Reflective Teaching and Practices in the Classroom

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Abstract: A reflective practice has been warmly influenced in teacher education and development programs on pedagogical practices. A classroom is like a laboratory where a teacher relates teaching theory to teaching practice and observes the students' responses. This paper attempts to focus on the importance of reflective teaching and check the teachers' awareness of reflective teaching. It shows the need for reflective practice in classroom practices or how a teacher's practice in the classroom can be improved through reflective teaching. The information of this study was generated through secondary sources and interviews of research participants, two English teachers of public schools from different parts of Nepal. Also, the study examines how the teacher educator created opportunities for student teachers to develop their reflective practices during their practice teaching sessions.

Keywords: Classroom practices, Reflection, Reflective teaching, Teacher education

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1. Introduction

We constantly interact with our environment and with ourselves as we make our way through life. Polkinghorne (1988) stated that there are no people without stories. Teachers use various techniques to address a range of challenges by incorporating these narratives into their work, individually or collaboratively. The ability to reflect, put insights into practice, and promote a culture of continual learning are all components of reflective practices in education.

Reflective teaching goes beyond teaching methods; it is about looking inward to improve. When I was a novice teacher, I often thought about what worked well in my classes, what did not, and how I could do things differently. Getting feedback from my students and colleagues was also really helpful. During my two years as a volunteer teacher, I learned that confidence and reflection on my teaching were key. At first, I mainly focused on delivering the content from textbooks without thinking much about reflection. But one day, during a health and physical class not being only textbook based but I shared a personal story. It was amazing to see how engaged and curious the students became. That is when I realized the power of reflective teaching. As I started to include reflective practices in my teaching method, I noticed a big improvement in how students interacted and understood the lessons. Reflecting on my teaching became like a guiding light during tough times in the classroom. Overall, my experience as a reflective teacher has made me a better educator and helped me connect theory with real-life teaching experiences. Reflective teaching is all about looking inward and continuously improving, and it has made a big difference in my teaching journey.

Similarly, following the above reflection, it seems clear that reflective teaching is a means of professional development that begins in our classroom. The basic premises behind reflective practice are that it helps teachers to apply theory to practice, leads to improved classroom practice and enables practitioners to grow professionally by learning from classroom-related experience (Cirocki & Farrell, 2017). Therefore, it is an important way to bring together theory and practice through reflection. To lead the changes and improvements in teaching, teachers need to identify and explore their own practices and underlying beliefs by collecting information about what goes on in our classroom and by analyzing and evaluating this information.

This study explores the areas of reflective teaching practices by focusing on the lived experiences of teachers who had an issue with initially incorporating reflecting strategies into their pedagogy. While conducting research on reflective teaching practices in Nepal, I found that this area is under-researched. Thus, the study seeks to address this gap by

answering the research question, "What are the experiences of teachers in adopting reflective teaching practices?" The article will briefly analyze the experiences of two teachers. Among them, one from government schools and one from private schools. The study attempts to clarify the transformative potential of reflective teaching and its implications through the analysis of these experiences.

1.1. Reflection and reflective teaching

Reflection and reflective teaching is one of the methods to review the current approach to language teaching, and it has become a central theme in professional growth in teacher education almost everywhere. In this regard, the idea that teachers need reflection not only to change their everyday routines within a classroom but also to realize what problems are arising should become a current belief for language teachers. It is common to recognize that teachers tend to implement a routine of their teaching methods, perhaps because of their teaching beliefs or lack of professional development. Teacher education plays a vital role in reforming and strengthening the education system of any country, and the Quality of education depends on the quality of teachers and teaching. So, teachers can decide which method would be most beneficial to them depending on the purposes of their reflections. Teachers who engage in reflective practice can develop a deeper understanding of their teaching, assess their professional growth, develop informed decision-making skills, and become proactive and confident in their teaching. The pursuit of high-quality teacher education programs and reflective practice has received wider attention because the teaching experience itself does not guarantee improved practices (Nguyen, 2017; Widodo & Ferdiansyah, 2018). Teachers have a powerful role to play in fostering reflection in their students in the classroom through approaches that can have implications related to the perceived worth of reflective practice. It means that reflection should involve more than a simple reflective session or training. It is suggested that teachers should be able to accept and consider other current teaching ideas which can be found by reading recent research reports or by participating in any professional development program. Teachers who explore their attitudes towards the teaching profession through critical reflection can benefit their professional practices as well as the improvement of their students' learning education.

