

Evaluating the Impact of Reflective Practice as an Innovative Pedagogy Approach: A Case of Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education at the University of Namibia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyse ways in which reflective practice impacts student learning and determine the challenges students encounter in conducting reflective practice in the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education at the University of Namibia (UNAM). Informed by the interpretivism paradigm, the study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design. The study population included 45 students and 2 course lecturers. A convenience sampling technique was used to select 18 students. Two lecturers were purposively selected. Semi-structured interview schedules were used as the research instruments to collect data from the participants. Lecturers were interviewed one-on-one either face-to-face or using virtual meetings. The research used Zoom virtual focus group discussions for interviews with the students. The study revealed that reflective practice has a greater impact in higher education pedagogy, namely, it transforms passive learning into active, meaningful engagement; it deepens understanding and retention, enhances self-awareness, informs decision-making, encourages life-long learning, resilience, and adaptability, and it also helps students gain real-world experience before graduating. It also provides insight into the impacts of reflective practice, and from the findings, it is evident that reflective practice has positive impacts on higher education, but it does not come without its own challenges. The university should provide training to both students and lecturers on reflective models and frameworks, and reflective learning; integrate reflective practice into workflow and course design, foster mentorship and feedback mechanisms, institutionalise reflective practice as a part of professional development, align reflective practice with the institution's vision, and create research tools for both students and lecturers.

Keywords: Adult Education, Higher Education, Reflective Practice, UNAM, Pedagogy Approach, Learning

INTRODUCTION

Reflective practice has become a critical component of educational theory and practice, supporting educators in examining their experiences, learning from outcomes, and improving future practice. It is grounded in influential theoretical perspectives on reflection and experiential learning, including the work of Dewey (1938), Freire (1970), Schön (1983), and Kolb (1984). Reflective practice encourages educators to critically examine their experiences and use the insights gained to inform future actions and promote ongoing professional development (Machost & Stains, 2023).

While reflective practice is now a prominent part of higher education, many still find it challenging to apply, as the concept carries diverse meanings for different people in different contexts (Mohamed et al., 2022). This concept builds upon some insights in the education field to bridge the gap around the aspects of reflective practice among higher education students. Whilst there is a large, extensive, and varied base of reflective practice in higher education, the argument incorporating the evidence for reflective practices with learning outcomes is theoretically limited (Harvey et al., 2016). Reflective practice is a measure and sensible process that requires a commitment of intellectual, responsive, and somatic abilities in critical thinking about the past, present, and future (Harvey et al., 2016). It is a meta-cognitive process that entails consciousness of what an individual does

and thinks about (mental conception), and it comprises deliberate, authentic, and critical research of personal beliefs, thoughts, and actions (Maksimovic & Osmanovic, 2018). The above means that reflective practice is the ability to re-look at one's work to take a critical stance while engaging in learning and adapting new knowledge.

In the field of education, reflective practice has been acknowledged as a significant aspect of continuous professional development. In higher education, reflective practice has become a vigorous, hands-on, and cyclical process that contributes to students' academic development and growth (Mohamed et al., 2022). Reflective practice is approved across the field of experience-based courses in higher education (Harvey et al., 2016; Rodgers & LaBoskey, 2016), hence the need to study the impact it has on the practice of higher education students.

According to Guo (2022), up to now, there is a lack of clarity regarding what makes reflective practice effective, for example, which population benefits more from reflective practice? What reflective activities are effective and to what extent? Could technological tools facilitate reflective practice? How can the force of social motivation be used to sustain reflective practice? The contention comes down to the intriguing question: How should reflective practice be supported in higher education? (Guo, 2022, p. 119). As reflection becomes embedded as a core part of education, it is critical to have a deeper understanding of how students engage with the practice of reflection. One of the issues is that educators may assume that students, when tasked to reflect, automatically know what to do and therefore should be able to do it (Tan, 2021). Tan (2021) states that, although the notion of students facing challenges in reflecting more dialogically at higher levels is not a new narrative in higher education, it remains a serious consideration for all involved in teaching and designing for reflective learning, and all who consider lifelong learning as a main goal.

