

Pathways to Reflective Practice Manifestation in the Public Health Teaching and Learning Process by the Lectures in Selected Universities in Lusaka and Copperbelt Provinces of Zambia

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ABSTRACT

Educators assert that when lecturers are embedded in reflective practice, they will be able to examine their practices, implement alternative methods and share the best practices with colleagues for achieving quality education deliverables. However, the evidence to support this practice in the public health teaching and learning process remains theoretical and scant. To close this gap, this article explored Pathways to reflective practice manifestation in the Public Health teaching and learning process by the lectures in selected Universities in Lusaka and Copper belt Provinces of Zambia. The study was qualitative underpinned with social constructivism worldview. The case study design was used. Data was generated from 32 participants who were purposively selected for one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions. The generated data was analyzed using thematic approach. The study found that promoting self-evaluation of lecturers, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of all lecturers, using students centered approach when teaching, reviewing the course curriculum frequently, National conference for sensitizing lecturers on reflective teaching and teaching lecturers on how to teach and examine students are the key strategies on how reflective practice can be applied in public health teaching and learning by the lecturers. The study concluded that these ways on how reflective practice can be applied if well harnessed by educators can bring about positive change when teaching public health courses. Based on study findings, the study recommends that Universities offering health courses should enhance the ties between Health Professional Council of Zambia (HPCZ) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) as these institutions can help to facility national conferences were lecturers can be sensitized about reflective practice and its value.

Keywords: Public Health, Teaching and learning Process, ways reflective practice can be applied, reflective practice, lecturer.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Reflective teaching offers teachers the opportunity to renew their practice and to understand the effects of their teaching (Hadiya (2017). This is derived on the belief that reflective practice is directly tuned into what workers actually know about the work, an opportunity for rapid and progressive refocusing and that it can help us to recognize and continue good practices. This article also argues that reflective practice can challenge practices that are taken for granted and can change and improve what is not working well in terms of lecture delivery (Mathew and Peechattue, 2017). This is supported by Moon (2004) who argued that one of the factors that can influence the quality of teaching and learning is reflective practice.

Further, there is a view that the process of Reflective practice takes place when an individual explores an experience; they have had to identify what happened, and what their role in the experience was, including

their thinking and behavior as well as emotions (Fook and Gardener, 2007). This brings to the fore the argument advanced by Korthagen (2017) who enunciated that asking teachers to reflect on their personal core qualities along with their teaching competencies allows them to gain deeper awareness of their classroom problems thus, offering an opportunity to rethink of possible remedy to classroom fragilities. This is supported by Muleya (2015) who established that teachers must be grounded on ethics that superintend the process of teaching and learning.

Lew and Schmidt (2011) posit that reflective practice is considered important within health promotion. This is supported by Ciampa and Gallagher (2015) and Mundia (2019) who observed that when teachers reflect on their teaching practices, it helps them to avoid teaching methods that have negative influence on the learning process of students. Empirical evidence also delineates that reflective skills are needed to capture the interplay between critical thinking and situational analysis in any professional (Kaufman and Mann, 2010). Hargreaves (2016) posit that reflective practice is central to medical education due to the fact that it helps lecturers to focus on approaches that increase in knowledge and clinical skills of students.

In view of various submission above, it vivid that reflective practice is paramount in the teaching process as this can influence the quality of teaching because through reflection, lecturers can be able to evaluate their lesson and how the students received it. However, it must be noted that the way reflective practice can be applied in public health universities by lecturers remains largely a disputed and unclear phenomenon. As such, the current article attempts to establish Pathways to reflective practice manifestation in the public health teaching and learning process by the lectures in selected Universities in Lusaka and Copper belt Provinces of Zambia.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article relied on Danielson (2012) teaching framework. Danielson (2012) emphasized, Teachers professional learning to include self-assessment, reflection in and on practice, and professional conversation. Therefore, this article contends that using a teaching framework such as The Danielson framework for teaching (2012) can enable teachers to measure their own teaching performance. This is reinforced by Disu (2017) who argued that following a framework is a good practice as this can help teachers to engender teaching and receive feedback without the involvement of a supervisor. Based on the salient features and the focus of the theory, it was necessary to utilize this teaching framework when exploring Pathways to reflective practice manifestation in the public health teaching and learning process by the lectures in selected Universities in Lusaka and Copper belt provinces of Zambia.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND PURPOSE

Educators assert that when lecturers are embedded in reflective practice, they will be able to examine their practices, implement alternative methods and share the best practices with colleagues for achieving quality education deliverables (Disu (2017). This view is in line with the quality of higher education and its relevance to industry as reflected in Educating Our Future Policy of 1996. However, the evidence to support this practice in the public health teaching and learning process remains theoretical and scant. To close this gap, this article explored Pathways to reflective practice manifestation in the public health teaching and learning process by the lectures in selected Universities in Lusaka and Copper belt Provinces of Zambia.

