



Original Article

Reflective Practices: A Comparative Analysis of Gender-based Differences and Barriers at Higher Secondary School Level

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Abstract

The gender differences and barriers to reflective practice have been compared in the present study. The study's main objectives were to observe the gender base differences in teachers about reflective practice and to check their views about barriers to following reflective practice. The nature of the following research was descriptive. This research paper sample consisted of 300 male and female teachers of higher secondary public and private schools. The collection of data was managed through a stratified random sampling technique. Inferential statistics were applied for the analysis of data. Gender base difference of opinions about reflective practice was discovered in this study as the female teachers showed more concern towards reflective practice as compared to their male colleagues. The results regarding the barriers to reflective practice were almost identical in public and private sector higher secondary schools. It was concluded that teachers of both the public and private sectors need professional training to apply reflective practices in classroom environments. It is suggested that technology can be applied in the teaching techniques which can be helpful to fulfill the present time needs

Keywords: Comparative analysis, Gender-based differences & barriers, Higher secondary school level, Professional development, Reflective practices, Teaching-learning process

INTRODUCTION

Reflective practice is helpful to teachers in gaining the experience to deal with a variety of situations in a teaching-learning environment. They understand their strategies and get acquainted with the diverse environment according to their professional behaviors, which is confirmed through reflective practice (Yalcin Arslan, 2019). The quality of teachers' performance is enhanced through reflective practice and it has an effective role in the teaching-learning process. The teachers can observe their performance through reflective practice and improve their knowledge and awareness to enhance their professional skills and teaching strategies (Glendenning & Cartwright, 2011). The two themes of reflective practice given by Schon (1987) are highly appreciated, which are "reflection on action" and "reflection in action". These variables are defined to reflect during the teaching-learning process and reflection afterward. These practices help the teacher to analyze the situation critically and move towards problem-solving.

Reflective practice enhances the creativity level of the teachers to understand the academic environment and create a strong link between the teachers' rational skills and teaching styles. It enables the teachers to facilitate the students in the teaching-learning process through applicable pedagogical tools to accomplish academic purposes (Joyce, 2015). Cognitive awareness is the backbone for understanding the diverse intellectual levels of students. For this purpose, reflective practice structures the scaffolding for the academic environment, which benefits all stakeholders. The professional behavior of the teachers enables them to deal with the issues of the students positively. Reflective practice creates the opportunity to analyze the condition and commendably explain the students' complications. This practice improves the quality of the teaching profession (Akbari, et al., 2008).

The teacher's experiences play a vital role in identifying the academic challenges for analysis and evaluation, which results in eloquent communication with the students. They observe their practices to deal with complex situations and connect purposefully with the students. The teacher should show empathy while reflecting upon the teaching styles so he can comprehend the intellectual and situational challenges of the students. These prospects are the foundation of relevant curricula and make the educational process more practical (Faerm, 2024). Zhenhui (2001) explored in the Asian context that effective teaching is based on the teacher's reflection on his practices and pedagogical skills. Then, he can understand the student's learning needs, which can be correlated with the aims and goals of education from a futuristic perspective. He further concluded that teachers should ponder upon their teaching techniques due to the students' diverse backgrounds and abilities. It is essential to understand the emotional and environmental dissimilarities of the students. It shows that various students' behaviors convince the teacher to think critically and improve his teaching strategies accordingly. So they will be able to impart the knowledge in an inclusive environment.

Problem Statement

Reflective practice in schools needs to be addressed for problem-solving and quality education. We can meet the academic challenges of modern times through reflective practices in the teaching-learning process. For this purpose, the researchers analyzed the gender-based differences and barriers at the Higher Secondary School Level.

Objectives

- To investigate the gender base differences among teachers regarding reflective practice at the higher secondary school level in the public and private sector
- To examine the barriers to performing reflective practice at the higher secondary school level in the public and private sector

Hypotheses

- H₁: There is no significant gender base difference in teachers regarding reflective practice at the higher secondary school level in the public and private sectors
- H₂: There is no significant difference in barriers to performing the reflective practices at higher secondary school level in the public and private sector

LITERATURE REVIEW

The arbitrating role of the teachers has significance for the learners from the school level to the university level. Male and female teachers play a vital role in academia according to the cognitive skills in the teaching-learning process. Research has shown that the role of female teachers is more positive and reflective towards teaching and understanding the students' emotional and societal problems than male colleagues (Antoniou, et al., 2009). Hayat, et al., (2016) studied female teachers' professional behavior and cognitive approach. They stated that they perform their professional responsibilities more actively and are more concerned with their professional attitudes toward students and the educational environment than their male counterparts. Their career-oriented approach to teaching enhances their reflective practices and motivates them to play an initial role in the academic setting. Lenka, et al., (2012) analyzed the professional behaviors of teachers on a gender basis and found that female teachers reflect on enlightening their teaching performances and learn to understand the student's performance to upgrade the academic atmosphere. Further, they pay more consideration towards the rational expansion of the students for their goal attainment.