Although existing literature highlights the potential benefits of reflective practice for learning and professional development in higher education (Machost & Stains, 2023; Mohamed et al., 2022), further empirical research is needed to establish how these benefits are realised within specific institutional and cultural contexts. In particular, limited research has examined how students enrolled in the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education (PDHE) at the University of Namibia (UNAM) engage with reflective practice and the extent to which it contributes to meaningful learning. Furthermore, while reflective activities such as journals and assessments are commonly integrated into education programmes, there is insufficient understanding of whether these practices promote deep, critical reflection or are engaged at a superficial level. This raises concerns about the effectiveness of reflective practice as a pedagogical tool. The lack of context-specific research on the impact and quality of reflective practice in Namibia creates a significant gap in the literature. Therefore, this study sought to evaluate the impact of reflective practice on student learning within the PDHE programme at the University of Namibia.

The research sought to address the following research questions:

1. In what ways does reflective practice impact student learning of the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education?
2. What challenges do students encounter in conducting reflective practice in the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education?
3. What factors influence lecturers' reflective practice in a higher education context?
4. What strategies can be used to overcome the challenges of conducting reflective practice among academics at the University of Namibia?

Theoretical Framing

This research study is underpinned by Donald Schön's theory of Reflective Practice and supported by the Social Constructivism theory. Donald Schön's work on reflective practice not only explains the how and why of reflection, but it also gives suggestions on how creative thinking can be fostered in reflection. Schön (1983) argues that an educator must realise that a student's difficulty in learning and understanding is not the student's

problem but a “defecting the teacher’s instruction” (Schön, 1983, p. 66). So, the educator should find a way of helping the student, and that is when one is required to reflect, by doing a piece of experimental research, then and there, in the classroom. Donald Schön distinguished between two types of reflective practice:

1. Reflection-on-Action (ROA): Reflecting after an event has occurred, analysing the experience to learn from it. This helps practitioners understand what happened and why.
2. Reflection-in-Action (RIA): Reflecting during the act of doing, allowing practitioners to adjust and improve their actions dynamically.

Recent studies that have critiqued Schön’s reflective cycle have shown that reflection can serve as a corrective to learning. Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action are central to reflective practice in higher education and professional development, emphasising how professionals think about their practice at different times (Machost & Stains, 2023). The depth at which reflection occurs can further be understood through the conceptual representation proposed by Nguyen (2022).

This conceptualisation aligns with the work of Li et al. (2024), who emphasise that reflective dialogue and feedback enable educators to critically examine teaching experiences and develop pedagogical knowledge through iterative reflection. Together, these perspectives extend Schön’s (1983) theory by illustrating how reflective practice (see Figure 1) not only occurs during and after practice but also deepens through structured reflection and dialogue, ultimately contributing to improved teaching practices and professional learning in higher education (Li et al., 2024; Nguyen, 2022).

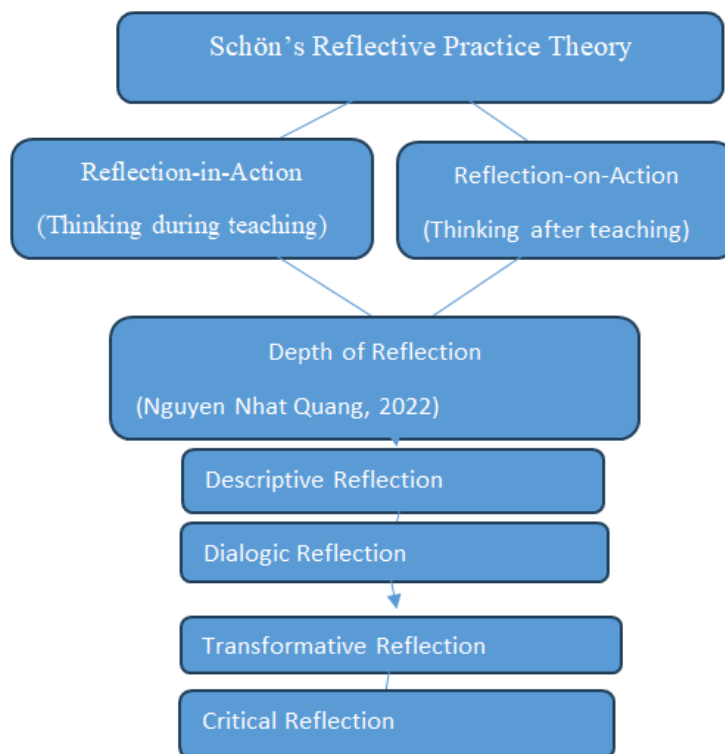


Figure 1. Conceptual representation of reflective practice adapted from Schön (1983) and Nguyen (2022)

A growing body of scholarship situates reflective practice within sociocultural and social constructivist paradigms. Drawing explicitly on Lev Vygotsky’s social constructivism, this perspective argues that reflective practice is not an isolated cognitive activity but a socially mediated process that unfolds through interaction, dialogue and engagement with cultural tools.

