

A CLASSROOM OF ONE'S OWN: REFLECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICE AS A PATHWAY TO TEACHER AUTONOMY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of reflective teaching practices in promoting teacher autonomy through Malik's (2024) PAM Model of Reflective Practice in Classroom. The model is designed to help teachers negotiate a never-ending cycle of lesson planning, real-time implementation, and reflective-driven change. The model structures reflection into pre-teaching, during-teaching, and post-teaching phases, stimulating self-assessment and incorporating feedback from students and peers. The reflective teaching practices empower teachers to plan, adapt, and refine their instructional strategies, adopting student-centered learning aligned with pedagogical objectives. The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 30 ESL teachers from Public Colleges in Multan City. The study emphasizes the model's effectiveness in enhancing teaching efficacy, improving student engagement, and teacher professional development. Despite challenges and difficulties in the application of the approach, the study also investigates the benefits of reflective teaching such as improved teacher autonomy, continued professional development, and better student involvement. Significantly, the study underlines that even with obstacles, teachers should never become demotivated; rather, they should view challenges as chances to use their creativity and improve their work. The PAM model offers a pathway to innovation and continuous improvement in instructional strategies and strengthening teacher autonomy in ESL classrooms.

Keywords: *classroom of one's own, reflective teaching practice, pathway, teacher autonomy*

INTRODUCTION

Particularly in areas like Multan, Pakistan, where different student origins, various degrees of English competence, and big class sizes can complicate instructional approaches, teaching ESL presents special difficulties. Although conventional curricula and limited teaching tools sometimes restrict teachers, they nevertheless have to try to fulfill each student's unique learning demands. Reflective teaching becomes hence a crucial tactic for improving teachers' adaptability and response to classroom problems. Rising to

these difficulties, the PAM model (Malik, 2024) provides a disciplined but flexible framework for reflective instruction. Based on reflection and student comments, the approach exhorts teachers to be in a never-ending cycle of preparing, implementing, and changing their teachings. The PAM model lets teachers create their "classrooms of their own," where the teachings are catered to the particular needs of their pupils, while stressing their autonomy. Though reflective teaching strategies have been investigated in many studies,

there is a clear dearth of research especially on how ESL teachers in higher education environments especially in Pakistan use structured models like PAM.

Background of the Study

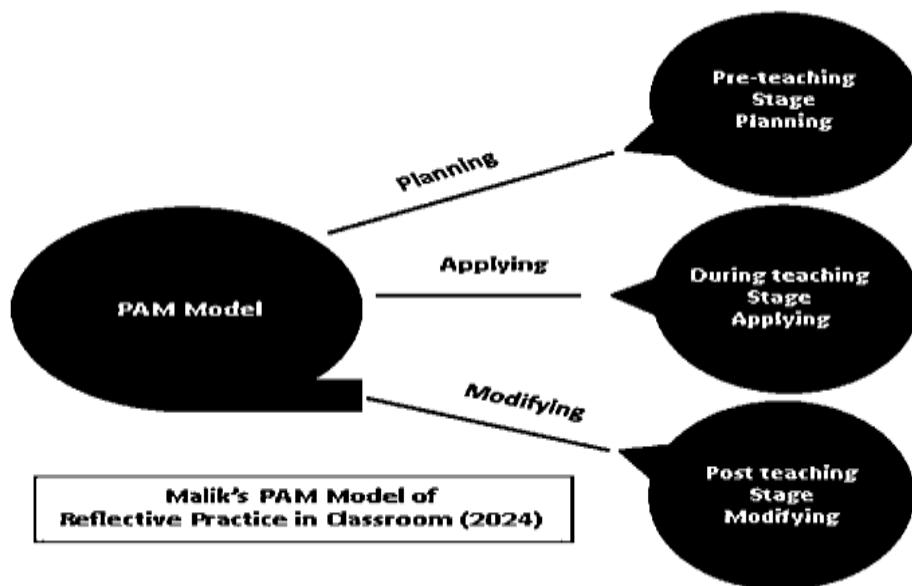
PAM Model: proposed by Malik, 2024 is based on reflective teaching practice. This model is focused on ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers. It encourages teachers to engage in a process of reflection as a way to develop both their professional practice and professionalism by being given the autonomy for ongoing professional learning. The model has three phases: Pre-Teaching, During Teaching and Post-Teaching with the support of two reflective tools: the self-lens and Others Lens. The PAM Model enables teachers to become masters of their own teaching style through self-awareness and listening to the feedback of students, colleagues, and institutional standards.