Ahmad, et al., (2015) explained the gender-based differences in the way that teaching is considered as the female profession in the Pakistani context. The societal environment encourages females to adopt this profession and they get involved passionately. Further, it is included that teaching is considered as the last option of employment for male members of society. This affects the teachers' performance, and female teachers work more deliberately in the teaching field than males. The study explored that although teachers try to perform professionally, some barriers still affect their professional duties. It is quite clear that teachers have to face some issues that demotivate them to follow the reflective practices fully in a classroom environment. It includes fewer resources, lack of training, and noncooperation of administration and senior colleagues. Additional duties also overstretch the teachers, which is the barrier to reflective practices. The management of the educational institutions and other participants need to ponder this matter vigilantly.

The reflection process determines a review system for both male and female teachers to examine the procedures to sort out the existing situations and how to expand for future teaching. This evaluation system promotes reflective practices for analyzing and interpreting the didactic setting (Mathew, et al., 2017). It is proved that reflective practices help teachers to deal with complex situations skillfully. These practices have been applied in different fields for decades; however, their implications in the educational

field are young. The teachers; therefore, need to be trained to deal with the hurdles efficiently. In their study, Maloney and Campbell-Evans, (2002) claim that teachers face many barriers in reflective practice. Inflexible schedules discourage them from reflecting on their performance; however, if they are provided the opportunity by the administration to reflect upon their routine, they can produce good results.

It is essential to train pre-service and in-service teachers to apply reflective practice in academia. They should be motivated to adopt new proficiencies to face the trials of the contemporary era for evolvment and professional development (Graham & Phelps, 2003). Sharar (2012) investigated the barriers and implications of reflective practices from a Pakistani perspective. He highlighted that most teachers are not proficient in applying reflective practices in the educational field, and are thus, unaware of the consequences of reflective practices. As a result, they become reluctant to adopt new ways to enhance their teaching expertise. He further investigated few barriers, like the extra workload of teachers apart from their professional commitments and lack of continuous professional development programs, which play a vital role in the inefficiency of teachers and become barriers to performing reflective practices in the classroom environment in public sector schools in Pakistan. It is imperative to schedule regular professional training programs for in-service teachers, refresher courses, and seminars for their knowledge and provision of updates regarding education. This is how the habit of reflective practice can also be promoted through practical exercises and activities.

Larrivee (2008) investigated the implications of reflective practices in the classroom environment and found that traditional teaching methods should be revised to benefit students' learning. Teachers should reflect upon their instructional approaches to deal with diverse clusters of students. It is observed that the implication of reflective practice requires a special environment in educational institutions. Collaboration of school teachers, administration, and other stakeholders is essential for achieving positive outcomes. The colleagues can work deliberately to achieve institutional goals through reflective practices (Al-Hashamyah, 2004). Mustafa (2005) studied the barriers to reflective practice and concluded that the teachers should be sturdier in giving feedback on the teaching-learning process rather than avoiding assessment of their teaching activities, which is the main component of reflective practice. Further, they need more time to be ready to discuss the hurdles in their teaching activities with the administration and other relevant authorities. Lack of professional training programs and exposure to new policies hinder reflection and its output. It is suggested that discussion forums should be deployed in educational institutions, where the teachers can discuss their problems and professional development opportunities for further improvement. Reflective practices are based on critical thinking skills so teachers should be provided the opportunities to learn these skills.

According to Al-Jabri (2009), it is a harsh reality that in many schools, the administration compels the teachers to follow the established policies, and they are not allowed to perform the activities of their own choice. Their feedback given through reflection is thus avoided and they are forced to follow the school routine mindlessly. The senior teachers are mostly habitual to traditional ways of teaching and they do not reflect upon their teaching practices. Davies (2012) has discussed his views about hurdles in doing reflective practice. He states that sometimes it is difficult for teachers to understand the value of reflective practice, and they avoid reflecting "on action" and "after the action". Professional training and a conducive environment are essential for implementing reflective practices in classroom activities. It is a fact that researchers in the field of education have highly reflective practice skills at the international level. The present research was intended to investigate the gender differences in reflective practice and the barriers teachers face in applying reflective practice at the higher secondary school level.

