CHALLENGES IN CONSTRUCTING DIALOGIC PRACTICES: INSIGHTS FROM B.ED. CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the challenges faced by the teachers in constructing dialogic practices in the classroom. The research followed an interpretive paradigm with a qualitative approach, utilizing a case study method that included focus group interviews with four teachers. Findings highlight the complexities arising from diverse student backgrounds, perceptions of educational adequacy, and the integration of theoretical and practical learning amidst resource constraints. Communication issues from low English proficiency led teachers to consider using students' first language, while inadequate classroom technology and training hindered technology integration. Despite these challenges, teachers promoted active participation and constructive feedback, recognizing the positive impact of dialogicity on student learning.
Key words: Dialogic Practice, classroom interaction, challenges

INTRODUCTION

Dialogic Practices is an important area in Education in which researchers explored various forms of talk and their educational functions (Mercer, 1995, 2000; Alexander, 2006; Cazden, 1988). As Klara et al. (2014; p. 214) state that " Research in this area is typically divided into two types: theoretical development and empirical observation. The former focuses on creating concepts to identify and evaluate the educational potential of different communication processes, while the latter examines these processes within real classroom environments." In Pakistan, teacher education is underdeveloped and undergoing significant reforms to meet the evolving needs of the educational system. The B.Ed. (Hons.) program is responsible for preparing professional teachers.

The quality of teachers teaching at various levels depends on the quality of the programs in which they are being developed. Ultimately, the quality of teacher education is crucial. Classroom practices are essential in determining how pupils learn and influence educational outcomes. Similarly, one essential component of teacher education is the teachers and their practices, which can bring a significant change if they are innovative, up-to-date, and meet international standards. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating productive and constructive dialogue (Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013; Sedova et al., 2016). Dialogic practices emphasize [1]the value of communication between teachers and students, facilitating deeper understanding and learning, which is integral to students' progress.

Teachers use various approaches, from traditional lecture methods to innovative inquiry-based learning and cooperative group work. According to Duit and Treagust (2003), the traditional perspective of learning, in which the student is seen as a passive participant, has increasingly given way to constructivist perspectives, where students actively engage with the material to make sense of it. Ideally, teachers should adopt teaching methods that meet students' needs. On the other hand dialogic teaching which emphasizes learning through dialogue and give value of communication between teachers and students, facilitating deeper understanding and learning, that is integral to students' progress.

Researchers agree that dialogic teaching must be intentional, learner-centered, and assessable (Bakker et al., 2015; Reznitskaya, 2012; Fisher, 2007; Simpson, 2016; Lehesvuori et al., 2011; Alexander, 2017). For successful dialogic teaching, students need to have agency, acting authoritatively and accountably when problem-solving (Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2010). However, it is observed that teachers in Pakistan often prioritize their comfort over students' needs, which ultimately impedes students' learning. As previously mentioned, the effectiveness of dialogic methods is well-established in this context. Mercer (2003) states that dialogic practices enhance students' learning, while authoritative practices may not provide the desired results. A shift in teaching and learning processes can be observed when teachers use dialogic and authoritative practices. Dialogic practices promote students' interaction and collaboration, while authoritative practices provide structured guidance and direction. Literature suggests that teachers' beliefs and practices significantly affect students' learning. Alexander (2004) connects "dialogic teaching" to the importance of dialogue between instructors and learners, emphasizing that dialogue is crucial for effective teaching. It is essential to investigate the practices of the teachers from teacher training institution, with the expectation that they will implement them in their classrooms, thereby enhancing the quality of education. Moreover, it is important to understand the challenges and constraints teachers face during their practice in fostering a dialogic environment which is the objective of this paper. This paper based on the data set taken from a larger data of a study conducted in Teacher Education Classroom to identify the practices either dialogic or non-dialogic and to explore the challenges and opportunities project teachers encountered in the implementation such practices.

