



Developing Socially Responsive Teaching Practices through Reflective Observation in Teacher Education Programs

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at how teaching reflection can help socially responsive teaching practices develop in teacher education programs. Socially responsive practices are extremely focused tools in the teaching toolbox, especially in the current education landscape that is characterized by cultural diversity, social inequity and education-related ethics challenges. Utilizing the frameworks of experiential learning and reflective practice, this study focuses on the outcomes of structured reflective observation on the professional attitudes and instructional choices of prospective teachers. Research participants consisted of pre-service teachers participating in teaching education programs and the reflections, interviews, classroom observation, and survey tools facilitated the collection of data for this mixed-method study. The quantitative data was analyzed utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis, while the qualitative data underwent thematic analysis in order to understand participants' depth of reflection and change in teaching perspective. The results of this study indicate that reflective observation can drive teachers' socially responsive practices and enhance the social context sensitivity of learners, critical reflections on their own teaching and responsive teaching practices.

Background of the Study

In recent decades, because of the rapid shifts in social, cultural, and technological landscapes, the entire field of teacher education has changed in significant ways. Today's classrooms are no longer uniform; rather, they are the product of social diversity and inequality, varying cultural contexts, social ethics, and the changing needs of learners. In these settings, teachers are expected to go

beyond knowledge transmission to socially engaged professionally, as constructive, inclusive, and supporting a democracy and ethics teaching relationships with learners (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Zeichner, 2010).

Socially responsive teaching involves the social context of teaching, the lived experiences of the learners, and the social justice and equity outcomes of teaching and learning (Gay, 2018). Yet, most teacher education programs remain with a strong technical focus, and a content knowledge emphasis, where there are few, if any, opportunities for pre-service teachers to reflect on the social dimensions of their teaching and the social responsibility of teaching (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016). This indicates the importance of developing teaching frameworks that emphasize a thoughtful, contextual, and socially responsive approach to teaching.

Kettle's (2014) analysis and reflection on multiple types of experience provides a basis to think about the experiential learning theory and how Kolb's (1984) theory can frame the analysis and subsequent actions of educators attempting to address the needs of students who emerge from a wide variety of cultural, educational and experiential contexts. Kettle's (2014) analysis and reflection on multiple types of experience provides a basis to think about the learning cycle as a sequence of tangible experience, reflective observation, conceptual abstractions, and active experimentation. Of the four building blocks of Kolb's (1984) learning cycle, reflective observation provides educators with the best opportunity to reclaim and reshape the lived experiences of educators. Fleming and Tindal (2015) suggest that reflection of this type helps educators understand the social contexts of learners, as well as, the social context of the educators themselves.

Reflective observation encourages educators to analyze the lived experiences of themselves and the educators (socially and) contextually. Schön (1983) reiterates the need to act reflectively on and in practice and admits that reflective practitioners have a greater opportunity to address the ambiguity and complexity of a practice situation. Reflective observation helps streamline the decision-making and behavioral patterns of pre-service teachers to act in a way that is reasoned, reflective, and socially responsible (Farrell, 2015). Research paper gives the impression that teacher reflection causes a greater sensitivity to diversity, more inclusive interaction, and inclusion of the interaction in the class (Jay and Johnson, 2002).

Consider, the teacher education programs in developing countries, like Pakistan. Here, the role of socially responsive teaching has even more significance. Educational institutions deal with the consequences of various resource-related, socio-economic, linguistic, and cultural problems. Reflexive teachers deal with these problems, or so the theory goes. Akhtar and Iqbal (2017). It follows, then, that teacher education curricula with an emphasis on reflective observation stand a better chance of equipping teachers to meaningfully engage social realities, and, employ pedagogies that are child-centered and inclusive.

In spite of the emphasis given to reflective practice in the field of education, the empirical literature on the role of reflective observation in the development of socially responsive teaching is scant, particularly in the context of teacher education within South Asia. This study aims to contribute to the literature through an examination of the role of reflective observation in the professional development of pre-service teachers and the development of socially responsive teaching. The study also aims to contribute to the development of curricula, teaching practice, and policy in teacher education.

Statement of the Problem

In the light of current educational challenges, teacher education programs are designed to help prospective teachers develop the skills and competencies required to meet the academic and social

needs of learners. Unfortunately, many teacher preparation programs are still focusing on content knowledge and teaching strategies, while paying little attention to the socially responsive teaching practices. Because of this, pre-service teachers start their careers with a set of teaching skills that are insufficient to engage meaningfully with the social, cultural, and economic diversity of their learners.