Social constructivism is a learning theory proposed by Lev Vygotsky in 1968 (Saleem et al., 2021), and it highlights that language and culture are contexts through which humans experience, interconnect, and understand reality. Vygotsky believed that social interaction is necessary for lifelong personality development

and that social learning adds to cognitive growth (Saleem et al, 2021). Knowledge is informally produced and co-constructed since it entails a community of people who share a language and culture. Social constructivists see knowledge as something students have in partnership with other students, teachers, and peers (Saleem et al., 2021).

Vygotsky's (1968) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Scaffolding emphasise how students and educators co-construct reflective practice, where guidance from peers and mentors enables deeper professional insight and transformation (Shah, 2022). In the context of reflective practice in higher education, this highlights how reflective abilities can be progressively strengthened through mentorship, peer interaction, and guided feedback. The model presented in Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between independent learning, guided support, and potential development within the ZPD.

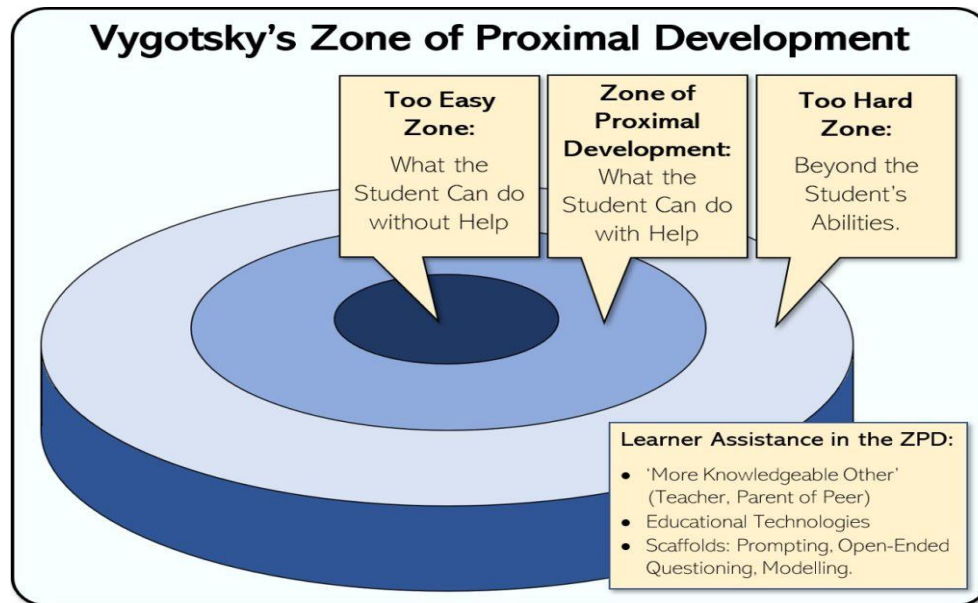


Figure 2: Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1968)

The ZPD model illustrates how learning occurs most effectively within a socially mediated environment where support enables students to extend their cognitive and reflective capabilities (Zuo et al., 2023). Within higher education contexts, reflective practice may consequently be understood as a scaffolded process in which educators, peers, and professional communities guide students towards deeper levels of critical reflection. This perspective complements Schön's theory of reflective practice by emphasising the social and collaborative dimensions through which reflective thinking develops, thereby strengthening the theoretical foundation for evaluating reflective practice in higher education.

METHODOLOGY

The study is located in the interpretivism paradigm. To summarise the definitions of various scholars on what interpretivism is, it can be defined as an approach to research that emphasises understanding the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Ugwu et al., 2021; Yong et al., 2021). Interpretivism was suitable for this research study on evaluating the impact of reflective practice in higher education because, generally, interpretivism seeks to recognise that social realities are constructed through social interaction (Archarya, 2025). Protesting is a phenomenon that requires social interactions for it to be successful; thus, subjects need to interact with each other for success. Interpretivism is also used to explore how people interpret their experiences and meanings as they attach to them (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). This study seeks to examine and discover why students engage in reflective practice, which makes interpretivism a paradigm to follow for this research study. Interpretivism is also used to explore social phenomena through the perspectives of individuals involved (Yong et al., 2021), which in this case will include exploring the effects of reflective practice in higher education.