METHODOLOGY

This was a quantitative study and the survey method was followed to collect the data. The population of the study comprised school teachers of district Rawalpindi and the sample was the higher secondary school level teachers. There was a sample of 300 teachers i.e. 199 male teachers and 101 female teachers. Further, the sample comprised 167 teachers from public-sector and 133 from private-sector schools. The study was delimited to male and female teachers teaching in higher secondary classes (1st year and 2nd

year). A stratified random sampling technique was followed in this study. Self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection. Three experts validated the questionnaire. Five-point Likert scale was used. The reliability of the questionnaire was 0.808. Descriptive and influential statistics were applied through SPSS to analyze the collected data.

RESULTS & FINDINGS

Table 1

Demographic profile and descriptive statistic of the sample (n=300)

Characteristics	Categories	f	%
Gender	Male	199	66
	Female	101	34
Sector	Public	167	56
	Private	133	44

Table 1 shows the demographical profile of the sample with descriptive statistics. The sample of the study contained 300 teachers. Among those, 199 were male teachers, and 101 were female teachers; 167 teachers were from the public sector and 133 teachers were from the private sector.

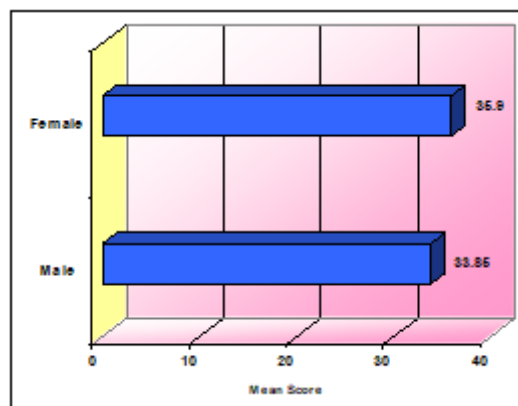
Table 2

Gender base difference in teachers regarding reflective practice at the higher secondary school level (n=300)

Gender	N	df	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Male	199	198	33.85	4.396	- 3.893	.000
Female	101	100	35.90	4.115		

*Significant t-value at 0.05

Table 2 describes the gender base difference in the mean score about reflective practice at the higher secondary school level. 35.90 was the mean score of female teachers and 33.85 was the mean score of male teachers. There was a difference of 2.05 between the scores of male and female teachers, which indicated that female teachers had higher mean scores than male colleagues. The p-value is .000 which shows a strong statistical significance. The hypothesis that there is no significant gender base difference in teachers regarding reflective practice at the higher secondary school level in the public and private sectors is therefore, rejected.



Graph. 1. Graphic form of Gender base difference in higher secondary school teachers

The results are shown in the graph which indicates the gender-based difference of mean (35.90 female and 33.85 male) in teachers regarding reflective practice at higher secondary school level.

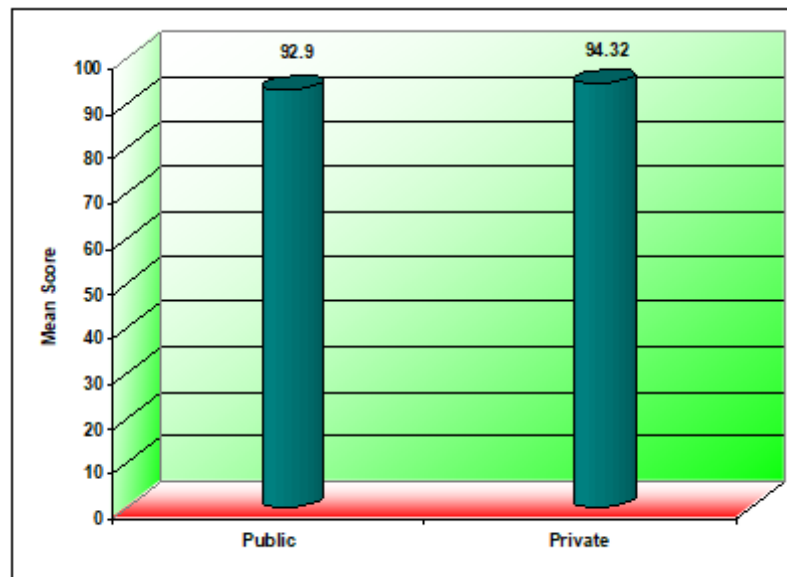
Table 3

Difference in the barriers to performing reflective practice at the higher secondary school level in the public and private sector (n=300)

Sector	N	df	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Public	167	166	92.90	9.394	- 1.027	.305
Private	133	132	94.32	14.316		

*Significant t-value at 0.05

Table 3 indicates the values of public and private sector teachers of higher secondary schools regarding barriers to performing reflective practices. The results show a difference in the mean scores of public and private sector teachers. The mean score of public sector higher secondary school teachers is 92.90, the mean score of private sector school teachers is 94.30, and the p-value is .305, greater than 0.05. It indicates that the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in barriers to performing reflective practices at higher secondary school levels in the public and private sectors is accepted.



