Integrating Research, Theory and Knowledge for Professional Development: A Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract

This personal narrative in qualitative research investigation delves into the impact of reflection on the personal and professional growth of educators. Critical reflection emerges as a pivotal concept that educators assimilate into their daily practices. Despite ongoing discussions about its essential nature, the role of critically reading and reflecting on theories and research in preparing teachers within South Asian pedagogy remains uncertain. This article adopts a cross-case study approach, incorporating a personal narrative from an educator to explore critical reflection in community development. The researcher critically analyzes two scholarly articles from distinct journals, grounded in the belief that theory and knowledge evolve through simultaneous research and reflection. The study's findings underscore the importance of reflection in enhancing teachers' awareness of personal and professional growth, contributing to advanced community knowledge. Improving professional knowledge through research is a key outcome, enabling educators to optimize theory and knowledge for locally relevant, high-quality scholarship.

Keywords: community development, critical reflection, scholarship, and research

Introduction

The idea of professional learning is a form of highly complex and skilled "practice" as it describes a set of circumstances for deep understanding, ethical conduct, and higher-order learning circumstances' which is deeply rooted in bodies of knowledge that are 'created, tested, elaborated, refuted, transformed and reconstituted' in institutions (Shulman, 1998, p. 10). It also requires a specialized body of knowledge acquired by extensive academic

preparation' (Livingstone & Antonelli, 2012, p. 16). In a critical professional development process, professionals define them as a collective identity with agreed values, recognized responsibilities and acceptable or required behavior in "a particular field of practice" (Appleby & Pilkington, 2014, p. 11). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999, p. 250) discuss three notions as 'a stance of inquiry' to build the relationships of 'inquiry, knowledge and professional practice' in 'the world of educational policy, research, and practice,' and they are: 'Knowledge-*for*-practice' (formal knowledge); 'knowledge-*in*-practice' (practical knowledge) and 'knowledge-*of*-practice' (generating knowledge by not differentiating between formal and practical knowledge).Assimilation of these notions allows educators to integrate diverse forms of knowledge, enhancing both teaching and learning experiences through a comprehensive approach. This integration fosters a dynamic educational environment where theory and practice inform and improve each other.

Professional development is about learning through self-learning by practicing theoretical principles (Eraut, 1994, p. 15) and developing expertise- as they affect the lives of learners of all disciplines through the rapid social, communal and economic changes. Teachers' professional knowledge and practices may differ not only among countries but also among teachers within a country, but experienced professionals would constantly evaluate 'the effectiveness of their work (Schön, 1983) because it brings a new scope to inquiry about the problematize situation with new perspectives (Little, 2003) for community development. Caine and Caine (2010) believe that educators must be quintessential learners. In line with that, Brookfield (2017) advises that critically reflective teaching will only occur if educators challenge their ways of acting by discovering 'assumptions' in their professions and critically studying them, which eventually leads to developing a sense of purpose in the community.

To be knowledgeable and expert means being professionally well-equipped, and it usually involves the process of teachers' feeling about how other people see them "in terms of their status, standing, regard and levels of professional reward" (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 152). Schön (1983) views professionalization as being distinct and reflective by using real-world knowledge, while Hargreaves (2000) defines it as upgrading quality and standards of practice and improving the status and standing of professionals. Hargreaves (2000) also defines *professionalism* as upgrading quality and standards of practice, and following that, he defines professionalization as 'improving the status and standing,' which Schön (1983) views as being distinct and reflective by using real-world knowledge.

As professional knowledge is layered with academic knowledge, professionals reinforce their work by getting endorsements from research and theories (Shulman, 1998), and they can face challenges that are paused against their learning experiences. This enables them to negotiate the challenges they face and helps them to release the unavoidable 'tension between theory and practice' (Shulman, 1998, p. 517). Theorists also try to understand the social settings with shared values in education (Weis et al., 2009), so knowing the social context helps professionals perceptions' of practice in education (Shulman, 1987).

Again, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (19992, p. 50) state that educators need to generate knowledge by discovering their classrooms so 'the knowledge and theory' they produce can be used "as generative material for interrogation and interpretation' because it brings theoretical framework that is firm knowledge-based and this 'empirical setting . . . enables one to make both theoretical and empirical claims . . ." (Shulman, 1987, p. 20). The crux of the argument is located in Eraut (1994) when he says that theoretical knowledge has to be adapted to suit the particular demands of each practiced situation in a practical context. Thus, a fusion of theory and experience is required to practice professionalism in one's field.