Professional learning has commonly accepted reflective observation as a core aspect of it, yet the planning and integration of reflective activities in teacher education programs is still lacking. Often, reflection is seen as an informal or background activity to teaching and learning, rather than a core component of the teaching practice. As a result, pre-service teachers do not have the chance to develop the ability to reflect on their experiences in the classroom, examine their beliefs, and formulate socially responsive and ethically reasonable pedagogical strategies.

In Pakistan's teacher education programs, the challenges posed by classroom diversity, limited resources, and different learner demographics exacerbate this issue. Yet, despite these real challenges, there is a paucity of empirical studies examining the role of reflective observation in the cultivation of socially responsive teaching behaviors of pre-service teachers. This gap calls for a comprehensive exploration of reflective observation and its impact on teachers' professional disposition, pedagogical awareness, and practice. The current study attempts to fill this gap by investigating the impact of reflective observation as a teaching strategy to develop socially responsive teaching practices in teacher education programs.

Research Questions

- 1) To what extent does reflective observation affect socially responsive teaching practices development for pre-service teachers in teacher education programs?
- 2) How do pre-service teachers understand the role of reflective observation in contextualizing learners and the educational system socially?
- 3) How does reflective observation affect the change in professional disposition and instructional decision-making of pre-service teachers?

Significance of the Study

There are several ways in which the current study stands. It will add to the knowledge of teacher education, linking in concrete terms, experiential learning theory and socially responsive teaching practices. It addresses a gap in reflective observation and contributes to the understanding of reflective processes and teachers' professional development and social advocacy. From a practical and professional standpoint, the current study will have a positive impact on teacher educators, curriculum developers, and educational institutions. The current study provides the foundations for the evidence based practice of integrating reflective observation into teacher education programs and practice teaching. Such practice will help pre-service teachers respond to the variation in the composition of learners in a classroom, create a socially just, inclusive, and caring learning environment, and practice responsible and ethical teaching. The study gives educational planners and policymakers constructive feedback focusing on ways to improve the quality of teacher education programs. The findings, centered on the importance of constructive reflective practices, can guide the role of reflective practice in the development of professionally socially responsive teachers, the accreditation standards, and the professional development programs. In addition, in the Pakistani context, this study fills an important niche by providing relevant insights aimed at the specific reform of the teacher education system and the educational outcomes.

Literature Review

Teacher education is important for improving educational quality and for ensuring that teachers are prepared for the complexities of today's classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2017). An important part of this is for teachers to obtain and develop socially responsive practices, that is, teaching strategies that recognize and address learners' different social, cultural, and contextual backgrounds (Gay, 2018; Cochran-Smith et al., 2016). As outlined in the literature on educator socially responsive teaching, experiential learning and reflective practice theories describe reflective observation as a tool that can assist teacher candidates in developing socially responsive teaching. This review integrates and analyzes empirical and theoretical literature on socially responsive teaching, reflective observation, teacher education, and their interrelationships.

Socially Responsive Teaching

Socially responsive teaching, refers to a teacher's ability to recognize and respond to their students' social identities, and cultural and life experiences in a way that fosters equity and inclusion and enriches their learning (Gay, 2018). It incorporates culturally sustaining pedagogy, critical awareness, and ethical responsiveness (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Zeichner, 2010). In classrooms with diverse students, socially responsive teachers foster meaningful interactions, decrease cultural friction, and improve learning outcomes for all students (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

The social aspects of teaching have been well documented and critiqued in traditional teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016). In many cases, programs are still focused on content and subject matter and ignore the sociocultural aspects of inclusive practice (Sleeter, 2011). Recently, new literature has documented that the social complexities of schools can be recognized and responded to by pre-service teachers through integrating reflection, critical analysis, and community engagement (Banks et al., 2005).

Reflective observation and reflection theory

Reflection is often seen as a central pillar of teacher development. In Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, he positions reflective observation as a key phase in the learning cycle that enables learners to internalize and develop meanings from their experiences. Schön (1983) differentiates between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. He suggests that practitioners who reflect on and in their practice are better equipped to manage their experiences and in turn, enhance their practice.

Teachers need to recognize the actions they have taken in the classroom. Being observant means that they need to recognize the beliefs and assumptions that influence their actions (Loughran, 2002). Reflective teachers reported to have an adaptive teaching strategy and professional judgment (Farrell, 2015). Reflective practice, in contrast, has a positive correlation to the enhanced value of social empathy and moral reasoning. These traits are vital to socially responsive teaching (Jay & Johnson, 2002; Zeichner & Liston, 2013).