METHOD

Qualitative research approach was used with an application of case study design. This study design falls within the constraints of constructivist and relativist ontology worldview whose argument paint a picture

that knowledge generation and knowing a reality of a particular phenomenon requires social interaction with people (Yin, 2018). The study recruited 32 participants from four selected universities. The sample comprised of Deans, heads of department and the lecturers. Homogeneous purposive sampling was used. The focus was to recruit participants who possessed similar characteristics that were relevant to the study (Creswell and Poth, 2017).

To generate data, one on one interviews and focus group discussions were conducted. The use of these instruments allowed the researcher to gather in-depth information which helped the study a complete and detailed understanding of ways reflective practice can be applied in public health universities by the lecturers. Data generated was analyzed using thematic approach. This was done manually by transcribing recorded interviews into textual data. Thereafter, the researcher read through the transcripts to identify open codes manually. Coding aided in identifying concepts, categories and sub-themes that were further broken down into themes. Further, before conducting this research, permission was sought from the university of Zambia ethical clearance committee, targeted universities and individual participants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Pathways to reflective practice manifestation in the public health teaching and learning process by the lecturers

Participants were asked to talk about ways reflective practice can be applied in public health teaching and learning process by the lecturers. Data analysis shows that Promoting self-evaluation of lecturers, Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of all lecturers, using students centered approach when teaching, reviewing the course curriculum frequently, National conference for sensitizing lecturers on reflective teaching and teaching lecturers on how to teach and examine students are the key strategies on how reflective practice can be applied in public health teaching and learning by the lecturers.

Promoting self-evaluation of lecturers

From the verbal accounts of both the participants, promoting self-evaluation among the lecturers was mentioned as one of the methods for applying the reflective teaching to other institutions of learning. The participants argued that educators need to conduct self-evaluation in order to provide quality lessons to the learners and if they don't evaluate themselves, they won't improve on their methods of delivering the lessons to the students. This is evident in the verbatim below:

[...] what I can say is that it's very important to do self-evaluation as a lecturer because if you don't do that it means that you are not giving quality lessons to the students. So if I teach a course this year, it means next year I should teach far much better than I did it this year. Without reflective teaching, you may not know if your frequency of teaching was wrong and you need to know (KII-HOD, University D).

KII-HOD from University B stated that;

Yah reflective teaching is a good practice, it's a very good process because it is only once this is practiced then you can know as a lecturer that you have delivered or not to the students because it's not good enough you teach or lecture at the end of the day you give some assessments for example you give an assignment your learners fail, then it means you have not delivered but once we use reflective teaching at the end of the lesson you will be able to say that my students have understood or not and if they have not understood, then you will be able to find a better way to make them understand.

On promoting self-evaluation of lecturers, findings gives an impression that all educators in other universities need to conduct self-evaluation in order to provide quality lessons to the learners. The

implication of the finding is that self-evaluation helps lecturers to identify their strengths and weaknesses which provide an opportunity for them to work on their mistakes so that learning can take place on part of the students. This is supported by the Danielson framework for teaching (2012) which emphasized teachers' professional learning to include self-assessment, reflection on practice, and professional conversation. This means that using a teaching framework such as the Danielson framework for teaching can enable teachers to measure their own teaching performance against the framework and can facilitate discussion on effective instructional practices. Similarly, Bradbury et al (2010) found that reflective practice is usually conceptualized as the responsibility of the individual, and is assessed on that basis. This means that lecturers need to reflective on their teaching practice every-time and this will help them to improve the quality of learning process for the students they teach.

Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of all lecturers

Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of all lecturers in the institutions of learning was also mentioned as one of the methods for applying the reflective teaching in universities. The quote below illustrates this point:

[...] our main intention is to improve the quality of teaching that is provided to students. Members of staff vary slightly some may have strength in using teaching aids, some may have strengths in using teaching delivery methods so what we are much interested in is to identify strengths and weaknesses in all members of staff and also try to increase their strength and minimize their weaknesses" (KII-Dean, University A).

In terms of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of all lecturers, findings of the study gives an impression that the main intention of every university is to improve the quality of teaching provided to students. The Danielson's (2012) framework for teaching has guided that that teaching frameworks can provide a process for reflection and can promote school-wide inquiry focused on a common language and teaching expectations. This can lead to the development of teachers' expertise needed to foster student learning as those involved in the teaching and learning process can detect the progress and impediment to teaching and learning.