Challenges in Dialogic Teaching: Research shows that dialogic teaching enhances student participation and engagement, promoting critical thinking, questioning, and reasoning skills (Sedlacek and Sedova, 2017; Elhassan and Adam, 2017). However, some scholars argue that dialogic teaching is unrealistic and impractical for everyday teaching (Lefstein, 2010; Sedova et al., 2014). Challenges include high student numbers, structured curricular content, and institutional roles defining teachers as primary authorities (Lefstein, 2010; Lyle, 2008;

Mercer and Howe, 2012; Reznitskaya and Gregory, 2013). Burbules (1993) identifies time constraints, standardized testing, and strict discipline as impediments to classroom dialogue. Myhill and Fisher (2005) argue that the absence of activities encouraging critical thinking hampers dialogue and discussion. The challenges in implementing dialogic teaching arise not from teachers' disapproval but from their difficulty in fully adopting these principles (Billings & Fitzgerald, 2002; Lefstein, 2008). Routine practices often override new dialogic approaches, and the micro-level interactions in classrooms are hard to change. Researchers recommend emphasizing dialogic topics in teacher training, familiarizing teachers with specific strategies, and making students realize the value of talk for learning (Mercer & Howe, 2012). Further research is needed to understand why regular teachers struggle with dialogic teaching and to identify which aspects of everyday practice are incompatible with it. This analysis can help bridge the gap between theory and practice and explain the limited presence of dialogic teaching in classrooms.

Statement of the Problem
The main issue in this research is understanding the impact of dialogic or non-dialogic classroom practices in a university setting. Non-dialogic practices limit opportunities for students to express their perspectives, engage in critical thinking, and actively participate in the learning process. The dominance of teacher-centered instructions and the absence of meaningful dialogue hinder the development of essential skills such as problem-solving, communication, and collaboration among students.The persistence of non-dialogic practices in university classrooms raises concerns about the effectiveness of teaching strategies. A lack of interactive conversation and student engagement can lead to passive learning experiences and poor understanding of the subject matter.

The study aims to enhance teaching practices by identifying the challenges faced by teachers, which is essential for developing strategies to support them in creating effective dialogic environments. By understanding these challenges, educational institutions can offer targeted professional development and resources. Additionally, understanding the challenges from both teachers' and students' perspectives can help design interventions that improve student participation and engagement in

dialogic activities, leading to better learning outcomes. The research findings can inform policymakers and educational leaders about the specific needs and obstacles in higher education classrooms, guiding the formulation of supportive policies for dialogic teaching. This study contributes to the limited body of research on dialogic teaching in the Pakistani higher education context, providing empirical data for future researchers to build upon. Moreover, addressing these challenges can promote educational equity by ensuring that all students have the opportunity to engage in meaningful and interactive learning experiences.

Methodology

The aim of this paper is to investigates the challenges faced by teachers in constructing dialogic practices in the classroom at the university level. I am presenting a portion of my doctoral thesis for this paper. This study is part of a larger dataset collected by employing case study methodology. In this paper I am taking one of the aspects in which I investigated about the challenges what teachers face in creating a dialogic context.

The approach of this study is qualitative nature, in which researcher gives importance on the environment that influences the actions, relationships, and interpretations individuals assign to their experiences. Under the qualitative research, I am using case study methodology, a fundamental approach to investigating a specific occurrence within its real-life context through various pieces of evidence (Robson, 2002). Qualitative research aims to grasp the significance and viewpoints of individuals concerned using different methods. Researcher employed flexible methods such as focus group interviews, observations (video recordings), and field notes to collect data that facilitated me to grasp the intricacy, nuance, and context in which the reality is perceived, comprehended by applying techniques of analysis, explanation, and construction of arguments. (Flick, 2006; Berry & Sahlberg, 2006). As said This paper utilizes data extracted from a larger dataset, specifically focusing on information gathered through focus group discussions

Participants

Participants were purposively selected based on characteristics that are aligned with my research objectives. I selected four teachers along with their classrooms from a public sector university. These teachers were teaching courses at B.Ed program (see Table 1).