Gardiner (2014, p. 35) says being professional is bringing what we are not aware of into our awareness' or 'making what is unconscious, conscious. We can also refer to Gramsci's enlightening view that knowing oneself enables one to master one's identity, and thus by knowing others will make one critically reflective in one's inquiries (cited in Fusaro, 2010). These penlights Socrates' "know thyself" dogma as to know oneself ensures that one is in control of oneself as part of asserting one's identity for the changes of society. Educators' professional learning is a continuous development, not solitude; instead, it starts with identifying the educational results they value in their professional teaching-learning practice. Moreover, knowledge and skills need to be reflected through their professional expertise to establish a bridge between the gap of current understanding and the valued outcomes (Timperley, 2008).

One of the prime resources of being professional is one's experience, which should be administered by integrating reflection on action and reflection in action as a reflective professional (Schön,1990). Moreover, one's 'active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief' makes the ground firm with a solid foundation of 'reflective thought' (Dewey, 1933, p. 6). For example, 'better teacher means enhancing student learning outcomes' (Guskey, 2002, p. 382). Therefore, constant, ongoing active processing is an indispensable element for optimal professional development (Caine & Caine, 2010).

Continuous professional learning and its allocation of resources constitute an ongoing journey that professionals across various fields must undertake. It is imperative for individuals in all professions to remain attuned to the dynamic interplay among them, recognizing its potential contribution to community development, even if it entails making small changes in society. Consequently, this paper delves into the researcher's perspective on professional learning, elucidating it through a personal narrative shaped by the critical examination of two articles. Based on the process of reflection and understanding, the researcher's chosen methodology is restructured and applied. To do so, first, the researcher starts by sharing the personal narrative that developed from her personal and professional experiences as an educator. Next, the researcher critically reflected on the chosen two articles to discover the perceptions and insights that may inform both philosophy and practice for educators' professional development.

Literature Review

One of the fundamental aspects of professional development is the critical reflection that revolves around within the educational field. Šarić and Šteh (2017) highlighted the theoretical significance of critical reflection in the educators' lives, however, their research reveals a significant difference between how its theoretical importance works and how practical implementation among teachers works - a gap that is further explored and investigated by Winberg et al. (2023) research. In the research of Šarić and Šteh (2017) , they emphasize mostly on the importance of how integrating critical reflection into teaching practices can generate new insights which would enhance student learning experiences in a better way; on the other hand, the research of Winberg et al. (2023) presents illuminating insights mainly focusing on the historical insights and discoveries of the different universities of technological aspects and how these universities lack of a tradition of implanting critical teaching and learning in the professional atmosphere. Arguably and critically, both of the studies challenge the established norms that are traditionally practiced in universities by mitigating the potentials that are needed for transformative change within educational institutions to foster critical awareness among educational professionals.

Similarly, Akella et al. (2021) focused onto into the role of critical reflection and how it is within the communities of practice which further attentions by demonstrating its effectiveness to create positive atmosphere among educators to enhance self-awareness for professional growth in the educational domain. Moreover, the integration of reflective practice is much needed for the educators' professional development field as it suggests various complex layers of teachers' complexity in their critical reflection and how this emphasizes the teachers identify awareness (Philp-Clark & Grieshaber, 2024). In line with this, Akella et al. (2021) in their research advocated for more collaborative reflection and open dialogues as they are the essential aspects of professional development which is much needed for teachers in their professional practice. Similarly, Philp-Clark and Grieshaber (2024) emphasize the importance of clear objectives and social collaboration in fostering sustainable reflective practices.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, the researchers explore how skilled the teachers are in practicing their reflective skill in their teaching and discover that there is a discrepancy between the reflective practices they made by themselves and the actual engagement in their teaching practices (Gudeta, 2022). This suggests that there should be professional development programs for the teachers where the culture of reflective practice will be facilitated by focusing on lifelong and continuous learning that will make the teachers involve in practical engagement (Akella et al., 2021). This idea is further extended by Shin et al. (2022) in the context of nursing practices, who highlighted how critical reflection plays a crucial role in enhancing critical thinking and experimental cognitive abilities. This additionally emphasizes the need for strategies and approaches that are systematic by nature to measure critical reflection competency to foster professional development opportunities in the field of professional domain.

In the context of higher education field, Chisholm (2012) discusses how the transformative potential of reflective practices can be attained through the lens of "critical friends" who will work and provide support by challenging the educators for their professional development. In line with this argument, Akella et al. (2021) and Philp-Clark and Grieshaber (2024) advocate/advocated for the collaborative and mentorship-based approaches with the focus on the mentorship for colleagues that will enhance in advancing teaching and learning while Saylag (2013) develops a framework on the critical reflection for professional development from the perspectives of psycholinguistic field, offering how reflective practices can be achieved by challenging the traditional views that language learners possess in their mental cognition which urges the need for pedagogical aspects that should be integrated in the teaching and learning context to shape learners' perspectives.

Therefore, the above literature presents a critical analysis based on the lens of argument for the integration of critical reflection into professional development programs into various higher educational fields. Despite the challenges in implementation, critical reflection holds immense potential for transformative change by fostering self-awareness, enhancing teaching practices, and ultimately improving teaching learning outcomes. By embracing reflective practices supported by collaboration, mentorship, and systematic approaches, educational institutions can advance teaching and learning in meaningful ways.