In other words, teachers are required to use their growing 'knowledge base' (Schulman, 1987) to identify problems emerging in their classrooms and schools through 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' and try to solve these problems through continuous reflection and professional and critical inquiry into their own practices (Schon, 1983). For some people, doing reflection may be difficult as they may have no reason why they should do it, or more deeply, they do not know whether or not they have problems to solve. Zalipour (2015) and Impedovo and Khatoon Malik (2016) agree that reflection is a process of rethinking and analyzing certain actions in class so students and teachers reach their teaching and learning objectives. Reflection as a good practice of how educators think in their classroom teaching increasingly receives more attention because there is a strong connection between reflection and learning. Reflection is believed to be an essential practice where people recall their experience, ponder it, and eventually evaluate it.

For reflective teaching, reflection may only be good for improving one's understanding of problems from several different viewpoints so that alternative solutions can be reached. Becoming a reflective teacher was investigated (Saylag, 2012), who highlights "the importance of personal beliefs and experiences that contribute to critical reflection as the distinguishing attribute of reflective practitioners". In that sense, personal beliefs and experiences should be at the core of the process of reflection which, in turn, would serve to improve teaching and academic skills. It is also important to mention here that when novice teachers are aware of the need for challenges, they develop their creativity and start implementing a variety of options to distinguish what is happening in their classroom in relation to the student's learning process and set future goals or activities.

1.2. Different platforms of reflective teaching

Reflective teachers usually use their pedagogical experiences in the past to enrich the capacity of their teaching in the future, avoiding the act of teaching which is characterized by thoughtless routines. Reflective practice can be promoted in various ways (Cirocki & Farrell, 2017a; Richards & Farrell, 2005). The different ways of doing reflection include writing reflective journals/diaries, peer observation of teaching, teacher-educator feedback lesson study, action research, collaborating learning, and reflecting with digital technologies. Teachers can most effectively coach student teachers in reflective practice by using students' personal histories, dialogue journals, and small and large-group discussions about their experiences to help students reflect upon and improve their practices. So, this is the possible step towards the process of reflection is to gather information on reflective practices. Thus, it is essential that teachers develop their capacity for reflection as they would be required to continue their learning not only during their education period but also in the course of their professional work.

A reflective teacher identifies classroom problems, invites peer participation in evolving viable/feasible solutions, and experiments with new ideas. While such a teacher develops by personal experience and attains proficiency through innovation and creativity, the students get inspired and actively involved in the learning process. Reflective thinking, on the part of a teacher, can be described as a recursive cycle of teacher-learning that includes using knowledge as a source of reflective observation, concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Reflective thinking

and action are continuous and never-ending. Therefore, following the above particular problems in the research, I tried to seek the possible findings that may help me to address the issues seen during teaching using reflective practices in their classroom.

2. Materials and methods

The interpretivism paradigm's qualitative research approach is an appropriate match for the study's goals of examining reflective behaviors in education. When examining various aspects of teaching methods and their effects on student performance, interpretivism, which highlights comprehending social processes through the subjective experiences and viewpoints of individuals, becomes extremely important. The study intends to capture the rich, nuanced thoughts of teachers regarding their reflective teaching tactics through the use of qualitative methodologies like interviews.