The pertinent research design that this study adopted was the phenomenological research design. According to Creswell and Creswell (2022), phenomenological research design is a design of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants. Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry that originates from philosophy and psychology, where the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by the participants (Asenahabi, 2019). In this research study, the phenomenology research design sought to respond to both the 'what and how' of the research questions. In this research study, 20 participants (18 students and 2 lecturers) were used for data collection, drawn from the students of the PDHE and their lecturers. To select the participants used in this study, the researchers used convenience sampling for students. Convenience sampling comprises using participants who are "convenient" to the research. Convenience sampling means that "the researchers utilize a sample which is readily available and they have access to; it can apply to almost any research" (Golzar & Tajik, 2022, p. 73).

The research data were collected using interviews with the students and the lectures and participants responded to a series of open-ended questions in interview sessions with the researcher. To ensure the reliability of research instruments, a pilot study was carried out, and possible changes were made to the interview schedules. Data were collected over a course of two months, using the availability of participants for interviewing. The study observed all ethical considerations, which include seeking an Ethical Clearance Certificate (ECC) (WKC0068) from the Decentralised Ethical Committee (DEC) from UNAM, and permission letters from the Centre for Research Services and the School of Education at UNAM. I also ensured that the protection of participants' identities through the use of pseudonyms. The data were analysed using the five-stage model of narrative analysis proposed by Renner and Taylor-Powell (2003). First, the data are read and re-read until it is well understood. Next, the analysis focuses on identifying the consistencies and differences in the responses of participants; then, the data are put into categories. The subsequent phase involves recognising patterns and relationships both inside individual categories and across different categories, while the final phase entails interpreting the data by synthesising all elements into a coherent whole.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Definition of reflective practice

The study revealed that students had the same understanding of the concept of reflective practice. Reflective practice within the context of reflective education refers to a deliberate and structured process through which educators and learners critically examine their experiences, actions, decisions, and outcomes to improve future teaching and learning.

Shishiiveni defined reflective practice as

a process of analysing one's actions, experiences, and decisions to learn from them and improve future performance. It involves critically examining one's own behaviors, biases, and assumptions, as well as seeking feedback and remaining open to different perspectives.

It is rooted in the idea that experience alone does not lead to learning; rather, learning emerges from thoughtful reflection on experience. It is a craft or profession based on learned experience; for example, teaching based on what you have learned from the workplace.

Patemoshela defined reflective practice as follows:

Reflective practice would mean a kind of culture or a profession whereby an opportunity is created in the work to look at what they have done, to look at the work done, and to shape the future activities that have to be done.

Reflective practice is the sense of looking at an individual's work and measuring it with performance for students and then using it to make improvements on their own work. It is the culture of learning, as it allows students to revisit their work and what they have learned so that they can make changes if needed. Reflective practice is thinking and relating to what was done. It is thinking about what should be done, and the manner of conducting

the lessons, which refers to doing the action and receiving feedback from yourself, your students, and your peers. It is the process of thinking about what you are doing before the learning process, and after the learning process, thinking about what needs to be changed or the way forward. This is in line with Bennett and Chong (2021), who stated that reflective practice in higher education refers to the deliberate and structured process through which learners and educators critically examine their experiences to inform future action and professional growth.

Impact of reflective practice on adult student learning

The study findings revealed that reflective practice has many benefits for students' learning practice. For instance, Nangula stated the benefits of reflective practice in this way:

Reflective practice is a powerful tool for personal and professional growth. It helps inform your future actions, and it also assists with identifying your strengths and weaknesses, as reflecting on your experiences helps you recognize what you are good at and what needs improvement. Reflective practice also helps you learn from your mistakes and develop self-awareness.

Hamutenya stated that

Reflective practice helps improve problem-solving skills, as you have an opportunity to reflect on the challenges and successes, which enhances your ability to approach problems with a clear and level head. It also enables your understanding and reflect on your experiences.

Pomwene stated that

In short, the greatest benefit of reflective practice is an improved teaching and learning process that leads to deeper quality learning and mastery of the subject matter by students.