Research Questions

1. How do we (e.g. ELT teachers or like such) develop professionally through critical reading and reflection?
2. How do ELT teachers integrate research, theory and practice for community development?

Methods

When designing the methodology for my research on the impact of reflection on the personal and professional development of educators in the field of community development, I gave utmost importance to including personal narratives. As an educator, I understand the need of sharing personal experiences to enhance the research environment, in line with Dowling and Brown's (2009) focus on careful selection of samples to ensure validity. Integrating personal narratives enhances the exploration by introducing a human element, aligning with the requirement for thoroughness and complexity in the research endeavour. Following the guidelines of Crowe et al. (2011) and Yin (2003), I utilize the case study approach to thoroughly examine two articles from different publications. As the aim is to asses how the theoretical perspectives aligns with the real-life teaching contexts, the approaches are chosen to discover common characteristics to fit into the practice aspects in the domain of professional development. To justify this, the case study approaches for the chosen methodology seem to be effective in the perspective of different contexts that have many instructional difficulties which may enable researches to form their own conclusions (Salmons, 2016).

Data Collection and Process

The selection process for scholarly articles involved clear criteria, including relevance to the research topic, publication quality, and diversity of perspectives within the field. This process ensured that the chosen articles would provide valuable insights into the research questions.

The data collection process included conducting a comprehensive literature search using academic databases and screening abstracts and conclusions for alignment with the research objectives. Final selection was based on the articles that best met the established criteria. By using a thematic approach and focusing on the qualitative aspects of "how" and "why" instead of just the quantity, as suggested by Cohen and Manion (1994), and using qualitative content analysis, it becomes easier to identify new issues and debates. By intertwining personal narratives with this analytical framework, I aimed to capture the multifaceted nature of the teaching experience. Ultimately, this process seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing personal and professional growth among educators in the realm of community development.

Fraternity Between Practice and Learning/Knowledge
The Educator's Journey: A Narrative

My professional learning and profession have given me a unique opportunity to understand that learning and practice reciprocally fraternize. I look back on my progress as an educator, and I am reminded of my process of being professionally skilled. I practice different approaches in teaching, which I acquired through theoretical knowledge, following a trial and error method, as teaching- practice brings maximum benefits from exercises through teaching-learning experiences; it is also a challenging task as socio-cultural and geographical factors affect a broad cross-section of learners and educators (Marais & Meier, 2004). So, I find myself reading more deeply, listening and learning more actively and carefully -- because I have to reimagine the contexts that I may not be able to relate with my experiences, even when I deeply care about those contexts. If not given attention, these encounters may affect students' perception of the teaching profession (Quick & Sieborger, 2005).

Professionals cannot work in isolation; hence, professional knowledge demands specific responsibilities and accountabilities as they hold 'specialized knowledge' by being 'trusted' within 'their particular communities' (Shulman, 1998, pp. 515-520). Aristotle's episteme- a 'true and certain knowledge is essential in one's practice as it means if you 'know' something, it has to be 'true. His 'phronesis - wise practical reasoning' aims to follow some principles in particular circumstances, but sometimes we take imperfect decisions in the context, which directs us morally to set a particular condition (cited in Eisner, 2002, p. 1).

The specific conditions matter to improve teaching in a 'particular' educational field, and we can recognize this 'particular' condition with 'phronesis' (Eisner, 2002). Furthermore, to create an environment of good teaching, we should consider 'artistry and aesthetic' perspectives (Eisner, 2002, p. 382). With 'craft experience,' educators can bring good in

teaching by 'knowing' and 'understanding' the students, which is influenced by 'timing, manner and tone of that 'particular' context (Eisner, 2002, p. 381). I also believe what Eisner (2002, p. 384) suggests that as educators, we can bring the 'revolution in assumptions and practice' of an institution as it has a role to play, but that should not always be 'the heart of teacher education.

Moreover, collaborative research is essential in a professional community as we share a mutual concern, and with collaboration, we can transfer our knowledge and hone our expertise in a particular area of knowledge by constantly interacting (Dubé et al., 2006). Timperley (2008) also reminds me that we need to have mutual trust with each other in our professions to bring about a fundamental change in practice as we differ in terms of our schemata which are affected by situational and contextual factors where a theory-practice nexus needs to be developed through the integration of process and product knowledge (Shulman, 1998). Furthermore, we can develop professionalism through personal research as it is a parallel process between 'professional and personal learning' (Caine & Caine, 2010).

As I navigate through this rich tapestry of literature, it becomes increasingly clear that the realm of professional learning is characterized by a continuous interplay between theory and practice, personal and communal, necessitating a responsive and adaptable approach. This reflection on the literature serves as a guidepost, shaping my evolving role as an educator and deepening my commitment to fostering a positive impact within the professional community.