The interview schedule was developed to get in-depth answers from participants on their experiences with reflective teaching. Furthermore, the questions might have been designed to examine particular reflective techniques like recording thoughts, peer observation, or cooperative learning, along with the effects these techniques are thought to have on student achievement. The interview is used to gather data on subjects' opinions, beliefs, and feelings about the situation in their own word (Ary et al., 2010). The interview is taken to collect the data in the form of information from teachers on how they are implementing reflecting teaching in the classroom and the outcomes they are getting from the students. Moreover, I named my participants Participant A and Participant B for my study. The research followed ethical principles and legal requirements required in research. The proposed research ensures that it is beneficial to the participants during the data collection process, they are respected, and their privacy will be protected. In order to find recurring patterns, themes, and insights within the interview responses, the data analysis procedure probably included thematic analysis or coding approaches. The process included an organized structure and categorizing the information in order to identify the main topics concerning reflective pedagogy and its influence on student achievement. With this thorough process of research, the study attempted to uncover significant discoveries that advance knowledge of reflective practices in education.

The objective of this study was to explore the reflective practices used during teaching, the strategies they applied, and their effect on students' performance. To achieve this objective, respondents were asked to respond to their teaching experiences and reflective teaching strategies so far, which they found as a result of implementing different ways of doing reflection such as reflective writing journals, diaries, peer observation of teaching, collaborating learning, etc. According to the teachers interviewed in the qualitative study, implementation of reflecting teaching strategies they used has the impact as discussed below. Here, I tried to gain experience and understanding by reflecting teaching and their implementation in the classroom.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Teacher's perceptions of reflective teaching

In exploring how teachers perceive reflective teaching, participants highlighted how important it is to improve teaching methods and promote professional development. The capacity to critically examine learning methods and provide important questions regarding the what, why, and how of teaching techniques has been described by participant A as reflective teaching. This is consistent with Finlay's (2008) idea of reflective practice as a way to develop teaching quality by drawing lessons from experiences. Furthermore, Participant B highlighted how reflective teaching assists students by allowing them to relate teachings with personal experiences, which improves comprehension. Moreover, what I conclude by their conception is being a teacher one needs to reflect on the experiences or activities one is doing for one's growth. In short, by developing knowledge and understanding of the setting practice and the ability to identify and react to the problems, student teachers can become effective teachers. Teachers can deal with the needs and different issues of the learners and the demands of time if they reflect on their daily teaching and learning activities for their professional growth. To deal with and survive in their professional field, student teachers need to grow and bring changes in their behavior and style. Reflection is a flashback that the teachers need to mediate for their development

These findings highlight the transformative power of reflective teaching, which goes beyond simply implementing instructional ideas to promote deeper comprehension and student involvement. Reflective teaching fosters a culture of continual development by pushing teachers to evaluate their educational decisions. This process transforms teachers from passive practitioners into active facilitators of change.

Despite the obvious advantages, participants also recognized obstacles related to the implementation of reflective teaching. These difficulties include institutional resistance to change, time restrictions, and resistance to change. These difficulties are supported by literature, which highlights the necessity of systemic changes and professional development programs to foster an atmosphere that is supportive of reflective teaching (Farrell, 2007).

A multidisciplinary strategy is necessary to solve these issues and maximize reflective teaching techniques. First and foremost, educational institutions need to prioritize reflective teaching by integrating it into programs for pre-service teachers and offering ongoing support through peer collaboration and mentoring (Hobbs, 2006). Second, teachers should use digital platforms for journaling, video analysis, and group reflection to speed up reflective processes (Farrell & Hobbs, 2008).

Fostering an environment of openness and trust is also crucial since it empowers educators to embrace vulnerability and express their thoughtful views without worrying about being judged (Ryan, 2015). By addressing these issues and implementing focused solutions, teachers can fully utilize reflective teaching to raise standards and encourage student success.

Finally, teachers' views of reflective teaching highlight how it may transform professional growth and pedagogy. Reflective teaching builds critical inquiry and continuous improvement, which improves student learning outcomes and enables teachers to succeed in a changing educational environment.

