

HOW REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IMPROVES TEACHERS' CLASSROOM TEACHING SKILL? CASE OF COMMUNITY BASED SCHOOLS IN DISTRICT CHITRAL, KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

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ABSTRACT

Reflectivity is the essence of quality teaching and learning. Reflective teachers understand the issues of education and are better able to help their students. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding the role of reflective practice in improving teachers' classroom teaching skills. For data collection a close ended questionnaire was designed and administered to 150 teachers in 30 Community Based Schools in district Chitral, KPK Pakistan. These teachers were provided a six months rigorous training in reflective practice. After that they were allowed to teach in their respective fields in the sampled schools. After lapse of one month, they were provided with questionnaires as a part of follow up activity. Their perceptions are recorded and presented here in a descriptive form. Results of the study showed that teachers who were trained in reflective practice have found a big difference in their teaching skills. The sampled teachers are now able to plan daily for their lessons. They are able to solve their classroom problems more confidently than before. They keep regular reflective diary in which they record their experiences on daily basis. They can solve the problems of students and guide them in a more competent way. They involve their students in classroom discussion and report the progress of the students to parents and the school management regularly. On the basis of this study it can be concluded that reflective practice helps teachers develop their teaching and learning skills. This is the foundation of professional development.

Keywords: Teacher's perception, reflective practice, classroom teaching skills, quality of teaching.

INTRODUCTION

One of the major concerns of parents, communities and students of the present day is the decreasing standards of education. The quality of education depends on quality of teachers (Pollard, 1997). Reflectivity is one of the characteristics of effective teachers. Reflective teachers use high level thinking and problem solving skills so necessary for the development of learners in the process of teaching and learning (Main, 1994).

Research has continuously proved that unless teachers use their creative skills in the process of education, students' development will remain incomplete. Teachers are models for students. Reflective practice develops creative skills of teachers (Kemmis, 1994). Reflectivity increases the abilities of teachers to plan, organize, critically think, observe and create. It enables teachers to learn new and variety strategies of teaching and learning in the process of

education. Reflective teachers offer a variety of materials to students for learning and experience (Knights, 1994).

When teachers create an environment of care, love and democracy inside the classroom, students become highly motivated, which results in their better learning. This habit of friendliness usually prevails in reflective teachers (Keogh & Walker, 1994). Reflective teachers are aware of the intentions of their students. They plan the learning experiences according to the needs and expectations of the students which help in attaining the attention of students during teaching and learning. In an active learning environment students actively participate in the process of teaching and learning which is the one of the main goals of education (Heron, 1994).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of Community Based School teachers in district Chitral regarding the role of reflective practice in the improvement of their classroom teaching skills. Reflective practice is defined by Schon (1996) as a process of critical investigation into ones' own teaching practices for bringing an improvement in the teaching and learning process.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The main research objective of this study was to investigate the perceptions of Community Based Schools Teachers of District Chitral regarding the role of reflective practice in development of their teaching skills.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

New developments in the field of education have necessitated that teachers should know various teaching and learning strategies for enabling students to optimize their learning. This will not materialize unless teachers become critical investigators in the process of education (Hillocks, 1995). Therefore, it was hypothesized that teachers in Community based Schools in district Chitral were teaching reflectively in their real classroom situation and their teaching skills have improved after attending training on reflective practice.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Reflective teachers are effective teachers. Effective teachers set priorities and examine the purpose of classroom activities. Such teachers are aware of the purpose of curriculum and design interesting teaching aids for meaning learning (Hole & McEntee, 1999). In one of his studies Atherson (2005) argues that reflective practitioner enliven the classroom by making it challenging, interesting and stimulating for students. Glen, Clark & Nicole (1995) identified six phases of teacher's reflective growth as part of a developmental continuum of a career teacher such as novice, apprentice, professional, expert, distinguished, and evaluative.