The Condition of Knowledge Governing My Field

My dominant knowledge is a pragmatic teaching process at the Tertiary level suited to the condition of learning specific to the country where I work. In my current role as an educational practitioner, my main focus is teaching and researching. The challenges I deal with regularly are: defining, organizing, planning, and evaluating in the light of the development of an academic habitus. My field of knowledge is dominated by what Braun et al. (2011, p. 588) give importance to contextual dimensions, namely 'situated, professional, material and external' as they inform and require the specific educational practice. The students are accustomed to memorization skills- which I do not find the ideal for all situations and students. The biggest challenge is meeting all the varied learning styles and needs of the students with a reminder of the high number of student's enrollment.

Furthermore, the lack of research experience in student intake is another barrier I face as an educator in my workplace, so I follow 'self-educative process' through the 'inner sense'- 'the matter of consciousness and a manifold of empirical inner intuition' (Ak, 1798 as cited in Kant's view, 2004, p. 41) to make the students fit in the society to act intelligently (Dewey, 1933). I reflect upon my pedagogic discourses with knowledge structure notions (Braun et al., 2011) and draw issues from past experiences to anticipate the future of the context (Dewey, 1998; Schön, 2008). Hayes and Doherty's (2017, p. 129) 'angles' [prediction, understanding, emancipation, deconstruction] are crucial in the same light as they enlighten us to our ways of places where we get stuck. Thus, we build tensions and dilemmas that develop

'across fracture lines, without losing the integrity of different knowledge.' Therefore, to negotiate our actions in response to the problems, action research should be done 'carefully,' 'systematically' and 'rigorously,' as a part of regular activity -' plan, act, observe, reflect' (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1992, p. 10).

My areas of expertise also match when Braun et al. (2011) highlight the importance of implementation and 'enactment' policies, as we see that there is a demand to find out how we enact 'the policy' practically and apply it in our professions. An educator's field is conceptualized as a 'dilemmatic space' which is 'ever-present' because we make choices and compromises to negotiate the conflicting situations by mitigating a range of fluctuating conditions that are imposed on us as a relational category wherein one object is related to another or others' (Fransson & Grannas, 2013, pp. 4-11). I am conflicted when I observe that the policies in institutions bring out disappointing results even after the inclusion of an active teaching-learning method with a collective focus (Hill et al., 2013). As I interpret and recognize 'self-interests and ideological distortions ... the correspondences and non-correspondences between understandings, practices and the structure of educational situations' (Carr & Kemmis, 1986 p. 205), my process of self-reflection tends to transit through dilemmatic spaces.

I experience dilemmas when I perceive that through the subconscious and conscious observation, academicians are influenced by their preconceived notions than solid shreds of evidence, so the problem arises as 'a broader field of discourse' integrated with 'academic and professional knowledge and debates' (Dowling & Brown, 2009, p. 8). As I consider teaching something to be grateful for the knowledge I can share and skills I can help students develop, I am often jolted into an awareness of the situation - 'systematic oppression and thus, I am in dilemmas when I see not able to do justice to my students need to analyze lived challenges and thematize actual experiences- which are termed as 'dilemmatic spaces' (Hargreaves 1994; Fransson and Grannäs 2013), but I can resonate what Hargreaves (2003) argues that satisfactory progress in a professional workplace will be seen eventually.

We, as educators, are affected and conditioned by many external factors which mediate what we can do in our professional field. The conflict comes when we compromise with the 'knowledge of the powerful' as we have already acquired the 'powerful knowledge' (Hordern, 2018). We develop trust in our' powerful knowledge' knowing it well that challenges and questions seek to find the 'truth' about the society we live in (Young, 2013). Regarding the dilemmas we deal with in educational contexts, Braun et al. (2011), Franssen and Grannäs (2013) and suggest we can resolve constraints that constantly conflict with our own moral and professional values considering several factors of a given place. However, Hordern (2018, p. 796) mentions that the powerful groups of society try to disregard educational research as it seems to be weak, therefore, do not find 'educational knowledge' powerful.

Moreover, in every society, we have these powerful groups who misuse their powers and impose conditions on educators that limit what educators can achieve by bringing the

reality of a situation with professional praxis (Hargreaves, 2000), so the system lies not on powerful knowledge but the knowledge of powerful (Hordon, 2018). We all come into our professions with our values and judgments, and with experiences, they metamorphose with 'metacognitions' which are submerged and influenced by several variables and 'universal features' 'with a vision for the future (Shulman, 1998, p. 518). These features are a barrier to our performances in our professional praxis, which Kemmis and Smith (2008) refer to - the danger in our profession as social and political factors judge us to follow the rules or 'rules which Lakhini (2016, pp. 3-20) recognizes as a medium of 'culture scape- the mental cognition of real 'truths' and the ideas we believe as in 'truths.' As a practitioner, the pragmatic residuals in my field of practices reflect when I deal with complex and uncertain societal conditions.