3.2. Reflective teacher's practices in the classroom

In the process of asking questions, my participants about their classroom actions in order to learn from and improve upon them, the methods they implement, and the opportunities they provide in their classroom. In summary, the uses of different reflective teaching strategies are useful elements to improve teaching professional practice. The strategies included in this study journals, lesson reports, audio and video recording, and self-monitoring methods constitute an important starting point for novice teachers who can analyze critically, raise awareness of their performance, and become classroom researchers. It is evident that at the beginning of any reflective teaching implementation, it could be a challenge because it requires time, effort, and support. One of my participants shared that 'I explain the lessons with as many examples as possible from different sources and fields, and the example will be given local as well as global context. Through these strategies, the student can relate to their local context and with their global understanding'. Relating to this, Yang (2009) indicates that critical reflection does not come naturally to most teachers; therefore appropriate opportunities for reflection should be provided to students.

Similarly, Regarding the implementation they are adopting in the classroom in order to learn and improve upon them, Participant B shared that 'implementing reflective teaching technique in his classroom enabled her to acknowledge and validate what she was learning' and she further shared that she allowed students to question their practices and be open to different possibilities in their teaching experiences. (Impedovo and Khatoon Malik, 2016) stated that to be a reflective practitioner, a teacher can implement different strategies. She further shared that she provides opportunities in her class by making her students engage in practicals and providing assignments during teaching sessions. And frequently inquiring them for any examples and checking their understanding. Teachers face several challenges to deal with in the classroom, requiring an ongoing process of reflection, examination, and restructuring of the teaching instruction, student learning styles and interests, the teaching context, and the real problems and issues of the education system in general. Such as analyzing and questioning happenings within the teaching-learning context, keeping a daily record of significant events, sharing stories about students learning, asking friends and students' families for their insights, or reading professional literature to learn more about changing the environment and materials to support students' learning.

In addition, the Teacher has the most effective role for students in reflective practice by using students' personal histories, journals, and group discussions about their experiences to help students reflect upon and improve their practices. So, this is the possible step towards the process of reflection is to gather information on reflective practices. A similar strategy they used was a diary; in the beginning days of teaching, they both used to write a notebook after each lesson about what happened, noting their own reactions and feelings as well as those of the students, and they found it effective as well.

3.3. Effects of reflective teaching on developing reflective learners

Encouraging reflective practice in the classroom not only benefits individual teachers but the whole school they are teaching for. Teachers should be encouraged to reflect by themselves based on their personal interests, experiences, and kind of learners because it can develop their teaching potential. It encourages teachers to understand their learners and their abilities and needs. Developing a culture of reflective practice improves class by creating a strong foundation for continuously improving teaching and learning. As participants respond, it creates an environment of collaboration as teachers question and adopt both their own practices. So this develops best practices across the school and results in a more productive working environment. They further shared that if teachers practice reflection in the classroom, they can more effectively encourage learners to reflect on, analyze, evaluate, and improve their own learning as well.

The results highlight how reflective teaching has a transforming effect on the growth of reflective learners. Teachers who engage in reflective practice not only improve their own effectiveness as teachers but also enable students to take an active role in their own education. Through reflective exercises like goal setting, self-evaluation, and feedback analysis, students gain the critical thinking and metacognitive skills necessary for lifelong learning. In addition, the development of a reflective culture in schools fosters cooperation and professional development. Teachers help spread excellent practices

throughout the school community as they reflect on and modify their methods in light of new information. This culture of collaboration creates a helpful and effective work atmosphere where educators work together to continuously improve.

Despite the obvious benefits of reflective teaching, the participants also recognized obstacles linked to its implementation. These difficulties include institutional support that is limited, time limits, and change opposition. To tackle these obstacles, a comprehensive strategy is needed, incorporating knowledge from the body of research on reflective education. For example, Hobbs (2006) advocates for structured professional development initiatives and mentorship programs, highlighting the significance of institutional support in fostering reflective habits. Furthermore, Farrell and Hobbs (2008) suggest utilizing technology to support reflective processes in order to get around time and location constraints.