According to Dobbins (1997) teaching is an active process. Reflective teaching is examining one's own actions. Reflective teachers create possible links between the needs and specific actions of learners. Despite time constraints and the demands of the prescribed curriculum, reflective teachers focus on the diverse needs of learners. This approach enables the teachers to know the needs of learners and how to be successful in the classroom (Holly, 1991).

Clarke (1995), found that reflective teachers always engage themselves in a continuous cycle of self-observation and self-evaluation in order to understand their own actions. They use teaching variety of teaching and learning strategies and the reactions they prompt in themselves and in learners. (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1994), explore the role of the reflective

teacher as a coach. Reflective teacher most effectively coach student by using students' personal histories, dialogue journals, and small and large-interesting group discussions about their experiences. Reflectivity helps teachers reflect upon and improve their skills. (Boud & Walker, 1998), found that reflective teachers are critical of their own practices. For making teaching and learning more meaningful reflective teachers prefer using different teaching strategies and methods in classroom.

Clift et al. (1990) have highlighted that reflective teachers are more practical in evaluating learning process. Such teachers ask questions from the students during classroom activities engage them in the learning process actively. This is an indication of effective teaching. Reflective teacher create a caring environment for students which leads to promotion of trust. Reflective teachers base their teaching and learning on effective planning which keeps aware of their targets. Atkin & Murphy (1993) write that reflection on teaching helps teachers become self-directed professionals. Boud & Walker (1998) believe that reflection on teaching helps teachers realize their inner abilities and needs of their students. Such teachers appreciate task completion or achievements of students that give them confidence and energy. Confidence building is the foundation of quality education.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This current research study was based on survey design which descriptively presents the results in simple percentages and graphs.

Participants

This study investigated perceptions of 150 teachers of 30 Community Based Schools in district Chitral. The teachers were randomly sampled.

Instruments

The role of the reflective practice was investigated using a close ended questionnaire form 150 teachers. The questionnaire was pilot tested in three schools before administering to the sample teachers. This ensured the validity and reliability of the items. In the light of the pilot testing, the instrument was refined and finally distributed among the sampled teachers.

Design and Procedure

For this study only male school schools teachers were selected due to cultural reasons. Although some of the community based schools have co-education system. Yet the number of the female teachers was very less. Thus the study was delimited to boys' schools only. All the sampled teachers were already trained in the ideology of reflective practice. The teachers were selected on the basis of simple random sampling. The results of the study were presented in simple percentages.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The data has been tabulated and analysed with regard to the responses of teachers for each statement to see the difference in the levels of responses of participants. For this purpose the degree of agreement and disagreement with regard to each statement for teachers were ranked by using Likert Scale such as Agreed (A), Unknown (U) and Disagree (DA). This helped the researcher in comparing the responses of the participants for each statement that has also been shown on a bar graph for more clarity of the analysis.

Analysis of Data

Table 1. The teachers reflects on the taught lesson after classroom teaching

<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Agreed (A)</i>	<i>Unknown (U)</i>	<i>Disagreed (DA)</i>
20	18	02	00
Percentage (%)	90 %	10%	0%