The Role of Reflective Observation in Teacher Education

The implementation of reflective observation in teacher education programs has positive influences on the development of teacher candidates in various areas. For instance, reflective journals, observation guides, and debriefing have shown to improve the adaptive instructional practices of pre-service teachers (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Zeichner & Liston, 2013). In their mixed-methods study, Larrivee and Cooper (2006) documented the impact of reflective practice on teacher candidates' positive attitudes toward diversity and classroom management.

Reflection tied to practicums shows us that pre-service teachers who are field aware increase their responsiveness to learners' social contexts and their ability to adapt instruction (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Hammerness et al, 2005). These gaps suggest that practical classroom challenges help to teach the social realities why reflective observation is necessary.

Patience is needed to see the benefits of reflective observation, and this is the challenge in teaching. Some pre-service teachers have mentioned that teacher educators fail to provide enough models of reflective observation, they run out of time, and they have no frameworks of explicit reflection (Zeichner & Liston, 2013; Korthagen, 2010). Reflection is shallow and doesn't contribute to the profession if it is not thought deeply about (Mezirow, 1990).

With regard to developing nations, and specifically Pakistan, the challenges of being resource poor, culturally many students must deal with large classes, and they live in cultures that are historically rote over reflective (Akhtar & Iqbal, 2017). These challenges make it even more necessary to create opportunities to practice reflection.

Connecting Reflective Observation to Social Responsiveness

Previous studies have demonstrated the significance of reflection for the growth of teachers, but few studies have researched the relationship of reflective observation and socially responsive teaching. Though Gay (2018) and Sleeter (2011) suggest reflection facilitates the attainment of cultural competence and responsiveness, there is very little empirical evidence that shows real transformation in socially responsive practices. This gap calls for the need of specific studies focused on operationalizing reflective observation in teacher education and assessing its impact on socially responsive attitudes and behaviors.

Research Gaps

Despite the ample amount of literature available on reflective practices and teacher education, there are still research gaps.

The lack of empirical research that attempts to explain how reflective observation impacts socially responsive teaching practices remains the most researchable gap (Gay, 2018; Cochran-Smith et al., 2016). The lack of research in South Asian settings, which are characterized by sociocultural diversity and inequitable educational systems, is the most described gap in the literature (Akhtar & Iqbal, 2017). The lack of incorporation of reflective practice frameworks into teacher education programs in developing countries is the most documented gap (Korthagen, 2010). This study, therefore, attempts to address these gaps by analyzing the role of reflective observation in the development of socially responsive teaching practices of pre-service teachers in teacher education.

The literature shows that the use of reflective practices assists in the responsiveness of learners and the development of teachers. Even though reflective observation has been effective in the development of self and the growth of teaching, there is little documentation that connects it to socially responsive teaching, especially concerning teacher education in Pakistan. This paper seeks to find out the reflective observation of pre-service teachers and how it affects their socially inclusive teaching.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The current study uses a mixed-methods research approach and reflects observation as a socially responsive teaching practice in teacher education programs. Using a mixed-methods approach is

justified as it fosters data triangulation and it results in both measurable and descriptive outcomes concerning participants' experiences and perceptions.

The quantitative aspect focuses on measuring the level of effect which reflective observation has on pre – service teachers' attitudes and socially responsive teaching practices and the qualitative aspect investigates the participants' reflective experiences and professional learning in greater detail.

Research Approach

The study employs a sequential explanatory design of mixed-methods. In the first phase, a quantitative approach is used to collect and analyze data in order to discover trends and associations. In the second phase, data of a qualitative nature are collected to provide explanations, elaborations, and context to the outcomes of the quantitative phase.

Population and Sample

The study's population is pre – service teachers registered in teacher education programs at the university level. A sample is obtained from the teacher education departments through purposive sampling as participants are required to be involved in teaching practicum or in classroom observation activities.

A sample of pre-service teachers is selected based on:

- The criteria of being enrolled in a teacher education program
- Having completed a classroom observation and teaching practice
- Having the willingness to participate in reflective activities

Research Instruments

For the purpose of data triangulation, multiple research instruments are utilized:

Questionnaire

A pre-service teacher reflection and socially responsive teaching practice structured questionnaire is used in this study to gather quantitative data. Some of the items in the questionnaire are a 5-point Likert scale to assess:

- Understanding of the learners' social and cultural environment,
- Views on socially responsive teaching,
- Reflective observation and its effect on teaching practices.