Graph. 2. Graphic form of barriers to performing reflective practices in public and private higher secondary schools

The result of differences in the barriers to performing reflective practice at the higher secondary school level in the public and private sectors are shown in this graph.

Discussion

This study explored the gender differences and barriers regarding the reflective practice of teachers. Reflective practice has a significant importance in the professional success of a teacher. The responsibility of the teachers at the higher secondary school level is to prepare adolescents for futuristic challenges. They have to be very cautious and observant in carrying out their duties because the learners have to choose the professional track after graduation. Therefore, the teachers at this level need to ensure reflective practice in the classroom environment. Among other factors, the gender also affects the performance of the teachers. It is observed from a Pakistani perspective that gender differences are sustained in the teaching profession. This research study indicated that female teachers had higher scores in reflective practices than their counterparts. Islahi and Nasreen (2013) have rightly reiterated that it is necessary to research the impact of gender differences on the professional life of teachers within various aspects.

The results of the present research highlight the gender differences in reflective practice. Luschei, (2012) has also beheld in his research that gender differences are prominent in teachers' professional roles in the teaching-learning process and female teachers are more proficient professionally than male teachers. The present study indicates female teachers' interest in reflective practice, highlighting the common trend in Pakistani society. They try to adopt innovative ideas to improve their pedagogical skills. This study result is in contrast with the findings of Kulkarni (2000), who claimed that male teachers more effectively reflect on teaching compared to female teachers. In our environment, we can observe that teaching is the least choice of the males in selecting the professions. Most females prefer teaching according to the environment and norms of our society, so they mostly become devoted teachers, and their social setup determines their interest in teaching. Generally, teaching is considered a first-rate profession for females, and most males select this profession as the last option. However, some researchers have proved that there is no effect of gender difference on teacher performance (Baraiya & Baraiya, 2013).

In the present study, the researchers tried to discover teachers' opinions about the hurdles in applying reflective practice. There was no difference of opinion regarding barriers in performing reflective practice. Mostly, the teachers at the higher secondary school level lack information about reflective practice in Pakistan and are thus unaware of any hurdles in doing reflective practice. Khan, et al., (2014) also concludes in his study that reflective practice is not commonly functional in the teaching-learning process in Pakistan as compared to developed countries. Hence, teachers are not familiar with the advantages of reflective practice. Mostly, the teachers do not get support from the administration or their colleagues to apply different classroom reflective practice strategies. They remain reluctant to do consistent reflection on their teaching skills or professional practices. In Pakistan, the lack of professional development programs for teachers is also a barrier to enhancing the proficiency of reflective practice. Mustafa (2005) opines that most school teachers follow the unchanged routine constantly and avoid reflection on their teaching strategies, which makes the educational system stagnant. The teachers follow a monotonous routine and do not reflect upon teaching-learning process and the educational environment, and the process of reflective practice remains deceased.

Professional training should be conducted to promote reflective practice among public and private sector teachers. It will help to improve the standard of teaching strategies. The concerned authorities should support the teachers in using reflective practices in the classrooms, which also raises the quality of education and standard of the educational institutions. Naseer, et al., (2020) opined in his study that the major hurdle for teachers in doing reflective practice is mostly the non-cooperative behavior of the administration and lack of facilities. In this modern era, teachers should be provided with modern equipment to utilize in classroom settings, which can help them modernize their traditional teaching skills. Denton (2011) highlights the importance of integrating technology in education to help teachers with reflective practice more comprehensively.

CONCLUSION

The current study explored the gender differences and barriers in reflective practice at the higher secondary school level. It was concluded that there was a gender base difference in teachers regarding performing reflective practices. Females were more interested in reflective practices than male teachers. This supports other research findings too that females adopt the teaching profession with interest and have shown more concern in reflective practice than their counterparts. They are willing to enhance their abilities as good professional teachers. It is also concluded that the teachers of both public and private sectors face barriers to performing reflective practices. It can be concluded that the routine and existing environment may not favour implementing the reflective practice for day-to-day academic work. Most traditional teaching methods are accepted in our schools and teachers are forced to follow set patterns instead of innovative pedagogical skills. Another reason may be that the teachers only impart knowledge and do not try to follow the reflective practice alone because they assume that the students cannot engross additional information due to their basic learning skills. Reflective practice needs devotion, effort, and time, which most teachers lack. A dearth of awareness about reflective practice is also a major barrier. The teachers are not acquainted with the benefits of reflective practice as they are not trained in this aspect exclusively.

Recommendations

Professional training and workshops may be conducted for the school teachers to raise awareness about reflective practice.

Public and private sector schools could promote a conducive environment for reflective practice and support and encourage the teachers to implement reflective practices in teaching-learning.

Competing Interest

The authors had no competing interests.

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