Table 1:

Demographic information of the participants

Name	Subject	Qualification	Experience	Teaching Course
Mehwish	Communication Skills	M.Phil.	4 years	B.Ed. 2nd semester
Ayesha	English	M.Phil.	5 years	B.Ed. 1st semester
Maria	Botany	M.Phil.	7 years	B.Ed. 2nd semester
Fatima	Philosophy of Education	Ph.D.	10 years	B.Ed. 2nd semester

Data Collection

The researcher used triangulation to gather data to understand the phenomenon comprehensively (Maxwell, 2015). As Stake (2009) posited, triangulation enhances the credibility of the research by providing a broader perspective of the classroom. Therefore, I employed observation, field notes, and focus group interviews as data collection methods for main study; these sources may offer a complete picture of classroom practices. Data collection occurred from March 30th, 2023, to May 15th, 2023, and the researcher obtained permission from the Director of the faculty of university for video recording and participation. I informed the teachers and students about the video recording and got consent for focus group interviews and assured them that their data would only be used for research purposes and remain confidential. Additionally, I met with the female participants to ensure their comfort, as required by cultural constraints. This article is related with focus group data collection and their analysis and interpretation.

Focus Group

I selected the focus group interview for my study to get clear idea about the views of the four teachers as participants' involvement emphasized their experiences in creating the rich data in qualitative research. It aimed to gain insights into the participants' perspectives on creating dialogic practices in their classrooms. These were the same teachers whose classes were observed (see table 1),

The researcher introduced them the purpose and significance of focus group interview. The researcher developed a protocol of focus group interview covering various aspects of dialogic practices which helped to gain knowledge about the participants' perspectives. The participant teachers uncovered the challenges they faced in creating dialogic practices in their classroom.

Data Analysis and findings

The researcher organized a focus group interview with the project. teaching B.Ed. courses. The interviewees 'interviews were audio recorded transcribed and these were analyzed thematically. The analysis facilitates me to reply the study question; "What challenges are faced by the teachers in creating dialogic context?" Below is the analysis and interpretation of the focus group interviews.

1. Understanding Challenges: diverse background, varied abilities & students' mindset

In response to the question "What are the most significant challenges they face in teaching B.Ed. students in the creation of dialogic context? One of the teachers, said that "as a teacher, 'addressing varied student abilities and engagement' are significant challenges in guiding B.Ed. students". However, another teacher added that she faced many challenges in the teaching of B.Ed. (Hons) students; As first challenge was the 'diverse background of students'. The second challenge was the 'societal mindset of considering B.Ed. as insufficient education'. And third challenge that I faced was 'dealing with a variety of students' educational backgrounds (FA, ICS, FSC, BA) last, 'the lack of conceptual understanding and cramming system' was also a major challenge that I faced in teaching B.Ed. students.

When the Interviewer probed 'Do students offer appropriate challenges to each other/ the teacher?" Teachers replied 'Yes' students offer challenges to each other leading to more interesting and detailed class discussions. Further, they added, classmates provide opportunities for intellectual growth by asking thought-provoking questions and contributing different viewpoints during discussions with each other and teachers.

When the Interviewer asked 'Are these specific challenges related to students' engagement, participation or behavior? They replied that challenges related to engagement and participation involve overcoming the personal hesitations of students, actively contributing them to discussions, and collaborating effectively with classmates in group activities. They believe that these challenges ultimately alter the behaviour and lessen students ' class participation.

In response to the question 'How would you describe the dynamics?' Teachers said that their dynamics refer to the 'Teacher - Student Interaction' and 'Student - Student Interaction'. Further, these dynamics involve facilitating a supportive and collaborative learning environment, encouraging active participation, and adapting teaching strategies. *Interpretation:* One of the challenges that teachers faced was dealing with a variety of student' educational background who lack of conceptual understanding and believe on cramming learning methods. Teachers added that the societal mind set of considering B.Ed. as insufficient education make the situation more complicated and exert the pressure on the teachers to restore the program status and play its role in increasing the scope of this degree. Challenges related to engagement and participation involve overcoming the personal hesitations of students, actively contributing them to discussions, and collaborating effectively with classmates in group activities. These challenges ultimately alter the behavior and lessen students ' class participation. Further, analysis shows the dynamics involve facilitating a supportive and collaborative learning environment, encouraging active participation, and adapting teaching strategies. According to Smith, Ewing, and Cornu (2008), there is disagreement among cultures regarding the knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, and abilities that educators should possess.