The Pre-Teaching stage involves planning, preparation and alignment between student needs and institutional objectives. During this stage, clearly defined learning objectives are mapped out, customized lesson plans are created and requisite teaching materials selected. With the Self Lens, teachers evaluate their own personal preparation and confirm that the plan has intent and is possible. While using the Others' Lens to bring in feedback generated during earlier courses that teachers can

use to adjust their plans provides a means for them to find ways of meeting institutional and student expectations.

The During Teaching stage is the one where lessons are applied and delivered. Employing prepared strategies, teachers modify them to align with the classroom environment and promote student-centered learning. The importance of reflection is evident during this period.' By using The Self Lens, teachers can monitor their classroom operations, explain effectively, and engage students with the information they learn. Meanwhile, they can use the Others' Lens to consider peer and student input as a tool for improving their teaching techniques. The reflective approach ensures that instruction remains flexible and responsive to the needs of the students.

In the Post-Teaching phase, educators appraise the results of their classes and identify areas that need to be improved. Teachers engage in the process of modification and improvement, analyzing their content with the teaching methods and evaluating the achievement of the learning objectives. Teachers can use The Self Lens to evaluate their performance and develop a strong sense of adaptability and innovation. By examining the Other's Eye, one can gain greater insights from co-workers/students/administrators, which could potentially influence future teaching strategies and decisions.



The PAM Model promotes not only reflection in practice but also teacher autonomy as it allows the teachers to own their professional growth. Through the cycle of planning, implementing, and adjusting, teachers are able to satisfy their personal objectives in teaching and the goals of the organization. This framework fosters a feeling of agency and trust so that teachers are able to self-select appropriate instructional methods and strategies. Teachers of ESL can maintain their development over time through regular work reflection while offering their students deeper and more effective learning opportunities.

Problem Statement

Reflective teaching plays a vital role in ESL environments, where educators need to adjust to various classroom dynamics. However, there is a lack of research on the use of structured reflective frameworks, such as the PAM Model (Planning, Applying, Modifying), in higher education ESL contexts, particularly in Pakistan. Most existing studies concentrate on general teaching strategies or language acquisition methods, overlooking how reflective frameworks can foster teacher autonomy and enhance classroom practices. This oversight limits our understanding of how models like PAM can aid ESL teachers in advancing their professional development and instructional effectiveness. It is crucial to address this gap to improve teaching practices and empower educators in both public and private universities in Pakistan.

Purpose of the Study

The central purpose of this analysis is to determine how ESL teachers in the Public Colleges of Mutan (both public and private) adopt PAM Model at the three main parts: pre-teaching, during-teaching, and post-teaching. Through a focus on instructors' planning, on-site teaching and flexibility to changes in real classroom situations, it intends to unveil the relationship oscillated between self-reflection in teachers and autonomy and effectiveness in their own practice. The end result would be to acquire an understanding of how reflective teaching models like PAM can be facilitated for better ESL instruction.

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to:

1. To explore how ESL teachers use the PAM Model to plan lessons that address student needs.
2. To investigate how teachers modify lessons in response to classroom dynamics.
3. To find out how ESL teachers assess their performance after lessons and adjust future strategies based on those evaluations.
4. Identify challenges faced by ESL teachers when applying the PAM Model and how they overcome them.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do ESL teachers in Multan's universities apply the PAM Model to design lessons that meet students' needs?
2. How do ESL teachers adjust their lessons based on classroom dynamics during teaching?
3. How do ESL teachers evaluate their teaching and modify future strategies accordingly?
4. What challenges do ESL teachers face when applying the PAM Model, and how do they overcome them?

Significance of the Study

This study has significant implications for ESL teachers, policymakers, and curriculum developers in Pakistan and similar educational contexts. It will provide insights into how the PAM Model can help teachers create more responsive, student-centered classrooms. The study highlights how reflective practices foster teacher autonomy by allowing teachers to modify their methods based on their students' needs. The study also emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development and flexibility in teaching, showing how the PAM Model can support teachers in overcoming classroom challenges and improving their instructional practices.

Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations. The sample consists of only 30 ESL teachers from public colleges in Multan, which may not represent the broader ESL teaching community in Pakistan or other contexts. The study is also geographically focused on Multan, limiting its generalizability to

other regions. Additionally, the research relies on interviews, which may be influenced by participant biases. Lastly, while the study focuses on the PAM Model, it does not compare it with other reflective teaching models.

