, we do it whoever is available at a certain time”* (Participant 02).

Few participants said that they did do group reflection due to workload and unavailability of all the teachers. As one of the participants said,

No. To be very honest, no. We are not doing it because we had timing issues before and now as well. We cannot manage time for it. The second thing is that everyone thinks that they have more knowledge than others or they are perfect. Even if someone shares their mistakes, others are not ready to accept or share their mistakes. So, we don’t do discussions. (Participant 05)

Innovation in Classroom Practice

Most of the participants said that they have found innovative ideas for teaching. They said that students learn better in a student-centered environment. They also said that students stay more disciplined if they were taught creatively. They said that they made better student understanding; they randomly asked two of the students to present a summary of the lesson on the same day or the next. Participants also said that they gave five to ten minutes in the lesson to the students to share anything they wanted other than the lesson, and this helped the students to stay disciplined. As one of the participants shared her idea,

I have observed that if you give students a free hand to learn their way like ask them to find work meaningful or present in a group or sit in groups, they perform quite well. Secondly, I have asked them to make a separate notebook for tests to keep records. (Participant 03)

Some of the participants said that they couldn’t get an innovative idea for teaching. They said that language subjects had a lot of content to be covered so they could spend time on activities as they are time-consuming. They also said that they were still working on self-improvement, so they required time and practice to reach this point of teaching innovatively. As one of the participants said, *“No, not yet. I am still focusing on just improving my current practice”* (Participant 11).

Building Student Understanding

Most of the participants said that they were more successful in building student understanding after the workshop as they prepared their lessons better than before and delivered more confidently. They said that students had become more comfortable in participating in class due to the changed behavior of the teachers and this helped the students to share their weaker areas that needed to be revised. They also said that they were now able to make their class more interactive, and this had made students active. Furthermore, they said that take students feedback helped them to improve the lesson. One of the participants stated,

Now it has improved a lot because I didn't use to take feedback about the lesson from the students now that feedback gives me a view of how much of the lesson was cleared to them. If they didn't understand any topic, then I revise it the next day or the same day if I have time. (Participant 04)

Few of the participants said that they already had full command of building their student's understanding as they had a lot of experience in teaching. They also said that it might have improved a bit after the workshop, but they had full command of understanding their students and creating their student's understanding. As one of the participants stated,

I have command over this already, but if you talk about it after taking the workshop, I have become relaxed, and I don't see any failure point in it. It is going towards the success up till now, and if our planning is a mismatch at some point, I am trying to match that planning with the help of reflective practice. (Participant 18)

Lesson Planner

All most all the teachers said that the introduction of feedback and reflection column in their lesson planner had helped them a lot in improving their teaching. It helped them to analyze their lesson critically. They said it helped them to find the missing elements of the lesson or the parts that were very clear. It also helped them to identify which methodology worked the best for them. They also said that writing self-reflection of teaching daily helped them to improve their lesson and plan better. As one of the participants said,

Feedback is like a mirror reflection of our teaching. I write feedback the next day. So, when I write feedback, it gives me a clear vision of how I taught. It makes me very honest. It helps a lot in improving the teaching and preparing for the next lesson. It has also improved my time management a lot. (Participant 17)

Conclusion

The participants were given an introduction to reflective practices through interactive workshop sessions. They felt that reflective practices helped them a lot in improving their daily lifestyle by focusing on all aspects and dividing their time according to the priorities. All the participants had different perspectives about reflective practices, and the researcher valued all of them equally. The participants initially felt that reflective practices were a tough and time-demanding task to be performed, but then after doing it, they found it quite helpful. It helped the participants in rearranging their routines and utilizing their time more efficiently. Further, they felt that they now do their work with a more responsible attitude and critically analyze their routine.

Reflective practices helped the participants to build a positive attitude and reduce negativity, improving them personally and professionally. It also helped them to change their classroom environment and conduct interactive lessons with the students. However, they did not find time for group reflection as the school did not provide formal time for it. Reflective practices helped them to find innovative ideas in their teaching, to produce better learning outcomes. The participants' focus shifted from the coverage of the syllabus to students' learning. They now searched for activities and used different methodologies to keep an active and interactive environment in class. Additionally, they felt that introduction to the feedback column in the planner helped them to improve their lesson planning and to build their students' understanding better. They were confident that they would continue using reflective practice and encourage others around them.