2. Curriculum implementation constraints

In response to the question 'Do you find any difficulty or problem in implementing the B.Ed. course outline?' The teacher responded that they are facing many problems; one of them is managing the balance between theoretical concepts and practical application. According to Lillian (2000), ineffective coordination between creating learning materials, teachers, and curricula impacts how well they are implemented.

Second, they added that sometimes it becomes difficult to ensure that students are getting theoretical and hands-on experience in learning. As Sleegers, Bolhuis, and Geijsel (2005) argue that academic content and practical skills should not be perceived as distinct from society and the teacher education should be grounded in social and political theories.

They go on to say that the curriculum for teacher preparation must be created in a way that allows it to accurately convey the local values, the school's operational environment, and its unique resources.

The third challenge they shared that the course outlines are a combination of different ranges of topics so one has to use different methodologies to deal with different topics which is only possible if plenty of resources are available and we have no hesitation in saying that the classrooms are not equipped with such resources, which limits flexibility in adopting of innovative teaching methods.

3. Technology integration constraints

In response to the question 'Do you believe in the integration of technology in B.Ed. classrooms to create a dialogic environment? If yes, how do you incorporate technology in your B.Ed. classroom and what challenges do you face in doing so?'

Here are the teachers' beliefs regarding technology integration:

As a teacher in a B.Ed. classroom, I believe in the integration of technology to enhance the learning experience. I did not know what you mean by incorporation of technology but I am using multimedia presentations and sometimes I use social media, and short video lessons on YouTube for concept clarity. And I find no difficulty in incorporating technology. But I feel reluctant to use all these because in the classroom there is no proper arrangement of video and audio display. It limits flexibility to facilitate group interactions and open discussion. Teaches added they use mobile phones sometimes for this purpose but it creates discipline problems during the class.

Teachers shared that since this is an era of information and communication technology, none can negate the importance of technology in education as well. The integration of technology not only facilitate teachers but also students to benefits from understanding many concepts. Moreover, we learnt many tools during COVID-19 for example, we are using GCR, Google Meet, and Zoom for online instructions and using "Padlet" for online group participation and teamwork. They want to say that technology can sometimes distract the learners when teachers will not be much trained about its uses. In this environment use of technology to foster dialogic environment becomes a big challenge. However, they were well knowing about the importance of technology in education as well. They had learnt

many tools during COVID-19 for online instructions, group participation and teamwork. This study shows that such type of teacher beliefs were not well aligned with the observed data, as very few instances were experiential from their classes when they used technology during their teaching practices.

Interpretation: The teachers believe that integration of technology may enhance the students' learning to establish dialogic practices. They were using multimedia presentations, social media, and short video lessons on YouTube in their classes. But they had little disappointed because no proper arrangement of video and audio display available in the classrooms. Teachers added they had to use mobile phones when their video or audio do not display which sometimes creates discipline issue.

4. Lack of confidence and Gender constraints

Teachers employed strategies such as group discussions and real-world examples to encourage connections and created an interactive learning environment. Despite recognizing the importance of dialogic education, one teacher admitted not using social learning strategies due to the time required for task preparation. Other teachers favored awareness seminars, class trips, and educational tours but faced implementation challenges due to lack of confidence and cultural and gender constraints.

5. Lack of Training for the implementation of Dialogicity

In response the question, "What strategies should be implemented to foster Dialogicity in B.Ed. classrooms?" Teachers replied, they are not well trained and lack in the implementation of Dialogicity properly because they think "Peer observation and feedback sessions can encourage open dialogue among students." But how to give the feedback properly they did not know … No need base training courses/programs are available for them in the university. So they consider lack of professional training is one of the big challenges in creating dialogic environment.