The results highlight the transformative potential of reflective teaching in developing reflective learners and promoting a continuous improvement culture in educational environments. Teachers can maximize student learning outcomes and foster professional development by utilizing proven strategies and addressing obstacles in reflective teaching.

3.4. Reflective teaching as an approach to enhance profession

Firstly and most importantly, reflective practice is the key to improvements. If teachers don't think about analyzing and evaluating their professional practice, they cannot improve. Reflective teaching practices allow teachers to create and experiment with new ideas and approaches to gain maximum success. Similarly, it is significant to say that reflective teaching is considered to improve teaching practices, to enhance the ability of teachers such as enhancing the knowledge base and language skills, and to reinforce teaching in general. Following this, the research tends to show that reflective teaching can be seen as a different approach to encourage teachers to become more critical of their daily performance. Ahmad et al. (2013) stated that "reflective teachers are effective teachers." It means during teaching sessions, teachers revisit their past and uncover the issues in related subjects, which enlightens learners effectively. Adding on this, reflection consists of a process that allows teachers to provide an active learning environment for learners and practitioners, and it should, therefore, become a habit that can be targeted with development programs.

The results are consistent with previous research that highlights the transformative power of reflective teaching in raising teacher effectiveness. According to Ahmad et al. (2013), reflective teachers are more effective by nature because they methodically review previous experiences and uncover insights to improve students' learning outcomes. Teachers who develop a reflective attitude not only gain a deeper comprehension of the material they teach but also build engaging classrooms that encourage student participation and inquiry.

Moreover, reflective teaching extends beyond individual professional development to benefit broader educational communities. By fostering a culture of reflection, institutions can nurture a collaborative ethos where practitioners exchange insights, share best practices, and collectively strive for excellence. As such, reflective teaching should be integrated into professional development programs to cultivate a habit of critical inquiry and continuous improvement among educators.

However, despite its undeniable benefits, participants also identified specific challenges associated with implementing reflective teaching practices. These challenges include time constraints, limited institutional support, and resistance to change. Addressing these challenges necessitates a multifaceted approach informed by insights from relevant literature. Schön (1987), for example, promotes the creation of a welcoming institutional environment that values and encourages reflective practice and provides opportunities for professional growth to assist teachers. In addition, Farrell and Hobbs (2008) suggest using technology to speed up reflective processes in order to get around obstacles like time and location restrictions. The results highlight the importance of reflective teaching in boosting student learning outcomes and improving professionalism. Through resolving obstacles and adopting techniques based on empirical facts, educators can fully utilize reflective teaching to promote a continuous improvement culture in educational environments.

4. Conclusion

The analysis and discussion of the data have revealed that both teachers experience reflective teaching, which has a positive response. As reflective practice is essential in educational practices, teachers need to be aware of the demands of skills and competencies required. The system of education should be carried out in a practical way rather than traditional. As a result of reflection, the teacher may decide to do something in a different way or may decide what they have been doing is the best way. It focuses on the improvement of teachers' actions to achieve effective outcomes for learners. So, if teachers are conscious of an effective way of teaching bearing in mind how learners learn, the results would easily be seen in the classroom.

This paper tried to demonstrate that reflective teaching is worth trying. The programs in teacher education should be designed to help student teachers become successful and effective teachers through guided reflection on field experiences, self-analysis, evaluation, and professional development. It is necessary that teachers reflect, analyze, and adjust or change their practice whenever it is necessary; otherwise, thinking would actually become a waste of time. What really will make the difference when reflective practice is performed is the fact that the results are empowering in helping teachers become

better teachers. So, the decision is ours, we can leave a mark in our students as well as in our teaching. Teachers should be aware of the different roles a teacher needs to play inside the class; for instance, the role of organizer, helper, manager, guide, and confidence-booster etc. They should not stick to the role of the knowledge transmitter alone. Teachers should seek their students' feedback from time to time; this will help them teach the way their students learn if teachers feel that students fail to learn the way they teach.

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