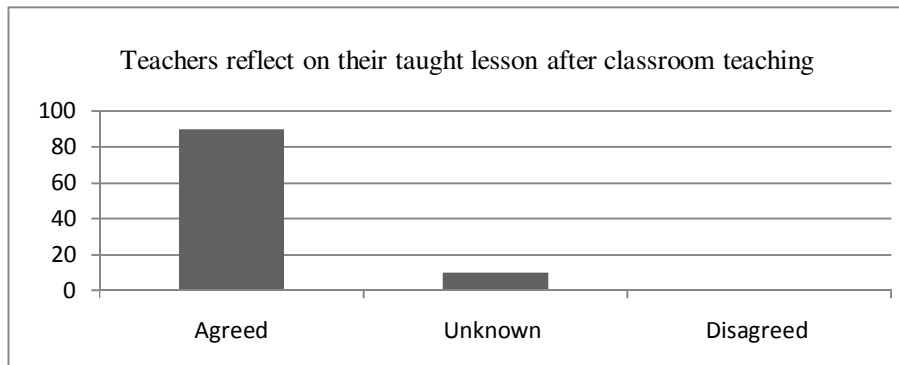


Table 1 show that teachers in the Community Based Schools (CBS) Chitral reflect on their classroom teachings. Responses in the above analysis show that out of the total, 90% of the teachers agreed to the statement that they reflected on their taught lesson after classroom teaching. Only 10% of the teachers replied that they didn't know how to reflect. The reason could be that there is a general trend of teacher turnout in most of the private schools in Chitral. Sometimes teachers leave their job in search of better job opportunities. On the basis of the above figures we can say that teachers reflect on their taught lesson after classroom teaching.

Table 2. Teachers know how to reflect on the taught lesson

<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Agreed (A)</i>	<i>Unknown (U)</i>	<i>Disagreed (DA)</i>
20	19-	00	01
Percentage (%)	95%	00%	5%

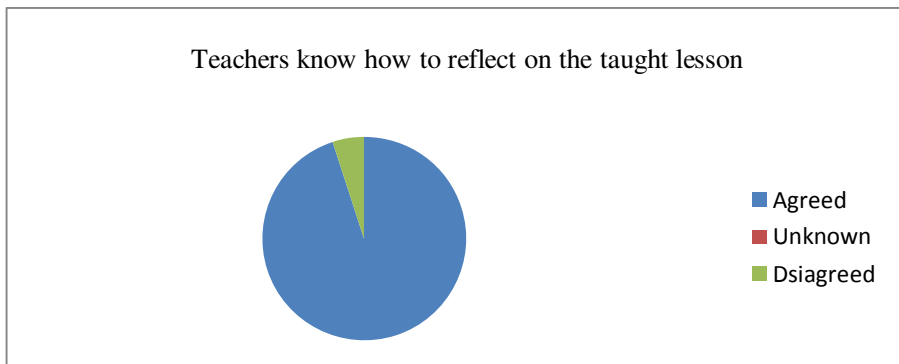
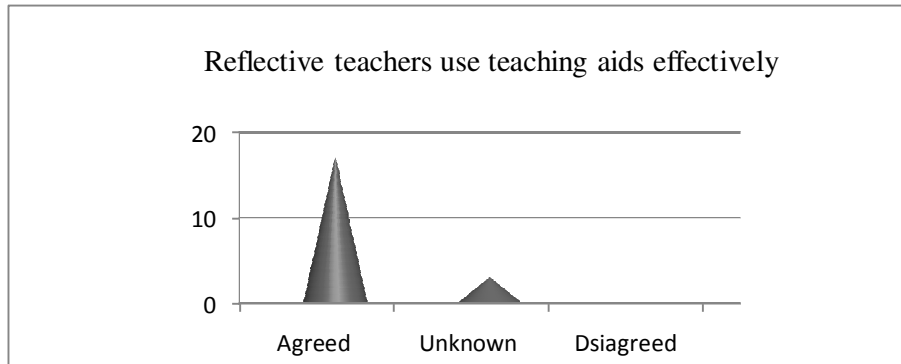


Table 2 shows that since teachers in the sampled schools had been provided training on reflective practice. In the above graph 95% teachers out of twenty have responded positively to the statement that they know how to reflect on the taught lesson expect 5% of the teacher

who may be new one or disinterested in giving his /her opinion. Therefore on the basis of this analysis we can strongly say that teachers are familiar with the concept of reflective practice and they know how to reflect on their classroom teachings.