6. Balancing the need for Thinking Time with curriculum demand and classroom management

In addition to this, the teachers were asked, "Do you give thinking time for creating dialogic context, which is an important component in dialogic teaching?" In response to this question, the one teacher replied that providing thinking time always remain an integral part of my teaching strategy. She recognized the importance of giving students a moment to process information and formulate their

thoughts before responding. In response to the same question, the other teacher replied, "It depends on the scenario, whether to give time or not. In most cases giving thinking time ends with productive results." Hence, the teachers agreed that giving students a moment to process information is essential. Providing thinking time should be an integral part of teaching strategy. However, in practice, balancing the need for thinking time with curriculum demands and classroom management was not easy. It was a challenge to allocate adequate periods for reflection without disrupting the flow of lessons or compromising content coverage. But They believe that giving thinking time ends with productive results.

7. Promoting Student-Student Interaction

In response to the third question, "Do you encourage students to respond to each other's ideas in a dialogic environment?" Teachers replied that they mostly encouraged students to discuss with one another, as students often understand the language of their peers better. A Stewart (2010) argue that construction of meaning by mutual understanding of the student-student more appropriate and quick because they understand their own level and independent to ask the question and argue them. Teachers added that they know collaborative practices not only enhance the communication skills but also allowed students to learn from each other. However, more interaction could emerge when teachers provide opportunities for group work, though implementing group work in its true spirit remains a significant challenge in traditional classroom with close ended tasks. Teachers believe that the classroom layout and lengthy curriculum hinder the fostering of such practices.

8. Maximizing students' Participation in a dialogic environment

The teachers were questioned 'How do you seek to maximize participation in a dialogic environment?' One participants replied, "as a teacher, I seek to maximize the learning experience by employing various strategies to develop dialogic context. This involves a combination of visual aids, interactive activities, and real-world examples. But I think I am not trained enough and participation creates mess in the classroom so mostly I tried to avoid them" However, on the other hand one participants elaborated that maximizing participation could be a piece of cake if one developed a good relationship with the class she/he can do. She added that it was

necessary to give individual feedback to every student, which would also help in maximizing participation but in limited time it is not possible to deal it.

9. Listen attentively to others in a dialogic environment

The teachers were also asked, "Do students listen attentively to other students and teacher in a dialogic environment?" One of the Teachers replied, "Yes, students listen attentively but to keep them attentive is a continuous effort. It does not happen all the times... sometime rather most of the time they go off task" She elaborated that the teaching methodology decides whether they'll listen to you or not and whether your lecture will become a typical traditional passive classroom or not. So, on teacher stated that "being a passionate teacher, I always made sure that my class was active and that learners were listening attentively". Further, the next question asked by the teachers was "Do students support others to express their views?" The teachers stated that they can answer this question in simple Yes or No; students express their views during class discussions when they are encouraged otherwise they mostly remained silent. They added that a classroom is a combination of different individuals which should be catered wisely otherwise it appeared as a big challenge to keep them on track in dialogic environment.

10. Teaching Style as a challenge in a dialogic context

Teaching style would be a big challenge in successful implementation of dialogic context. Teacher argued shifting from traditional teaching method to a dialogic method requires a changes in teacher mindset. Teachers encouraged students to participate during classwork which ultimately influence on their performance and participation. This shift can be challenging, as it demands new skills and attitudes, as well as a departure from familiar practices.

11. Fostering Opportunities for Interaction

The interviewer asked, "Do you provide opportunities for students to interact in the dialogic classroom?" in response to this question, they all remained silent and after a long pause one teacher replied it is always a challenge in the construction of dialogic practices. But one respondent state that she created dialogic environment by asking argumentative questions and reciprocal teaching.