While Hatton and Smith (1995, pp. 37-42) argue that dilemmas are based on educators' conceptualization of a considerable barrier through 'dialogic reflection' which requires imposed knowledge in a particular situation, Fransson and Grannas (2013) state that dilemmas are spaces that educators negotiate over' time and opportunity for development. Schön (2008) posits that educators need to develop a kind of artistry with "intuitive knowledge about the existing conditions by demonstrating multiple 'truths' that counter rather than 'propagating post-truth developments in our field" (Gore,2017, p. 369). Gore (2017, p. 368) further suggests that to strengthen professionals, we 'must reconcile differences among educational research as there is not a singular way to view many issues which we face regularly, but, by reframing existing preconceptions, we can redress emerging and evolving challenges (Braun et al. 2011; Fransson & Grannas 2013; Hatton & Smith 1995; Schön 1983).

Hargreaves (1994) urges for emergent-new professionalism as new professionals lack knowledge of theories in institutions (Troman, 1996), so professionals/'architectures' should practice a set of 'ecologies of practices' (Kemmis et al., 2014, pp. 25-43) to value 'of the theory underpinning pedagogy' (Linda, 2008, p. 29). This can be nurtured through 'a balance between support and challenge, and between theory and practice' (Kemmis & Smith, 2007, p. 10), so a theory-practice connection created through the 'proposition' and 'process' knowledge – 'the maxims that guide the practices of able teachers' (Shulman, 1987, p. 11).

An educational researcher can integrate different phases of research with a collaboration of 'professional culture' to improve education to build the social order systems (Hargreaves, 2000; Sharma, 2018). Moreover, Shulman's (1998, pp. 520-521) comprehensive perspective of "six universal features of professions: service, theory, practice, judgment, learning from experience, and community is a 'challenge for the pedagogies of professions' to create and foster the work as an emergent view of education in the professional field especially 'when questions of the quality of practice are at stake."

Looking back on my career, I see how important it is to have a practical approach to higher education instruction that is adapted to the unique educational needs of the country I work in. Defining, organising, planning, and evaluating, all within the ever-

changing framework of an academic habitus, are constant problems for me as an educational practitioner who focuses on both teaching and studying. Managing these obstacles requires a constant balancing act between accommodating students' varied learning styles and accommodating the large number of students enrolled. In line with the action research cycle proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1992), the literature highlights the importance of collaborative research as a strategy to overcome obstacles and improve teaching methods. The literature helps me to understand the nuances of education, where problems emerge from biases, systemic oppression, and outside forces. At issue are the interplay between influential knowledge, social power structures, and the necessity of resolving disagreements in educational research. The continuous pursuit of a balance between theory and practice is echoed by Hargreaves's (1994) proposal for emergent professionalism. A thorough framework that emphasises the complex duties and difficulties inherent in the pedagogies of professions is provided by Shulman's (1998) universal characteristics of professions. In light of these considerations, it is clear that the professional world is complex and ever-changing, and that the key to success is a dedication to lifelong learning and flexibility.

Case Study 1: A Theory of Education

In 'A theory of education,' Sarid (2018) provides a broad look into the age-long question: 'what is education?' He thinks that education, as a project, has always been a crossing between the traditional and institutionalized approach, which gets misinterpreted because the origin and the definition of education have never been addressed. Once more, by being objective, Sarid (2018) notes, education is not a grounded approach due to its longing to institutionalized root because learning and' places of learning' both work as a nexus which states:

> Education is a continuous practice of purposively structured learning processes aimed at the realization of ends that are consciously derived from a certain the conception of the 'good'. (Sarid, 2018, p. 480)

This extract leads to the fundamental question: what is the extent of knowledge that leads to the succession of 'education' or the extent of knowledge that a person/student has to go through to become an educated person and also, when and where 'the end of being educated' generally leads one into?

Sarid (2018, p. 483) debates unstructured teaching methods to discuss the bi-dimensional analysis with the reference 'good,' which is used in education as 'common good' while referring to the purpose of education. It has both socio-cultural, philosophical and politico-economic roots, but one of the major problems is that 'good' can be both inside and outside the domain of education as 'mirroring' and legitimizing factors. If education tends to reshape the learner, then who is going to reshape education? Does it need any form of revision to do in order to sustain? What 'good' can education bring to the table of the discussion of the feasibility of education?

Sarid (2018) also argued that education provides 'change' as it is perceived that change is

eminent in any learning process. In the learning period, people are obligated to 'change' as its root dictates towards knowledge; thus, the most rigid form of education can also change a learner's motivational factors due to both 'social acceptance' and lack of it.