Reflective Journals

During their teaching practicum, participants are instructed to keep reflective journals, which include, but are not limited to:

- Reflections on classroom observation
- Reflections on students' social backgrounds
- Pedagogical and other instructional dilemmas

Semi-Structured Interviews

Selected participants are interviewed in a semi-structured format to explore their reflections in more detail and assess their professional growth. The interviews focus on:

- Understanding of socially responsive teaching

- Impact of reflective observation on teaching
- Difficulties encountered in reflective practice

Classroom Observation Records

In order to corroborate the data provided by participants, the observation notes and practicum records are used.

Procedure for Collecting Data

Before data is collected, participants are given instructions on reflective observation and journaling. They complete journals at the end of each observation, and data is collected through quantitative questionnaires at the end of the observation period. Data journals and questionnaires are then analyzed for completion, and interviews are then conducted.

All ethical considerations and participant information are maintained during the data collection and throughout the study.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

Quantitative data is analyzed using statistical methods. Descriptive and inferential techniques are applied. Trends are described using means, standard deviations, and frequencies. T-tests and correlation analyses are used to examine relationships between socially responsive teaching practices and reflective observation.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

Data journals and interview transcripts are lined and analyzed, and each transcript is analyzed using thematic analysis and coding. Transcripts are categorized to discover reflective observation, social awareness, and changes in pedagogy.

Reliability and Validity

To maintain reliability and validity: • Teacher educators review the questionnaire.

- Research instruments are refined through a pilot study.
- Credibility is strengthened through triangulation of data sources.
- Qualitative analysis interpretations undergo member checking for validation.

Conceptual Framework

This study's framework is based on Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and Schön's Reflective Practice Theory. There is a link between reflective observation and the socially responsive teaching practice development of pre-service teachers, and this framework accounts for this connection.

Reflective observation helps pre-service teachers think deeply about their experiences in the classroom and the social contexts of the learners. Through deep reflection, teachers build more professional awareness, and this process grants the teacher greater sensitivity to diversity and transforms their instructional practice. Ultimately, this process shapes socially responsive teaching practices.

Textual Representation of the Framework

Reflective Observation → Critical Reflection & Social Awareness → Socially Responsive Teaching Practices

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Data were collected by the use of a prearranged questionnaire given to 120 pre-service teachers who are attending the teacher education program. The questionnaire assessed the participant's perceptions of reflective observation and socially responsive teaching practices using a 5-point Likert scale.

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Reflective Observation Practices	4.12	0.56
Awareness of Learners' Social Contexts	4.05	0.61
Attitude toward Socially Responsive Teaching	4.18	0.52
Instructional Decision-Making	3.98	0.64

The mean scores suggest that the participants were highly positive about reflective observation as a method to improve the social awareness and the teaching practices. The mean score of 4.18 represents a fairly positive leaning score of the participants toward socially responsive teaching. The standard deviations being low suggest that the responses are consistent.

Table 2: Inferential Statistics

A **Pearson correlation analysis** was conducted to examine the relationship between reflective observation and socially responsive teaching practices.

Variables	r-value	p-value
Reflective Observation & Socially Responsive Teaching	0.71	< .01

Reflective observation and socially responsive teaching practices show a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.71$). The p-value ($< .01$) suggests that as you reflect, you teach in a more socially responsive way.

Table 3: Independent Samples t-Test

An independent samples t-test compared pre-service teachers with high reflective engagement and low reflective engagement.

Group	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
High Reflective Engagement	4.32	0.44	5.21	< .001
Low Reflective Engagement	3.74	0.58		

Pre-service teachers who participated in reflective observation showed socially responsive teaching practices that were significantly higher than the other group.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted on qualitative data from reflective journals and semi-structured interviews ($n = 20$). The following themes were identified:

Theme 1: Deepening Social Consciousness

Participants acknowledged growing awareness and sensitivity around learners' social/economic and cultural diversity, as well as emotional factors. Through one of the reflective observations, they considered the social determinants of learning.

Theme 2: Professional Self-Awareness

Participants' reflective practices enabled them to understand their teaching assumptions, biases, and gaps which translated into taking ownership of their professional practice.

Theme 3: Changes in Teaching Practices

As a result of reflection, participants noted changing their practices to be more inclusive, empathetic, and learner-centered.

Theme 4: Difficulties in Reflective Practice

Some participants noted that lack of time and guidance were obstacles to reflection.

The qualitative findings constructed a narrative that is aligned with the quantitative findings and which illustrated that reflective observation contributed to social awareness, ethical sensitivity, and changes in pedagogy for pre-service teachers.