Reflective teachers use teaching aids skillfully

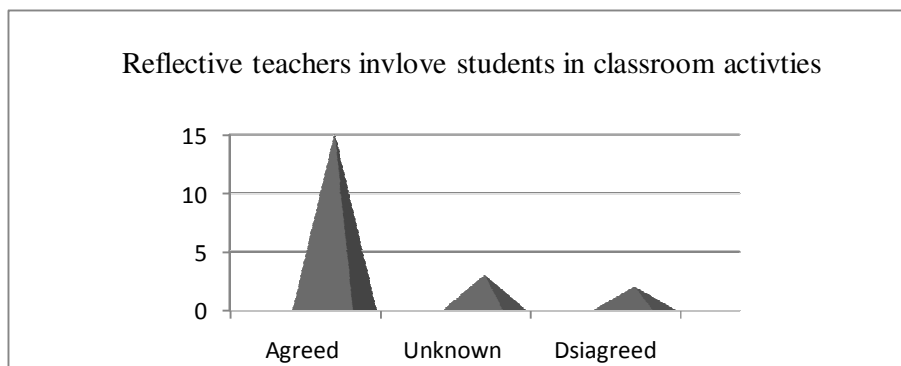
<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Agreed (A)</i>	<i>Unknown (U)</i>	<i>Disagreed (DA)</i>
20	17	03	0
Percentage (%)	85%	15%	0%



To the above statement 85% of the teachers replied that they were now able to use teaching aids effectively in the classroom activities for meaning teaching and learning. Only 15% of the teachers responded that they didn't know how it. The reason could be that they were new teachers or simply didn't like to show their response. It shows that reflective practice enables teachers how to use the available teaching resources purposefully in the class.

Table 3. Reflective teachers involve students in classroom activities

<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Agreed (A)</i>	<i>Unknown (U)</i>	<i>Disagreed (DA)</i>
20	15	03	02
Percentage (%)	75%	15%	10%



In the above Table 3 a great number 75% of the teachers responded that they involve their students in the classroom activities. It means teachers do not dominate students rather allow them to express their ideas or share ideas with others. Three of the teachers said that they did not know about it. Two of the teachers did not agree to this. May be that they either were new

teachers or does not like share power with students. The above analysis shows that majority of the teachers prefer to involve students in the classroom activities.

Table 4. Reflective teachers evaluate the taught lesson effectively

<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Agreed (A)</i>	<i>Unknown (U)</i>	<i>Disagreed (DA)</i>
20	19	01	0
Percentage (%)	95%	5%	0%

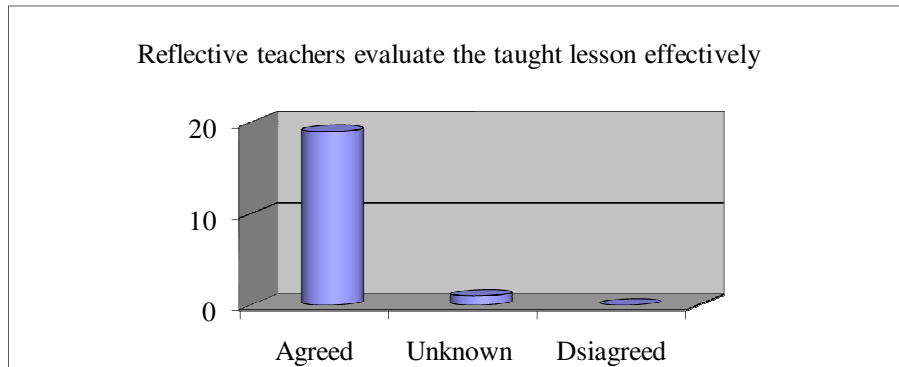
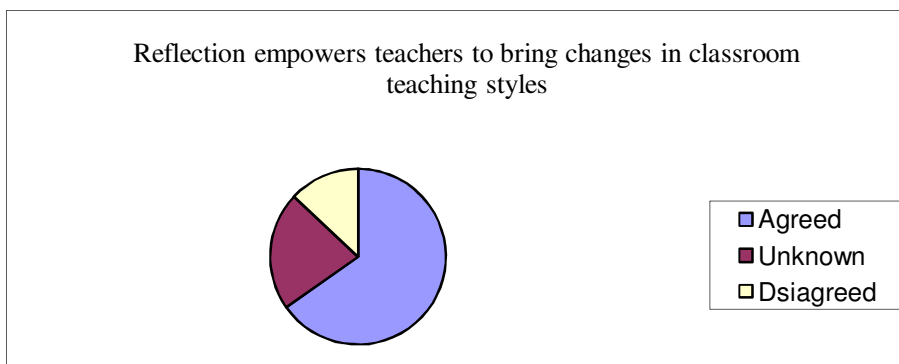