Literature Review:

Teacher autonomy, the ability of teachers to exercise independent professional judgment and decision-making in their teaching practices has been identified as an essential element for effective and sustainable teacher quality (Benson 2011). Since Schon (1983) highlighted the role of reflective teaching in developing teacher empowerment and teacher autonomy, researchers have paid greater attention to this unique but essential component of the teaching process. This review of literature investigates the response of reflective teaching practices and teacher autonomy regarding conceptual frameworks (different views), implications for teacher development, classroom behavior expectation. Reflective teaching allocates the consistency method of analyzing conduct and communication content by teachers to examine their prescriptions (Farrell, 2015). Based on Dewey's (1933) concept of reflective thought, this process allows teachers to link theory and practice respond accordingly (to varying learner needs) in a number of ways. In this way, reflective teaching deepens an understanding of pedagogical processes and supports teacher professional learning and adaptive expertise (Brookfield, 2017). According to Larrivee (2000), reflection allows teachers to see what they can do better as well as what steps they could take that would make them a more effective teacher and experience higher job satisfaction. Teacher autonomy extends in different areas such as curriculum, instruction and classroom control. It signifies the capacity of teachers to act with autonomy without excessive outside pressures (Little, 1995). The freedom to customize how to teach facilitates adaptation to the unique context of each classroom which can ultimately serve to enhance student learning (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Finally, teachers with greater autonomy show more intrinsic motivation, professional commitment, and resilience (Ryan & Deci, 2000). At the same time, reflective teaching practices can

help to build teacher autonomy by enabling teachers to be more self-aware, critical and problem solvers (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Reflection empowers teachers to question those norms, try new paradigms and take charge of their own development (Zeichner & Liston, 2013). So, it is believed that reflective teachers will have little chance to face with the difficulties at contemporary classrooms because of their ability for adapting practices on changing characteristics of students and curricular needs system (Clarke, Triggs & Nielsen 2014). Many researches show how reflective teaching enhances teacher autonomy. Teachers that participated in organized reflection practices expressed higher trust in their capacity for decision-making and more control over their teaching strategies according to Farrell (2013). Reflective teachers were more likely to apply student-centered pedagogies, therefore displaying autonomy in curriculum design and assessment techniques, Smith and Erdoğan (2008). Moreover, studies by Akbari (2007) underline how reflective teaching helps teachers to develop agency, therefore allowing them to match their methods with their values and convictions. Reflective practices combined into professional development initiatives can greatly increase teacher autonomy. Giving teachers chances for mentoring, peer learning, and self-evaluation helps to foster a culture of thought and ongoing development (Moon, 2004). Effective techniques for encouraging reflective practices, enabling teachers to take responsibility for their professional learning and development, including seminars, journaling, and action research (McAlpine & Weston, 2000). Reflective teaching techniques present various difficulties even if they have advantages like time limits, lack of institutional support, and opposition to change (Loughran, 2002). Dealing with these difficulties calls for establishing motivating surroundings that support introspective conversation, offer tools, and acknowledge the need of teacher autonomy. Professional development programs including reflection must be given top priority in institutions since they help to create an empowering and innovative culture by include reflection as a basic component (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Improving teacher autonomy and arming teachers with the tools and

confidence to negotiate the complexity of contemporary classrooms depend much on reflective teaching strategies. Reflective techniques help teachers to become owners of their professional development by encouraging critical self-awareness and adaptive expertise, therefore benefiting both teachers and students. Future studies should investigate how long-term reflective practices affect teacher autonomy in various educational environments, therefore offering important information for policy and practice.

Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach to explore how ESL teachers in Multan, Pakistan, apply the reflective teaching framework of the PAM Model (Planning, Applying, and Modifying). The research involves 30 ESL teachers from Public Colleges in Multan, chosen based on their experience and willingness to participate in the study.

Data Collection

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for in-depth exploration of ESL teachers' experiences with the PAM model and reflective teaching practices. The interview questions were designed to probe into teachers' strategies for designing lessons, implementing them in the classroom, modifying their teaching based on classroom dynamics and reflecting on their teaching practice for achieving teacher autonomy.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to examine the interview data. The interviews were transcribed, and recurring themes connected to the three stages of the PAM model: pre-teaching (planning), during-teaching (applying), and post-teaching (modifying) were identified. This analysis focused on uncovering trends, challenges, and successes regarding the use of the PAM model. Five thematic categories that emerged from the data included Teacher Autonomy, Professional Development, the Power of Reflective Teaching Practice, Instructional Strategies, and Teaching Efficacy.

Thematic Data Analysis

Theme drives the study; replies for every one of the ten interview questions are compiled. Aligning with Pakistan's ESL teaching system and the restricted use of the PAM Model.