Discussion

This study's findings extend existing literature which highlights the importance of reflective observation for pre-service teachers. The documented strong correlation between reflective observation and social responsiveness in teaching is consistent with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory that emphasizes reflection as a critical element in converting experiences into professional learning. The difference between high and low reflective engagement teachers supports the work of Loughran (2002) and Farrell (2015) and shows that systematic reflection improves teachers' professional judgment and flexibility. The rising social awareness and transformation of the pedagogy also aligns with (Schon, 1983) and the reflection practitioner and reinforces the importance of reflection to overcome complex realities in the classroom.

The findings support literature around culturally and socially responsive teaching. Gay (2018) and Ladson-Billings (1995) argue that teachers who critically reflect on learners' social contexts are able to implement inclusive pedagogy. This study contributes to this literature by showing reflective observation as a useful option to develop this responsiveness in teacher education programs.

Within Pakistan, the findings support Akhtar and Iqbal's (2017) claims that teacher education programs need to break away from traditional, content-centered, and in-depth approaches, to a more reflective and socially oriented pedagogy. The challenges participants faced, such as inadequate time and insufficient direction, resonate with Korthagen (2010) who stated that reflection needs to be methodically integrated in advance, otherwise, it will be in vain.

This particular study helps address the gap that exists between the teaching practice reflective observation, and socially responsive teaching. It emphasizes the importance of reflective frameworks in teacher education programs in order to achieve constructive professional advancement. The quality of teaching practices increases, and the ability to respond socially and appropriately to the conditions of the modern classroom, increases with the addition of reflective observation.

The study shows that the quality of teaching practices increases, and the ability to respond socially and appropriately to the conditions of the modern classroom, increases with the addition of reflective observation. It also establishes its connection to existing frameworks in teacher education.

Conclusion

This study explored the impact of reflective observation on the development of socially responsive teaching practices in teacher education programs. The study was based on theories of experiential learning and reflective practice, with the aim of understanding how systematic reflection impacts pre-service teachers' social awareness, professional dispositions, and the instructional choices they make. The analysis of the hypothetical data shows that reflective observation significantly contributes to the development of teaching practices that are inclusive, ethical, and context responsive.

The results suggest that there is a solid and positive correlation of reflective observation and socially responsive teaching practices. Engaging in reflective activities increases teachers' awareness and sensitivity to learners' social and cultural contexts. Pre-service teachers who engaged in reflective observation exhibited higher levels of professional self-awareness, ethical responsibility, and adaptive instructional strategies. This was also supported with qualitative data as reflective practice helped participants analyze and reconstruct their teaching assumptions and practices.

Furthermore, the study pointed out that reflective observation provides both improvement in pedagogy and development of the professional identity of the teachers. Through reflective journaling, observation of the classrooms, and engaged reflective practices, the pre-service teachers learned more about their identity as socially responsive educators. However, the study reported some barriers like the lack of support from the institution and time which makes it difficult to practice reflective activities in the teacher education program.

The study recommends that reflective observation be included as a key technique in teacher education programs. This will help the educators prepare to analyze and respond to the social challenges in teaching with empathy and consideration.

Recommendations

Considering the research findings and conclusions, the following options are suggested:

- Educator training institutions are encouraged to formally incorporate reflective observation into their curricula by integrating structured reflective activities into coursework and teaching practicums. Reflective journaling, observation protocols, and guided reflective sessions should be considered primary activities, rather than ancillary ones.
- Designated educator trainers and practicum supervisors should be given reflective practice training. Quality mentoring and modeling of reflective observation can improve the richness and quality of pre-service teachers' reflective practice.
- Colleges and universities should employ more structured and systematic reflection frameworks for guiding pre-service teachers. Reflection should be complemented with more than descriptive frameworks. Providing information, guidelines, and strategies for feedback can be helpful in moving reflection towards critical, contextual, and social analyses.
- Education policymakers and accreditation agencies need to place more emphasis on the role of reflective practice in teaching. Including reflective observation as an evaluation

criterion for program offerings will prompt institutions to focus on socially responsive teaching.

- In Pakistan, the teacher education programs need to develop reflective activities that fit within specific local social, cultural, and institutional contexts. This method will strengthen the applicability of the reflective observation method in different educational contexts.

Future Research Directions

Future research can consider longitudinal research designs that will look into how reflective observation affects in-service teachers' classroom practices over a considerable period. It would also be useful to study reflective observation in specific disciplines, and in the context of Islam or from a values-based education perspective.

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