Reflective practice is mentioned to be a powerful tool for personal and professional growth, as it helps inform future actions and assists with identifying strengths and weaknesses as a student. It also improves problem-solving skills. When students incorporate it in their routine, they become better equipped to make decisions, adapt to new situations, develop resilience, and continuously learn and grow. Reflective practice also enhances self-awareness and fosters a culture of continuous learning, which in turn results in better performance for students. Engaging in reflective practice also gives an improved teaching and learning process, which leads to a deeper quality and mastery of the subject matter by the students. The more students practice reflective practice, the better their performance in both academic and when they get to work in the field. This is in line with the literature review, where Maksimovic and Osmanovic (2018) state that reflective practice impacts specialised learning and development of students, and it is also defined as a changing factor in teaching quality.

The research findings revealed that reflective practice helps students to gain real-world experience that cannot be gained in class. Through reflective practice, students experience firsthand information on how the market or profession works, which helps them perform better in their work after they have left school.

Hilinomenwa responded that

The benefit of reflective practice, it makes someone more aware of what they normally do. And you keep on improving where you did not do well. By incorporating reflective practice into your routine, you will be better equipped to make informal decisions, adapt to new situations, develop resilience, and continuously learn and grow.

Hakuna stated that

Reflective practice helps you learn from your experiences to improve your skills, increase self-awareness, and grow continuously. Reflective practice helps you learn from mistakes, analyzing what went wrong and what could have been done differently. Reflective practice also enhances critical thinking, as it encourages you to evaluate information and analyse situations.

Reflective practice assists students with the critical examination of subject matter and helps them learn from their experiences. It also helps analyse what worked well and what could be improved, as well as gain deeper insights into the work dynamics. Reflective practice also enables students to make more informed decisions and plan more effective strategies for execution. It also serves as a bridge between experience and professional growth, guiding students to continuously adapt, refine, and improve in areas that need improvement. It provides feedback and helps improve performance. It also guides students to think of ways to apply whatever they know in the examination and involves students in the assessment of their lecturers.

Shishiiveni responded that:

Engaging in reflective practice has significantly boosted my creativity, innovation, and problem-solving abilities. By taking the time to analyse my teaching experiences and classroom interactions, I have been able to identify new and more effective ways of approaching challenges. This process encourages me to think critically and creatively about how to improve lesson delivery, adapt to the diverse needs of the students, and experiment instructional strategies.

Reflective practice also helps lecturers receive criticism from their own students and improve their practice. According to Harvey et al. (2016), reflective practice has positive outcomes for learning. It also helps to critically examine the effectiveness of learning methods and to clarify the objectives.

Factors that influence reflective practice

The research findings revealed that literacy skills, time management, conceptual understanding of reflective practice, and external support from mentors and lecturers were the factors that influenced students' ability to carry out reflective practice successfully.

Teacher Ndinomwene mentioned that:

These factors can be their literacy skills, which include reading and writing, their ability to manage time efficiently, and their understanding of the concept of reflective practice.

This is endorsed by literature where Hafiz et al. (2023) mention that factors such as education, training, experience, and personal characteristics all play pivotal roles in shaping reflective practices.

Teacher Ndinomwene said in an interview that.

A lack of conceptual understanding of reflective practice can result in unstructured reflection that may fail to generate actionable insight.

Conceptual understanding is the most important factor that influences reflective practice. An understanding of the concept of reflective practice determines whether students can carry out reflective practice or not; students who have a better understanding of the concept do not struggle in comparison to those with little to no understanding of the concept. Additionally, it was discovered that students who possess stronger academic reading and writing skills are better able to demonstrate reflective practice ability.

Teacher Ndinomwene said:

Time management is also another factor that can influence the ability to carry out reflective practice, as reflective practice requires deliberate and sustained engagement.

Time management is also another factor that can influence the ability to carry out reflective practice, as students have so many academic and personal demands; they might struggle to allocate and balance their time amongst their study-based needs. This is validated by literature, where López-Cuello et al. (2024) found that timing is found to be another crucial factor that influences reflective practice to engage in meaningful reflection.

Teacher Ndinomwene said

Sometimes, external support from mentors and lecturers can be another factor that influences students' ability to carry out reflective practice. Most students look up to their mentors for guidance, and they are more likely to use what their mentors think to reflect, so they will use the type of support they get from their mentors and supervisors to carry out reflective practice.

To sustain what López-Cuello et al. (2024) said, as stated in the literature, students identified a positive interactive context as a central factor to facilitate reflective practice because being exposed to the views of their mentors and teachers creates an opportunity to consider new aspects of themselves and actions; external support from mentors and lecturers was discovered to be another factor that influences reflective practice. If the students have adequate support from their mentors and lecturers, it makes it easier for them to understand better, and understanding makes it easier to practice the concept as well.