Theme 1: Teacher Autonomy

Item No. 3: What situations, while teaching, make you feel more limited or autonomous?

Summary of Responses

Teachers who implemented personal teaching strategies, encouraged creative student engagement, and managed their classrooms with minimal interference experienced a sense of autonomy. However, this independence was often constrained by the demands of standardized curricula, mandatory testing, and strict administrative protocols. Many teachers highlighted that the extent of their autonomy largely depended on the specific nature of their responsibilities and the context in which they worked.

Discussion

Autonomy in teaching often hinges on achieving a balance between institutional policies and individual teacher freedom. Teachers generally felt more constrained in their decision-making during high-stakes sessions, where strict guidelines were in place. However, they experienced the greatest sense of independence when engaging in non-assessed tasks, allowing them more flexibility to implement their own teaching methods.

Item No. 4: How do you see your own autonomy in managing student contacts and classroom discipline?

Summary of Responses

Teachers exhibited significant autonomy in managing behavior and establishing classroom rules. They appreciated the cultural support for maintaining discipline but noted that external interventions were often required to address major disruptions. Some teachers expressed that rigid systemic structures limited their ability to foster open and honest communication with students, restricting their effectiveness in creating a supportive learning environment.

Discussion

Teachers faced the ongoing challenge of balancing cultural expectations with their aspirations for instructional freedom. Despite their efforts, their autonomy was often restricted to managing discipline, which shifted their focus more toward administrative responsibilities rather than fostering innovative teaching practices.

Theme 2: Professional Development

Item No. 2: How much do you work with others or include comments from colleagues or students into your class preparation?

Summary of Responses

Collaboration among teachers often occurred informally, typically during staff meetings or casual conversations. While structured peer-feedback systems encouraged teacher participation, student feedback remained largely underutilized due to insufficient training in effectively incorporating it into teaching practices.

Discussion

Limited time and the lack of supportive institutional structures often prevented the effective implementation of collaborative teaching methods. However, professional development programs that focus on the proper use of feedback could significantly improve classroom quality and increase teacher autonomy.

Item No.9: Following a class, how do you ask mentors or colleagues for feedback? In what ways do these comments affect your view of your teaching autonomy?

Summary of Responses

Although post-lesson feedback was primarily informal, it was generally appreciated by teachers. While some teachers valued the mentoring aspect, others felt it added pressure or imposed limitations. Despite the feedback highlighting systemic constraints, it still contributed to changes in teaching practices and instructional approaches.

Discussion

Although feedback was recognized as beneficial for personal development, it lacked a structured framework to ensure its effectiveness. Establishing mentorship systems could offer a balanced

approach, allowing for professional growth while preserving teacher autonomy.

Theme 3: Power of Reflective Teaching Practice

Item No. 1: Do you create a lesson plan prior to instruction? During the planning process, what challenges do you face?

Summary of Responses

Most teachers, to varying degrees, developed their lessons, although they faced significant challenges, including time constraints, a lack of training in reflective practices, and inadequate technical support. Some teachers relied on outdated methods while expressing a desire for more modern planning tools to enhance their teaching strategies.

Discussion

While lesson planning was commonly practiced, systemic challenges often restricted its depth and creativity. Integrating reflective practices into the instructional process, with the support of the PAM Model, could help bridge these gaps and foster more dynamic and thoughtful teaching approaches.

Item No. 7: Following a lesson, how would you assess your degree of autonomy over what worked and what you might change?

Summary of Responses

Teachers often relied on informal responses, guided by student reactions and their own judgment. A recurring challenge was the lack of structured opportunities for introspection, which hindered deeper reflection. Additionally, the rigidity of the curriculum often resulted in only superficial adjustments to teaching practices.

Discussion

Despite being recognized as crucial, post-lesson reflection was often underutilized due to limited resources and institutional rigidity. Training in the PAM Model could provide teachers with structured methods for conducting assessments, supporting continuous professional growth and development.

Theme 4: Instructional Strategies

Item No. 6: In what ways might institutional policies affect your freedom in presenting a lesson?

Summary of Responses

Policies primarily emphasized syllabus completion, which limited creativity and innovation in teaching. Textbook requirements and strict exam protocols were identified as significant constraints. While some teachers appreciated the consistency these policies provided, many expressed a desire for greater flexibility and freedom in their teaching approaches.

Discussion

Institutional policies are designed to ensure standardization, but they often hinder creativity and innovation in teaching. Striking a balance between teacher autonomy and these policies could provide teachers with the flexibility to explore diverse pedagogical strategies, leading to a more engaging and adaptable learning experience.