Sarid (2018, p. 486) also connects the variability of knowledge with Schwartz's theory of universal values. As the bi-dimensional theory mostly flattens the dimension of education which, in contrast with Schwartz's one, is a chance that most of the vital elements of education have been overlooked by educationists for a long time. As Sarid (2018, p. 486) explains this in his theory:

> Schwartz's theory of universal values is particularly advantageous since,
> instead of construing values as isolated (semantic) entries, it acknowledges
> the relations of values to one another. According to the theory, some values
> are more closely related to other values and, in some instances,… adherence
> or commitment to others.

This particular theory has ten concepts ranging from religious education to liberal modernist education and the concept of religious education, as Schwartz explained, as the medium thought to have 'conversational' and self-driven 'transcendental' values (Sarid, 2018).

Referring to 'Liquid education,' Sarid (2018, p. 490) describes a specific educational process that requires 'emancipation, reflexivity and flexibility by marginalizing knowledge and knowledge boundaries. In the later part of 'liquid' education, transformative-critical education re-examines the structures of the society and its monumental bodies so the learner can achieve certain educational goals. Finally, the philosophy of 'the liberal-modernist education' stimulates students in four stages: 'self-enhancement, conservation, openness to change, and self-transcendence,' as suggested by Sarid (2018, p. 492), which need to be practiced to address the conflict between the old and new systems of thought.

Case Study 2: Globalization, the Strong State and Education Policy: The Politics of Policy in Asia

Lim (2016) states that 'The Global West' has dictated the terms of education policy across the world but, with the emergence of some strong states in Southeast Asia, the hegemony of the West in this field has been challenged. In particular, south Asian countries in general and Singapore have framed and applied policies as both text and discourse in tandem with their cultural particularities and nationalistic aspirations.

Lim (2016) further examines how the Singapore state has refurbished and regulated its education policy with critical thinking as its motto. Its 'paternalistic authoritarianism' in formulating and applying the national curriculum seeks to ensure that Singaporean citizenry develops intellectually and communally to aim to attract international capital and investments by offering a technologically sound workforce out of its nationals. Therefore, the national education program of the city-state hinges on firm government manipulation in terms of the interpretation and translation of policies. However, the social process of appropriation and application of knowledge via education policy concerns itself with three

fields such as 'production,' 'reproduction' and 'recontextualization; the stakeholders of all educational programs are in the main 'official recontextualizing field' (ORF) and 'pedagogic recontextualizing field' (PRF) (Lim, 2016, p. 714). While the first group is engaged in policy preparation, the second is involved in its application and propagation at the grassroots. Lim's (2016) notion of ' recontextualization can parallel within and Brown's (2009, p. 7) process of ''recontextualizing in education, which concerns how a server applies the knowledge with 'imposed principles of selection and organization.' Hayes and Doherty's (2017, p. 136) 'Deconstruction' theory can be connected here when they suggest that 'power relations and problems are constituted in ways we have made them up as there is a strong relation between 'bodies of knowledge and the practice competencies they inform.'

Furthermore, Lim (2016) puts a premium on how 'Asia as method' has gained currency in academia of late. South Asian countries such as Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan, with their recent colonial experiences, have manifested nationalistic orientations with their national curriculum, and these nations, with Singapore being a particular case, are trying to catch up with the developed world and also to outperform their more fancied competitors on the global stage.

With that end in view, Lim (2016) points out that their national education policies reflect their national ambition to emerge and sustain as global players by garnering global cash flow in their economic landscape. Thus, Lim (2016) scrutinizes the underlying mechanisms and politics of education policies of these Asian states, with a particular focus on Singapore, which prioritize collaborative development instead of a neo-liberal attitude of protecting and promoting the rights of individual citizens.

Discussion

Interfacing Research, Knowledge, Learning and Practice for Community Development: Cross Case Analysis

The exploration of knowledge through the mode of interrogation, as advocated by Dowling and Brown (2009), has been a transformative process, encapsulated by the careful study of two selected articles. The revelations garnered from these articles have provided profound insights into our existing knowledge, practices, and learning methodologies. The consistent themes across both articles have served as a foundation for integrating research and practical knowledge, thereby contributing to the advancement of our shared community.

In understanding the theoretical underpinnings of education, Sarid's (2018) assertion that education does not happen by chance but must be meticulously planned resonates deeply. Following Shulman's (1987) concept of 'wisdom for practice,' which encompasses codified knowledge, skills, understanding, technology, ethics, and disposition, becomes pivotal in navigating the complexities of an ever-changing educational landscape. The necessity of a well-thought-out inquiry method, involving pondering alternatives, drawing inferences, and considering diverse perspectives, becomes apparent in addressing the multifaceted goals of education, particularly in complex situations (Higgins, 2011).