Table 4 shows that out of twenty teachers 95% responded that they could evaluate their taught lesson more effectively. According to them it became possible as they did reflect on their student learning outcomes after each lesson by asking questions, giving them test and so on. Only one teacher showed anonymity. The reason could be that either the teacher did not like to share response or did not know how to evaluate the students learning outcome effectively.

Table 5. Reflection empowers teachers to bring changes in classroom teaching styles

<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Agreed (A)</i>	<i>Unknown (U)</i>	<i>Disagreed (DA)</i>
20	12	05	03
Percentage (%)	60%	25%	15%



In the above table 5 majorities of the teachers 60% responded that they bring changes in their teaching styles as per learner’s need and classroom environment. On the contrary five teachers said that they did know about it. It could be due to their indifference or they liked status quo. Only three teachers opposed this. It shows that majority of the teachers like

changes according to the need of classroom environment and reflective practice enables teachers to do this.

Table 6. Reflective teachers plan better on the basis of new learning

<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Agreed (A)</i>	<i>Unknown (U)</i>	<i>Disagreed (DA)</i>
20	01	01	18
Percentage (%)	5%	5%	90%

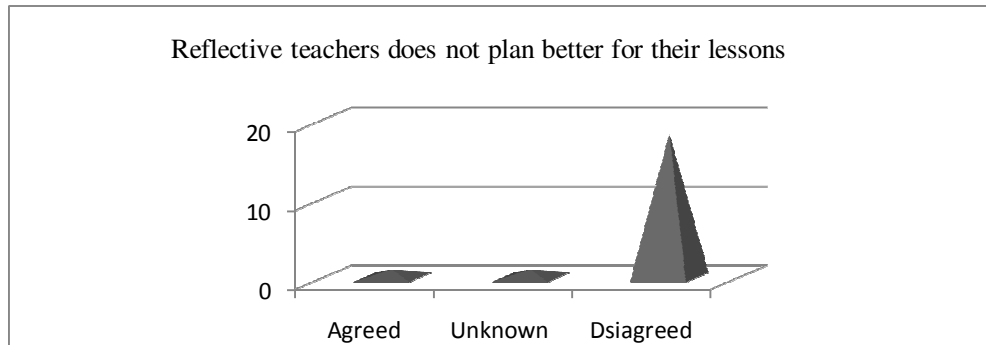


Table 6 shows that as a response to the above statement 90% of the teachers responded that they could plan better for their lessons after each classroom teaching. Only one of the teachers said that reflective practice had nothing to do with lesson planning. One more teachers showed anonymity. On the basis of the above analysis we can safely conclude that reflective practice enables teachers to plan better and effectively for classroom teaching.

Table 7. Reflective teachers use variety of strategies in classroom teaching

<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Agreed (A)</i>	<i>Unknown (U)</i>	<i>Disagreed (DA)</i>
20	16	00	04
Percentage (%)	80%	0%	20%