Implications of Research

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Based on the findings of the current research study, the following recommendations for policy and practice are made:

- 1) This study has revealed an area of developing reflective practices in elementary teachers through interactive workshops in a school in Lahore. It was not intended to correct the irregularities; it was intended to identify the influence of reflective practices on the teacher's personal and professional lives. It revealed that they were unaware of this practice, and there was no formal time for this school practice.
- 2) This study raises questions about the existing school system and the influence of the workload on their practices. Therefore, it is recommended that reflective practices should be made a mandatory part of the education system. The policymakers should make it part of the teaching profession, and schools should facilitate their teachers for such practices.
- 3) As shown by the research, teachers found reflective practices very helpful and effective for them. Therefore, this study recommends that policymakers should make it a mandatory part of the institutions to fill the gap between belief and practice.

Suggestions for Future Research

In light of the study's findings and limitations, several avenues for future research studies are suggested below:

- 1) Many areas of relevance to this study remained uncovered since these areas were not targeted by the research questions which we explored in this study. Therefore, it is suggested that future researchers can explore those areas, or they can deepen what has been investigated here in the current study. For example, they should investigate more about classroom practices and student behavior.
- 2) Future researchers can broaden current knowledge of reflective practices by training the principals for reflective practices so that more teachers are aware and encouraged.
- 3) There is a need to examine reflective practices in public school teachers.
- 4) Future researchers can expand the current study by examining the role of reflective practices in public and private school teachers.
- 5) This study did not include perspectives of the administration of the school, much as they would have enriched the findings. Future research studies can design to explore administration perspectives related to reflection practices.
- 6) The use of semi-structured interviews showed its usefulness in gaining insights into the current circumstances of understanding participants' attitudes. However, future studies may consider observations as an additional tool to report participants' practices in class related to the reflection.

References

- Akbari. (2015). Akbari Public School. Retrieved from <https://aci.com.pk/company4.php>
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Hayfield, N., & Terry, G. (2019). Thematic analysis. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Handbook of research methods in health social sciences* (pp. 843-860). Singapore: Springer Nature Pte Ltd.
- Fabrigar, L. R., MacDonald, T. K., & Wegener, D. T. (2005). The structure of attitudes. In D. Albarracin, B. T. Johnson, & M. P. Zanna (Eds.), *The handbook of attitudes* (pp. 79-125). London: Routledge.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2000). The interview: from structured questions to negotiated text. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 645-672). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ghaye, T. (2011). *Teaching and learning through reflective practice: A practical guide for positive action* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Hetzner, S. B. (2013). *Reflection in professional practice*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), University Of Regensburg, Germany.
- Kaasila, R., & Lauriala, A. (2012). How do pre-service teachers' reflective processes differ in different contexts? *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 35(1), 77-89.
- Kemmis, S. (2009). Action research as a practice-based practice *Educational Action Research*, 17(3), 463-474.
- Khan, M. I., Fazal, S., & Amin, M. (2014). Reflection in teacher education programs in Pakistan and the UK: A comparison *Journal of Research and Reflections in Education*, 8(2), 132-138.
- Killeavy, M., & Moloney, A. (2009). Reflection in a social space: Can blogging support reflective practice for beginning teachers? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(0), 1070-1076.

- Kriyacou, C. (2011). Teacher stress from prevalence to resilience. In J. Lagan-Fox & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Handbook of the Stress in Occupations* (pp. 161-170). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Levinsen, R. Ø. a. K. (2017). Workshops as a research methodology. *The Electronic Journal of eLearning*, 15(1), 70-88.
- McKernan, J. (2006). *Curriculum action research*. London: Routledge.
- Merriam-Webster. (2016). Workshop. *Merriam-Webster's dictionary*. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/workshop>
- Roberts, C. (2014). Developing future leaders: The role of reflection in the classroom *Journal of Leadership Education*, 7(1), 116-130.
- Roeser, R. W., Skinner, E., Beers, J., & Jennings, P. A. (2012). Mindfulness training and teachers' professional development: An emerging area of research and practice. *Child Development Perspectives*, 1(1), 1-7.
- Rowlands, B. H. (2005). Grounded in practice: Using interpretive research to build theory. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methodology*, 3(1), 81-92.
- Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. (2016). In-depth interviewing. *An Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource* (4th ed.). New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Zeichner, K. M., & Liston, D. P. (2014). *Reflective teaching: An introduction* (Second ed.). New York: Routledge