12. Equal Participation

The interviewer probed, "Do you make sure and guide that each student interacts in the classroom

talk?" in response to this question, one teacher said "As a teacher, I make it a priority to guide and ensure that each student has opportunities to interact in the classroom. In group activities, I carefully structure teams to include a mix of personalities and strengths for balanced participation." She explained in detail and the other teacher also stated, "Yes, it's my responsibility to make sure about that and make my lecture enthusiastic." During probing they shared that there to be active in the teaching-learning process and in establishing dialogue in the classroom

13. Individual Learning Needs

The first question asked by the interviewer was "How to cater to the diverse learning needs of the students?" In response to this question, one teacher replied "Addressing the diverse learning needs of students requires a flexible approach to teaching. Teachers should use different learning styles and preferences within the class." She further added that she asked some questions to assess the students level and then taught accordingly. Sometime I have to give individual feedback students after formative assessment." they highlighted in this regard Lack of time was the only challenge That they face during teaching. The interviewer also probed, "Do you believe it reinforces good dialogue?" upon this question, Teachers said "Yes". we believe in reinforcing good dialogue within the classroom. Encouraging positive and meaningful conversations among students is essential for creating a learning environment." The teachers argued that their students face difficulties in whole class discussion. They remain reserved within the non-friends group. One teacher said she thinks discussion in a second language would be the main hurdle in fostering collaborative dialogue. However, another teacher said, "There could be several reasons like shyness, lack of confidence health issues etc."

14. Communication in a Second Language presents a significant challenge within dialogic context

In response to the question, "Do you experience any communication problems with the students during dialogue? Teachers replied that they didn't face any communication problems with the students but sometimes the students feel difficult during the class to communicate in the English language because it is their second language. However, they recognized their responsibility to engage students and address their needs.

The teachers said that students prefer to share their ideas in the first language. They mostly switched to their mother language while discussing in second language 'English'. Teachers consider that communication in second language is a barrier and one of the main factors that stop students in participation freely during class participation. Therefore, teachers have to use Urdu (first language) even in English classroom for teaching English what they feel not good to use.

15. Challenge in Developing authentic tasks

When the researcher asked, "What challenges do you encounter in assessing and evaluating B.Ed. students?" One teacher answered, "Designing assessments that effectively measure both theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge of students is challenging for me to evaluate B.Ed. students." the other teacher also replied, "The challenges that I faced were traditional paper patterns, traditional marking systems, exhausting checking and rechecking procedures and the lack of time." They have the opinion developing authentic tasks is always challenging for them however summative assessments can sometimes be challenging as they require a lot of time.

16. Exploratory Questions for Dialogic Questions

The researcher also asked, "Do you ask exploratory questions during teaching?" The teachers gave positive responses, Yes, 'we understand the value of exploratory questions as an effective teaching and learning tool but developing and asking such questions is always a challenge' because they not only create the disciplinary problems but also detract from the core topic being taught. This happened when students are overly engaged by asking exploratory questions. However, they perceived that exploratory questions encourage critical thinking, curiosity, and deeper engagement, the students to reflect their understanding and developing dialogue in the classroom. As Chin (2007) states that asking question can facilitate teachers to analyses their students' performance and determine how well they learn, think and participate in the class.

17. Feedback in dialogic environment

The researcher asked, "How do you provide feedback to the B.Ed. students?" One teacher said that she provides constructive feedback to students verbally during the learning process and g gives clear-cut instructions. Further she added she tried to maintain the balance between critique and praise. The other teacher stated, that "I used to provide overall feedback after formative assessments and sometimes individual feedback via oral discussion.

The teacher highlighted that they face many challenges like lack of student interest, demotivated students, differences in aptitudes and lack of time in constructing dialogue in their classrooms.

Summary

Teachers faced several challenges in creating a dialogic context in B.Ed. classrooms. Diverse student backgrounds and societal perceptions of B.Ed. as insufficient education added pressure on teachers. Implementing the course outline was difficult due to the need to balance theoretical and practical learning, compounded by limited resources and technology. Teachers saw the potential of technology integration but struggled with inadequate classroom technology and training. Communication issues arose from low English proficiency, leading teachers to consider using students' first language. They promoted active listening and participation through engaging methods, discussion techniques, and multimedia tools. Teachers also aimed to ensure equal participation and provide constructive feedback, though students often viewed feedback as criticism. Addressing students' emotions and building positive relationships were deemed crucial for engagement. Finally, teachers found traditional assessment methods inadequate for evaluating dialogic practices.

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