Sarid's (2018) philosophy of avoiding biases in conceptual edges aligns with the ongoing struggle to read and write across differences, as highlighted by Weis et al. (2009). Schwartz's theory of universal values, encompassing political, religious-sentimentality, traditional-sentiment, and transcendental aspects, proves particularly relevant to the context, shedding light on the diverse dynamics in Bangladesh. The intersections of religiously driven political parties, sentiments rooted in family and societal structures, and adherence to long-standing customs highlight the intricate interplay of values in shaping educational policies and practices.

However, the critical reflection process also surfaces Yip's (2006) cautionary note on self-reflection, emphasizing the potential dangers if unacceptable conditions are overlooked in the process. Therefore, this presents how the approach self-reflection can be as a reminder to make awareness of the probable multiple relevant layers of complexities in the field of professional development filed which will ensure that the critical discussion is well grounded. In the various socio- cultural context, critical lens on different perspectives, theories and values are needed to develop education policies that will focus on the inclusivity for the professional development of educators.

All things considered, the investigation, which was aided by an approach to methodological triangulation and epistemology, has been profound. Two articles were carefully examined, and the results shed light on our current knowledge, practices, and ways of learning, which has greatly aided our community's overall development. Recognizing the ever-changing nature of educational practices and the necessity for a variety of inquiry approaches in intricate settings, I wholeheartedly embrace the significance of careful planning and practical wisdom. The relevance of inclusivity in establishing educational policies is highlighted by the awareness of the value of unbiased opinions. By looking at Bangladesh through the lens of universal principles, I can better understand the complex relationship between politics, religion, tradition, and transcendence in that country. Therefore, it is needed to approach the potential of critical reflection with much care and caution which will create the bridge between the complexities and practical aspects of teaching and learning situations in multiple contexts. As I wrap up this reflective process, I am more reflected on discovering multiple viewpoints and values which I find crucial to create educational policies that are inclusive and sensitive to our specific socio-cultural context.

Comparison of Personal Narrative with Research Findings

The interplay between practice and learning is reflected though the lens of personal narrative, which resonates with Shulman's (1998) concept of professional knowledge. Shulman (1998) focuses on how professional knowledge requires specific expertise, responsibility, and trust in different socio-cultural contexts in the professional development domain. In line with this perspective, this narrative highlights the need for the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice- that is what exactly Shulman (1998) views. Furthermore, the researcher's narratives can be paralleled with the Caine and Caine's

(2010) view who emphasized that the educators need to reflect on their professional growth by integrating theoretical knowledge with practical implication -a process that should be simultaneously practiced for professional and personal learning.

Furthermore, the researcher's narrative addresses the challenges that the educators face while fitting themselves in accommodating diverse learning styles and managing a large student body in their classrooms. This discussion is also aligned with Braun et al.'s (2011) discussion when they presented various contextual dimensions ('situated, professional, material, and external') for the growth of professional development that influence educational practice. Moreover, the case study approach that this narrative study used as a method further validates and justifies the improved teaching practices which Kemmis and McTaggart's (1992) call for systematic, rigorous research to address educational dilemmas in multiple situational contexts. Thus, a practical application of case study approach is demonstrated and highlighted by integrating action research principles with an emphasize to improve continuously through he four layers of cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

Divergence from Theoretical Expectations

Though the alignments are uncanny, it has been observed that the personal narrative and theoretical expectations are characterized by notable divergences. For instance, the researcher's narrative discusses on how the researcher struggles with the preconceived notions and systemic biases within the higher educational field, which is echoed what Dowling and Brown's (2009) explored as in biases and power structures in education in their research. Arguably, this notion is different than what Lim (2016) discussed and suggested a more structured approach in Singapore's educational policy context, where the aim is more strong state intervention for the intellectual and communal development. This narrative study also goes through the process of trial-and-error method which can be contrasted with the top-down, policy-driven approach in Singapore, as it highlights a divergence in addressing the challenges in its own educational context.

Moreover, Sarid's (2018) theory of education posits that education, as a project, has always been a crossing between the traditional and institutionalized approach which aims at the specific conceptions of the 'good.' The narrator's narrative study is more adaptive on the ground of the researcher's trial-and-error teaching method which differs from the structured method that Sarid (2018) has taken in his study that emphasizes on the bi-dimensional analysis of 'good' in education. This view of Sarid's proposes to initiate the understanding of the importance of both socio-cultural and politico-economic backgrounds in educational context. On the contrary, the main focus of this narrative study is to dissect the practical challenges of teaching that are present in diverse contexts but not explicitly to address the broader philosophical and socio-economic dimensions in relevant contexts in the field of professional development.