Using students centered approach when teaching

The findings of the study revealed that using students centered approach when teaching is one of the ways in which the methods of reflective teaching can be applied. It was revealed that students centered approaches are beneficial because it gives them different perspectives on how to solve problems. The participants argued that all institutions of learning should concentrate on changing the styles where the classroom is more of a round table so that there is more discussion and interactions. Below are the verbal responses to support the theme.

KII-Dean from University A stated that:

[...] institutions of learning need to concentrate more on changing the styles of teaching because most of the styles of teaching have more to do with what we may call teacher centered learning where a teacher gives a lecture and then walks out when the time is up. So we are more interested to blend other methods where there are students focus learning where the classroom is more of a round table so that there is more discussion because we are more interested in the students learning rather than the teaching.

FGD P1 from University D narrated that:

Ok I think reflective teaching practice is a good practice for individual lecturers to employ because the reason why we as lecturers are here is because of the students so whatever we do should be for the benefits of the students in class. So the reason why we should be reflecting on our teaching behaviors, is for us to be

better lecturers and also for us to be able to deliver the information to the students in an adequate manner so that our students can benefit and can get the necessary notice that is going to be beneficial to them as practitioners in the future. So it is an important strategy and it should be employed by all lecturers who are dealing with students.

FGD P3 from University B mentioned that:

You can try to use learners to find out if they have understood and then throw back some questions to them to research more on that particular topic. Sometimes they tend to get more information that can teach you as an educator as well so it's a learning process and we also learn from each other.

Responses of the study also give an impression that in order to make reflective practice a reality, lecturers should focus on employing student-centered approaches. The participants argued that all institutions of learning should change their styles of teaching from teacher-centered where a lecturer gives a lecture and then walks out when the time is up to student-centered which allows participation through discussions and interactions. By implication, student-centered approach such as action research and questions and answer sessions when teaching can be applied to universities in Zambia because it makes students to be co-creator of their own education. Engaging students on how and what they learn helps to prepare students not only to acquire academic knowledge but with various skills such as self-direction, creativity and collaboration which may be useful to their daily endeavors (Mundia, 2019).

Reviewing the course curriculum frequently

The participants argued that reflective teaching should be accompanied by frequent reviewing of the curriculum so that some concepts which are missing from the curriculum can be added to the course content. Below are the verbal responses:

Not really, yah not really it's only that as we do reflective learning, it's important that the curriculum is reviewed frequently so that some of these concepts which are missing can be added otherwise it's a good idea to have a good look on it and see how best it can be utilized" (KII-Dean from University A).

FGD P2 from University D stated that:

Ahh it's very important to review the curriculum when reflecting on the teaching practice for the benefits of both the students and the lecturers. For the lecturer it actually helps them to be creative in their teaching and also for the students because it ensures everyone has their benefit because different strategies are used and different students are actually able to benefit from these strategies differently so that at the end of it all it tends to benefit all of them looking at the strategies in terms of delivering to them information.

Findings depict an idea that reflective teaching should be accompanied by frequent reviewing of the curriculum so that some concepts which are missing from the curriculum can be added to the course content for the benefits of both the students and the lecturers. This goes to show that the process of reviewing and enhancing the curriculum is a valuable process as this enables the educationist to assess how the curriculum interacts with actual students. Further, through the responses from the participants, it was clear that reviewing of the curriculum helps to evaluate its effectiveness after it has been implemented and reflect on what students benefited and did not benefit out of it.

National Conference for sensitizing lecturers on reflective teaching

The study findings revealed that introducing a national conference for sensitizing lecturers on reflective teaching another way in which the methods of reflective teaching can be applied to institutions of learning in Zambia. The participants argued that platforms need to be created where lecturers can hold conferences for

presentations and interactions at least once in a while. They was a view that this may enhance action research among lecturers and as well as help in identify their colleagues who teach similar courses with them and they will begin to exchange notes, best strategies for teaching, challenges encountered and experiences. This is evident from the verbal responses below:

[...] I just feel that university lecturer, let me say higher education needs a conference and they can be conducting the national conference in a period of two years or three years where public health lecturers can be sharing their experiences with teaching. I think the conferences have a benefit of sensitizing each other so you can even try to be motivated because there are a lot of things that people are trying at an individual level, at the group level, at the university level but we need to share those ideas (FGD P1, University A).

FGD P5 from University A shared the following views by stating that:

[...] if I look at what happens in nursing the fact that all nurses are assessed using the common examination. So which means that it doesn't matter whether you are from the University A or any other university or colleges as long as it's a common examination and if you pass then you are good enough. Instead of where you are just independent and I am teaching genetics and somebody else is also teaching genetics in a different way. There is this thing where others will be saying you have never taught this topic and you don't even know this. But if there is that collaboration at least at the very minimum level of knowledge for a given course, it will help really when different lecturers are discussing and they all know about this basic.