Item No. 8: Considering your instruction, how would you balance your personal teaching goals with curricula or evaluation criteria?

Summary of Responses

Curriculum conformity often took precedence, forcing teachers to compromise on their personal teaching goals. Many struggled to align their creative ideas with the rigid evaluation frameworks. Some teachers expressed frustration with the strictness of the curriculum guidelines, feeling constrained in their ability to innovate.

Discussion

Teachers are tasked with balancing institutional demands and their personal teaching goals. Incorporating introspective techniques, like the PAM Model, can help achieve this balance by promoting both adherence to necessary guidelines and fostering creativity in the classroom.

Theme 5: Efficacy Instruction

Item No. 5: In what way, student comments affect your teaching practice in a lesson? Does it limit or improve your autonomy?

Summary of Responses

Although feedback often conflicted with syllabus requirements, teachers viewed it as valuable. However, time constraints and regulatory limitations made it difficult to implement immediate changes. While teachers appreciated the feedback, they noted that few practical options were available for applying it effectively.

Discussion

Student feedback is often underutilized due to systemic barriers that prevent its full integration into teaching practices. Providing training in feedback-responsive teaching methods could enhance both instructional effectiveness and teacher autonomy, allowing for better incorporation of student input.

Item No. 10: How might your perspectives on your autonomy as a teacher change in reaction to student outcomes?

Summary of Responses

Positive student outcomes reinforced teacher autonomy, while poor results highlighted underlying structural issues. Teachers viewed student performance as a measure of both institutional and personal effectiveness. Although policies limited the possibility of making immediate changes, reflecting on these results often revealed opportunities for professional growth and development.

Discussion

While student outcomes are a key indicator of educational effectiveness, they are often influenced by institutional constraints. Encouraging teachers to act on their reflections could enhance both their autonomy and student performance, fostering a more responsive and adaptive teaching environment.

Discussion of Results

The responses highlight key challenges in Pakistan's ESL teaching system, including inadequate training, rigid policies, and limited

collaboration. Despite these issues, teachers showed a willingness to engage in reflective practices. The *PAM Model* offers a structured approach to reflection, promoting teacher autonomy and professional development. To address these gaps, it is recommended to integrate *PAM Model* and reflective practice workshops into training, establish formal feedback systems, and introduce policy flexibility to allow greater teacher autonomy. These steps could enhance creativity, effectiveness, and continuous development in ESL teaching.

Findings of the Research

The study's key findings indicate that teachers found the *PAM Model* to be a valuable tool for reflective teaching practice, as it allowed them to plan, implement, and adjust their courses in a structured yet flexible manner. By encouraging decisions based on reflection and student needs, teachers felt more autonomous and empowered in their teaching practices. However, challenges such as time constraints and the difficulty of adjusting courses on short notice, particularly in large classes with diverse student needs, were noted. Despite these obstacles, teachers reported that the *PAM Model* kept them motivated, reinforcing the belief that challenges should not hinder their efforts. Instead, the model helped them maintain a positive attitude, viewing obstacles as opportunities for personal and professional development.

Conclusion

The study emphasizes the important part reflective teaching strategies play in creating a classroom of one's own. ESL teachers can better match their instruction to their students by using the PAM model (Planning, Applying, Modifying), resultantly creating a more student-centered and dynamic classroom. The cyclical approach of the PAM model improves teacher autonomy as well as supports continuous professional development. Though still difficult, especially with regard to time and resources, the PAM model presents a practical framework for reflective practice in ESL instruction in Pakistan.

Contributions of the Study

This study advances ESL teaching by emphasizing the importance of reflective practice and offering the *PAM Model* as a structured framework. It provides valuable data on the benefits of reflective teaching in higher education, particularly in Pakistan, and contributes to the understanding of teacher autonomy and professional development. The findings highlight how well-organized models can enhance teachers' reflective capacity and overall effectiveness. Importantly, the study emphasizes that classroom challenges should not lead to demoralization. The *PAM Model* serves as an empowering tool, enabling teachers to create dynamic, flexible classrooms where creativity flourishes and empowers them to create a classroom of their own.

Future Research Directions

Future studies should investigate strategies to help teachers overcome obstacles and improve the model for more general use in several educational environments. Teachers have to keep in mind above all that difficulties in the classroom are stepping stones for development rather than failures. Acting as their pathway, the PAM model promises that their classroom stays a place of inspiration, innovation, and ongoing development.

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