Challenges of conducting reflective practice

The research findings revealed challenges that hinder students from conducting reflective practice. The following challenges were identified: lack of prior exposure to reflective practice (conceptual uncertainty), absence of reflective learning culture, inadequate mentorship, emotional discomfort (fear of vulnerability), time constraints, cognitive overload, as institutional pressure.

Nangula mentioned in the interview that:

One factor that impedes my ability to carry out reflective practice as a student is that it is not always easy to remember all the actions, decisions, and thought processes that occurred during the learning process. I am often focused on making sure my tasks are complete, understanding new concepts, or meeting assignment deadlines, which makes it difficult to consciously track everything I do and think at each stage.

Patemoshela said that

Reflective practice becomes a challenge if you do not understand what you want to do. Once it is not clear, you will not be able to know how far you have gone or not.

Lack of exposure to reflective practice and an inadequate reflective learning culture are among the challenges of conducting reflective practice. Conceptual uncertainty is a challenge experienced by students when it comes to reflective practice. If the students have not been exposed to reflective practice before, it becomes difficult to carry it out, as they would not know how far they have gone or how much work they still need to do. Limited knowledge of reflective practice hinders students from carrying out reflective practice successfully because many students are unfamiliar with structured reflection models and may not know how to engage critically and analytically with their own experiences. In addition, a misunderstanding of the concept of reflective practice can be a challenge to carrying out reflective practice well, especially if lecturers/tutors share limited information with students about the practice in general. The aforementioned is supported by Demir and Korucu (2019) in our literature review, where it is stated that Demir and Korucu (2019) discuss that familiarising students with reflective procedures is among the challenges, and it involves acquainting the students with different reflective procedures.

The literature review by López-Cuello et al. (2024) reports that students identified a positive interactive context as a central factor to facilitate reflective practice because being exposed to the views of your peers, mentors, teachers, and friends creates an opportunity to consider new aspects of yourself and actions. The aforementioned review works against the next challenge that was identified, incivility and toxic learning environments.

Shishiiveni said that:

A culture of incivility and a toxic learning environment impede my ability to carry out reflective practice as a student. When disrespect, negativity, or a lack of psychological safety is among the learning environment, it becomes difficult for me as a student to carry out reflective practice, as it makes me feel unheard and anxious to properly express myself, and I would sometimes withhold genuine reflections.

If there is disrespect, negativity, or a lack of psychological safety in the learning environment, it becomes difficult for students to carry out reflective practice, as it makes them feel unheard and anxious to properly express themselves, and they would sometimes withhold genuine reflections. The gap between the mentor and the student can also be a challenge to proper reflective practice, as it hinders openness, which makes it difficult for students to interact with their mentors and, hence, receive inadequate mentorship from their lecturers. Reflective practice requires interaction for it to be successful. Lecturers themselves may not be adequately trained in facilitating or modelling reflective practice, affecting their ability to mentor students effectively.

Lihongeni stated that:

Time. Studying while having many other responsibilities is a challenge.

In the literature review, López-Cuello et al. (2024) found timing to be another crucial factor that influences reflective practice to engage in meaningful reflection. The research findings revealed that time constraints and cognitive overload were among the challenges of conducting reflective practice. The ability to engage in effective reflective practice can be impeded by limited time, as balancing coursework, teaching, and personal responsibilities can leave little time for meaningful reflection. The time factor has to do with time management, with tight deadlines and cultural demands for certain tasks to be completed, which does not leave much room for proper reflective practice. Moreover, reflection blind spots were discovered as challenges that impeded students' ability to carry out reflective practice. This has to do with the difficulty of remembering all the actions, decisions, and thought processes that occurred during the learning process. Pride is also another challenge in conducting reflective practice; if the students always think they are right, they tend not to leave room for corrections. This makes it difficult even for mentors to assist and offer guidance.

Strategies to overcome the challenges

Research revealed appropriate strategies that could be used to overcome the challenges that were identified: provide training in reflective models and frameworks, create safe, non-judgmental spaces for reflective practice, integrate reflective practice into workflow and course design, foster mentorship and feedback mechanisms, institutionalise reflective practice as part of professional development, bridge the gap between theory and practice, and align reflective practice with institutional vision.