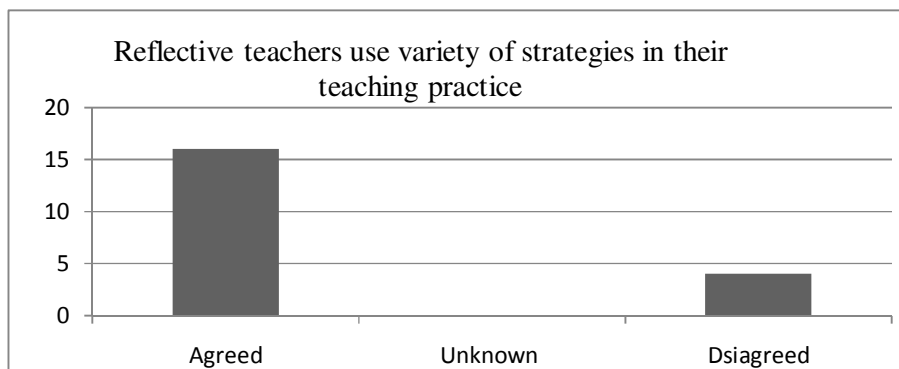


Table 7 shows that in the above statement 80% of the teachers agreed that they are able to use different teaching strategies according to classroom need and requirement. Whereas four teachers said that they did not think so. May be they were new teachers or do not like to bring innovations in their teaching styles. The analysis and with the support of literature we can say that reflective practice prepares teachers to use new methods and strategies in classroom teaching.

Table 8. Reflective teachers keep parents informed about the progress of the child.

<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Agreed (A)</i>	<i>Unknown (U)</i>	<i>Disagreed (DA)</i>
20	17	02	01
Percentage (%)	85%	10%	00%

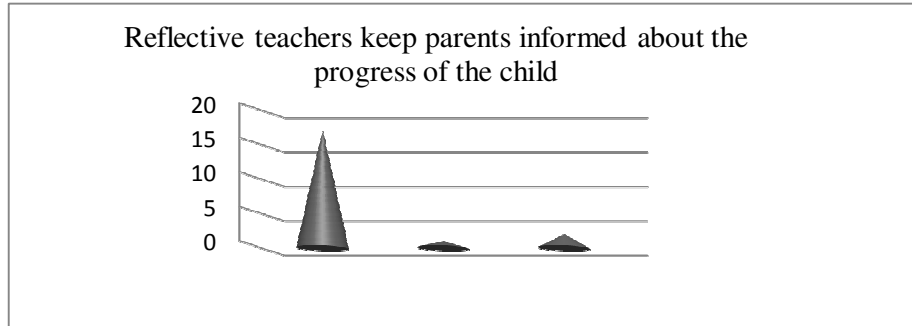


Table 8 shows that in the above statement 85% of the teachers responded positively. Only one teacher disagreed which means that reflective practice educates teachers to inform consider parents as integral part of child education.

Table 9. Reflective teachers create less interesting learning environment in classroom

<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Agreed (A)</i>	<i>Unknown (U)</i>	<i>Disagreed (DA)</i>
20	00	04	16
Percentage (%)	0%	20%	80%

Table 9 shows that 80% of the students disagreed to the statement that reflective teachers does not create interesting learning environment inside the classroom. It means the teachers know the importance of reflective practice. Therefore, majority of the teachers opposed this statement. However four of the teachers remained silent which is a negligible repose. On the basis of this analysis we can say that reflective practice is helpful for teachers to create an interesting environment for students.

CONCLUSIONS

This research study concludes that reflective teachers are effective teachers. Such teachers set priorities and examine the purpose of classroom activities and the curriculum and design new teaching aids for meaning learning. Reflective teachers create a stimulating learning environment in the classroom.

The study concludes that teachers in the community based schools Chitral, despite of many challenging, difficulties as reflective teachers focus on the diverse learners and their needs in the real classroom environment. Teachers in the community based schools Reflective teachers are now self-observers and self-evaluators. This characteristic enables them to know their own actions and the problems of learners.

The study explores that reflective teachers work as coach and mentor. Teachers in the community based schools create a friendly environment inside the classroom where students are able to participate as equal stakeholders rather than recipient of knowledge. The teachers in these schools now develop lesson plans and implement it in the classroom teaching. This practice according to them enables them to be organized and disciplined.

This study also concludes that teachers in the community based schools Chitral keep reflective journal in which they record their teaching and learning experiences and events. They use the diary as a tool for learning and development.

The study also discovers that reflectivity has helped the teachers in the community based schools to become self-directed practitioners. These teachers demonstrate care, love and respect for their students.

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