Regarding the establishment of the National Conference for sensitizing lecturers on reflective teaching, participants suggested that there is need to introduce a national conference for sensitizing lecturers on reflective teaching. The participants argued that the Ministry of Higher Education should create a platform where lecturers can hold conferences for presentations and interactions at least once in year. By implication, sensitising lecturers on reflective practice is beneficial because it may enhance action research in the sense that it will enable lecturers to identify their colleagues teaching similar courses with them consequently, this allow them to exchange notes, share best strategies for teaching and the challenges encountered through their experiences. Hadiya (2017) is of the view that qualified teacher learning and skills status requires trainees to begin the practice of continuing professional development right from the start of their training. This goes to show National conference for sensitizing teachers can be the best platform for improving the ability of lecturers so that they can be at a comparative advantage to judge the quality of their work.

Teaching lecturers on how to teach and examine students

The study participants said that teaching lecturers on how to teach and examine students were some of the ways of applying the methods of reflective teaching to other institutions of learning in Zambia. Participants argued that reflective teaching is only a component of the whole process of teaching and institutions of learning should always aim at improving the quality of teaching that is provided to students. The participants also argued that educators should be flexible and open to learn because they learn from each other on how other lecturers teaches and they can do that by asking questions from their colleagues and students. The quotes below illustrate this point:

Our main intention is to improve the quality of teaching that is provided to students. So what we are more interested in is to make sure the staffs that we have are trained on how to teach and how to examine students because sometimes people may know how to teach but they may not know how to examine sufficiently well (KII-Dean, University A).

FGD P1 from University B mentioned that:

Ok I think over the four years that I have been teaching here, I have learnt that you don't stop learning and

that knowledge does not intoxicate because you learn from those that have gone ahead of you and then as you progress year in and year out you become a better person when it comes to perfect delivery. So there are certain times when as a lecturer you are very knowledgeable and you have all the data but your content delivery is very poor and that's the reasons why the assimilation levels of your students are very low. So I think it is important to be flexible and open to learn because we learn from each other on how other lecturers teaches.

In addition, teaching lecturers on how to teach and examine students was another way of applying the methods of reflective teaching to other universities in Zambia. Responses from the participants paint a picture that teaching lecturers on how to teach and examine students can be an effective method of improving the quality of teaching. Participants argued that quality learning can be achieved by teaching lecturers on how to teach and set examinations for students because some lecturers may know how to teach but do not know how to examine students. This finding resonates well with Muleya (2015) who argued that some teachers in Zambia were not well grounded on innovative methods of teaching.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there are substantial ways in which the methods of reflective teaching can be applied to teaching and learning process in public health by lecturers. These substantial ways are centered on promoting self-evaluation of lecturers, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of all lecturers, using students centered approach when teaching and reviewing the course curriculum more frequently. Similarly, holding national conference for sensitizing lecturers on reflective teaching, and teaching lecturers on how to teach and examine students is fundamental. The implication of these findings is that creative, vigorous, innovative and disciplined mentality of lecturer is required if these ways were to be applied and be effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been given originating from the findings.

1. Universities offering health courses should enhance the ties between Health Professional Council of Zambia (HPCZ) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) as these institutions can help to facilitate national conferences where lecturers can be sensitized about reflective practice and its value.
2. There is need for University administrators to enhance support and encourage in-service training and provide capacity building to lecturers.
3. Lecturers should develop the culture of embracing innovative and creative methods of teaching as this has a potential to ignite interest for learning among students.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Limitations	Mitigation strategies
The study could not use a questionnaire for collection of accurate data. The use of interviews and focus group discussion may have impacted negatively accuracy of data on reflective practice	The study relied on four principles of trustworthiness for data quality control such as confirmability, credibility, dependability and transferability.
Some participants were difficult to be found at their institutions after making an appointment where the interviews were supposed to be conducted from and this meant going back to the same institutions more than once. This delayed the data collection process.	The researcher remained focused and determined to meeting the participants until the day they were ready for this academic engagement. In the process of waiting to have an interaction with the participant who were busy, the researcher was also busy familiarizing with data which was shared by other participants for easy data analysis

<p>The study focused on Pathways to reflective practice manifestation in the public health teaching and learning by lecturers in selected three (3) Universities in Lusaka Province and one (1) University in Copper belt Province of Zambia; Therefore, a study of reflective manifestation in public health teaching and learning by lecturers in one province may not be representative of all Public Health Lecturers in the country. Results of this study may only be a representation of the sampled group</p>	<p>The study made a theoretical contribution in the area of public health were reflective practice is concerned.</p>
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