Implications of the Divergences

The divergences that are addressed in this study represent the multifaced layers of complex dimensions variables in the context of various educational practice. As this narrative

study is based on a trial-and-error method and it followed the context-specific strategies, this study needs to adopt a flexible approach that sometime underpinning theoretical framework may be overlooked. However, it should be noted that Sarid's structured theoretical framework may reflect on educational aims and objectives, it still may not cover all the challenges educators face in their real-life context for their professional development. Therefore, this narrative personal reflective study may be a suggestive study that requires more positive and receptive approach in educational teaching and learning context that will lead the educators to reflect on their own approach while taking study in dynamic and diverse educational environments.

Limitations and Implications

By employing personal narrative and case study methodologies, this research seeks to explore the relationship between reflective practice and learning in social community development. While these methods provide rich insights, they also have significant limitations.

Personal narratives are subjective and may introduce biases due to the individualistic nature of the experiences shared. This subjectivity limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Similarly, case studies focus on specific instances, which may not capture broader trends and patterns, further limiting generalizability.

To address these limitations, future research should consider using mixed methods, incorporating quantitative data to complement the qualitative insights from personal narratives and case studies. Methods such as large-scale surveys and longitudinal studies could enhance the validity and applicability of the findings. Additionally, this research underscores the importance of context in educational practice, suggesting that solutions must be tailored to specific socio-cultural and geographical factors. Future studies should investigate these contextual influences in greater detail, potentially through comparative research across different regions. For practical application, educators and policymakers should supplement personal narratives and case studies with broader research methodologies to ensure that educational policies are both evidence-based and contextually relevant.

Conclusion

Professional learning, particularly within the educational sphere, is a multifaceted and dynamic process deeply rooted in critical reflection, theory-practice integration, and continuous development. This article has underscored the significance of professional learning through a thorough exploration of scholarly literature and personal narrative. It has highlighted the crucial role of critical reflection in fostering self-awareness, enhancing teaching practices, and ultimately improving learning outcomes.

The literature review revealed a compelling argument for the integration of critical reflection into professional development programs across various educational contexts. Despite challenges in implementation, critical reflection holds immense potential for

transformative change by challenging established norms, fostering collaborative dialogue, and promoting mentorship-based approaches. Moreover, the methodology outlined in this article emphasizes the importance of personal narratives and case study approaches in enhancing research validity and complexity.

Through a synthesis of theoretical insights and practical applications, this article emphasizes the need for educators, particularly those in the field of community development, to engage in continuous learning and reflective practices. By embracing reflective approaches supported by collaboration, mentorship, and systematic methodologies, educational institutions can advance teaching and learning in meaningful ways, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of community development.

Reflecting on my exploration, I find that my awareness regarding research, practice, and learning has undergone a journey marked by complex and paradoxical conceptions (Berlak & Berlack, 2012, p. 211). To a considerable extent, I have discerned the intricate process of integrating practice with knowledge and learning. However, I acknowledge that this understanding is not yet complete; it is merely the beginning of a new horizon, a cognitive choice fraught with the challenges inherent in various actions (Berlak & Berlak, 1981).

Undoubtedly, the realm of teaching and learning is a dynamic and challenging situation, prompting practitioners like myself to uphold professional obligations. This involves developing and maintaining professional relationships with diverse learners, communicating and acting ethically, promoting positive values, and adhering to professional standards, as emphasized by Honig (1996). In recognizing the absence of a singular right approach to teaching, I echo Hirst's (1993, p. 184) perspective that education should be primarily concerned with social practices rather than a mere pursuit of knowledge. Moreover, Guskey's (2002b, p. 51) call to "document the evidence" between effective and ineffective activities in professional development practices resonates with my commitment to continuous improvement. Reflecting on my personal narrative as an educator, I am reminded of the need to critically assess and adapt my teaching strategies, acknowledging the evolving nature of educational practices.

As suggested by Guskey (2014), my ultimate assertion is that we, as educators, should light the lantern to illuminate the best possible way forward. This involves a commitment to becoming better practitioners who objectively value the learning context. Emphasizing the importance of rooting our efforts in local, social communities, this approach opens doors for us to contribute meaningfully to the broader international educational landscape. In essence, I see this as a call to action—a call to light the lantern for the development of a knowledge-based community, echoing Guskey's insightful perspective.

To account for teachers' transforming progress, future study might examine the sustained impact of longitudinal reflective practices on teachers' professional development through reflection and reading. Technology integration, cross-cultural comparative studies,

and action research in the classroom can also provide nuanced viewpoints. Mentorship programmes, non-traditional reading materials, and reflective practices in teacher education programmes need further study. Further investigation is needed of the dynamics and effectiveness of classroom-based learning communities centered upon reflection, as well as the direct relationship between teachers' reflective engagement and student outcomes. I hope this study directions will help us understand how reflective practices and reading might improve teachers' professional growth.

Thus, professional learning is not merely a static process but a continuous journey of self-discovery, growth, and adaptation. It is through critical reflection, integration of theory and practice, and collaborative engagement that educators can effectively navigate the complexities of their profession and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Author's Bio

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