Nangula said that:

An effective way in which the challenges to reflective practice can be overcome is by integrating reflective practice directly into learning activities, instead of treating it as a separate task. If reflective practice is embedded into what students are already doing, it feels more purposeful.

Embedding reflective practice into what the students were already doing was deemed to be more purposeful. This is supported by the literature review, where Bybnys et al. (2020) highlight that structured reflective practice enabled educators to analyse experiences, connect theory to practice, and reconstruct meaning for future action.

Bybnys et al. (2020) also state that reflective practice is most effective when grounded in real teaching experiences, enabling educators to interrogate their instructional decisions and adapt their approaches. This suggests that reflective activities embedded within programmes such as the PDHE should systematically be designed to promote depth, coherence, and criticality.

Hamutenya stated that:

To overcome the challenges, the university needs to increase mentoring and systematic inclusion of professional courses. Having mentors to guide individual students through the reflective process can make a significant difference.

The university should also increase mentoring and systematically include reflective assessments across the learning programmes or professional courses. Instead of including reflective practice only in this specific course, it should be decentralised across all the other courses so that students have prior knowledge of reflective practice

before enrolling for the PDHE. Furthermore, having mentors to guide individual students through the reflective process could make a significant difference, as mentorship can provide constructive feedback, model reflective thinking, and offer supportive questioning techniques.

Lihongeni mentioned that:

By fostering a collaborative and supportive culture where individuals genuinely want to work together, share experiences, and learn from one another. Reflective practice can sometimes feel isolating, especially when it involves discussing mistakes or areas of improvement.

Reflective practice can feel isolating, so encouraging teamwork and mutual understanding could help create a safe environment in which students could feel respected and open to sharing their reflections. Students should also network with others and assist each other to participate in reflective practice, which allows everyone to be part of it. Lecturers should also provide full references and resources for further learning, which can help students to deepen their understanding and develop more structured and meaningful responses.

Shishiiveni said that:

The university, as a system, must ensure the adequacy of all its components. Provide essential infrastructure, facilitate a conducive institutional culture and learning environment.

Pomwene responded, *“The entire university structures and culture need to be overhauled and be re-oriented towards a truly student-centered constructivist approach to teaching and learning.”*

These findings are supported by the literature review, where it was discussed that reflective practice is strengthened through dialogic and collaborative processes, including reflective writing, peer discussion, and feedback. Dorit and Nirit (2022) underscore the value of dialogic reflection in enhancing critical engagement, and Kayapinar and Alkhaldi (2023) highlight the role of feedback in supporting reflective development.

In addition to the above-mentioned strategies, students need to be exposed to bold individuals who have experience in reflective practice, and they should also understand that reflective practice is not there to hunt but to assist with improvement. There should be an intervention from the university by interviewing students at their workplaces and what they are practising, so the students can see if they are learning something or not. It is also crucial that the university knows whether the lecturers have the appropriate knowledge when it comes to reflective practice to guide students regarding reflective learning.

Limitations Of The Study

The data collection process was confined to conducting in-depth, one-on-one semi-structured interviews with both the academic staff members and the student participants; this limited the length of data to be collected. The other limitation was on the focus-group data collection method, as the researcher was unsure about the number of students who would be willing to attend the Zoom interviews. With the course only having two lecturers, one lecturer chose to utilise their right to withdraw their participation from the research project, and adherence to established ethical research protocols and principles of voluntary participation meant that continued involvement could not be compelled. As a result, the study might not have captured the full range of lecturers' perspectives and experiences related to reflective practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to these findings, it had been proposed that the University of Namibia should strengthen institutional support for reflective practice by recognising its importance in teaching and learning, by providing the necessary resources and policy support to sustain its implementation to strengthen the integration, facilitation, and sustainability of reflective practice in the PDHE programme.

CONCLUSION

Reflective practice is a very important element of adult student learning. It plays a role in student performance and professional development. It can be hindered by a variety of factors. It has its own challenges, and the strategies to combat the challenges have been discussed. There is a need for a more deliberate and coherent approach to the integration of reflective practice in the PDHE programme. Addressing the identified gaps requires not only curriculum refinement and enhanced lecturer capacity but also sustained institutional commitment to fostering meaningful reflective engagement. By strengthening both the pedagogical and structural dimensions of reflective practice, UNAM, the, could better realise its potential as a tool for critical inquiry, professional growth, and improved teaching practice in higher education.

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