

## **Purpose of Paper**

Here, a detailed analysis of two research articles is presented of which one article by Deng et al. (2017) is presented as a report on a collaborative project to foster cross-cultural online discussion between two universities and understand the experience of students on formal and informal online platforms. On the other hand, another article by Smidt et al. (2018) talks about a real-time experience of four academics on private blog sharing reflections on teaching and understand whether such blogging proved to be transformative or troublesome while learning about university teaching. The articles are compared to evaluate the contrast in various sections like introduction and literature review, methodology followed to conduct the study, findings and discussions and recommendations and conclusion provided at the end of the research articles.

## **Introduction and literature review**

As Tavakol and O'Brien (2023) argues, the introduction section of a journal article holds significant importance as it establishes the framework for subsequent sections of the research. Its primary function is to offer clear details regarding the nature, scope, justification or rationale, goals, and objectives of the study. Considering the introduction section of the journal article by Deng et al. (2017) the authors have successfully given a detailed introduction section with justified rationale backed by arguments related to the need of studying the impact of online and face-to-face learning options. On the other hand, the article presented by Smidt et al. (2018) provides a crisp introduction section with the required background about collaborative reflective practice-based conversations thereby justifying the rationale of studying such reflective conversations in relation to students' learning experiences. Further, both the articles have identified the gaps in the body of knowledge thereby justifying the research. However, Deng et al. (2017) has explained the lack of empirical studies focused on designing and implementing collaborative learning in a details manner while linking the arguments with existing literature and studies, current scenarios about student daily life and their growing interest in social networking websites.

It is to be noted that Smidt et al. (2018) provides a brief overview about need of reflective conversations and their disappearance from everyday practice. There is a lack of detailed explanation of current studies leading to identification of gaps in the body of knowledge. At the same time there is a lack of clear and measurable objectives, aim and research questions in the introduction section of the research paper by Smidt and his colleagues. This becomes the major reason of creating ambiguous understanding about the purpose and rationale of the study. The discussion in introduction section does not clarify the region, setting or area where the study is conducted nor there are any details about the theoretical underpinnings justifying the results of the study. As argued by Greenhalgh (2019), substantial evidence given in the introduction act as a foundation of the study aiding the readers to understand the specific gap that the study aims to fill with its results. A lack of such clarity makes it difficult for readers to grasp the significance of the study and its potential ramifications. The authors are successful in using a range of contemporary evidence from recent years and avoided any obsolete information that can result in bias towards the results of the study. However, the literature review section is short and lack theories and models to back the claims made across the study.

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Considering the same elements of literature section of the research article by Deng et al. (2017), it is evident that authors have clarified the study setting as two universities in Hong Kong and Taiwan while clearly stating the purpose, measurable objectives, and research questions of the study. Also, there is a detailed literature review explaining various phenomenon related with online discussions as pedagogical tool, cross-cultural collaborative learning and using Facebook as educational purpose. However, authors fail to use a range of contemporary evidence and considered more than 10 years old resources to support the claims and arguments. Such obsolete information can create a bias thereby limiting the validity and generalization of results of the study (Busse et al., 2020). At the same time, there is lack of any established theoretical models to back the arguments making sourced literature unreliable and less trustworthy in nature (Youssef, 2022).

The methodological decisions explained in Deng et al. (2017) are clear in terms of specifying it as qualitative approach where 75 students were selected from

shortlisted universities to participate in the study. The authors have made it clear that instructional design formed the foundation of the methodology that is related with literature concerning the topic under study. The authors have provided details of the population, setting, target group, sample size and required relevant information about the participants. Also, they have explained the method followed to select the participants while they missed the inclusion and exclusion criteria followed to finalize the participants. According to Oflazoglu (2017), qualitative methodology proves effective in research when understanding participant perspectives is paramount. This approach enables direct engagement with the students and aligns well with the study, facilitating the identification of specific attributes and characteristics of various online platforms like Facebook making it the most popular SNS in the informal domain and can such attributes of Facebook make it a popular and useful source in formal educational setting too. However, the methodology section of the research paper fails to provide details of any possible ethical issues, consent taken from participants or any other steps taken to avoid any ethical issues.

They have clearly mentioned the use of individual interviews and assignments as the instruments to collect the required information for the topic. These instruments were suitable for the study as it is a qualitative discussion focused on knowing the experiences and perception of students about various technologies to support their learning. This method help participants to understand the interpret the world around them and act as a familiar social encounter where people interact by asking and answering questions (Knott et al., 2022). However, it is to be noted that while conducting individual interviews it is necessary to consider the ethical challenges and gaining consent to ensure participant safety and attending to their distress (Knott et al., 2022).

Considering the strengths and weaknesses of the articles, the study by Deng et al. (2017) explores a key topic thereby contributing to the literature on cross-cultural communication and online interactions among students of universities. It provides a relevant background information but limits its focus on single methodology making generalization of results difficult that is necessary to offer insightful interpretations of the findings (Cazura et al., 2013). On the other hand, the article by Smidt et al. (2018), conducts the study with a clear methodology and thematic analysis method,

however it lacks the practical recommendations for policy and practice related with the field under study. As argued by Harris (2022) a good article addresses important issues or gaps in the existing literature, the study by Smidt (2018) provides the results that are relevant to researchers and practitioners in the field of study.

As compared to Den et al. (2017), the study conducted by Smidt et al. (2018) provides a detailed methodology section with details of action research as the basic research method followed to find answer to research questions. It specifies the study as qualitative analysis with focus on analysing the group's reflective posts and associated emails giving researchers the themes required to conduct the analysis. The authors fails to provide details of the population, sample selection method, inclusion and exclusion criteria but provides details of the participants coming from different areas of two large metropolitan universities of Australia. The data collection method through setting up a blog and asking participants to post their reflections on their teaching is well explained and proves to be suitable for a qualitative study where teachers' perception and experiences are studied. However, such a research design may pose challenges because of subjective interpretations of the posts and opinions shared by participants on the blog (Kiani et al., 2022). It is essential that researchers take care of such possible challenges and provide an alternate or additional method like quantitative statistics to establish reliability the results of the study (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Furthermore, proper care is taken to identify the ethical issues and therefore an ethical approval is taken to make a call to participants and asking them to posts on the blog. There is no mention of any formal consent taken from participants, however, authors describe that participants agreed to make the posts and reply to other's posts on the created blog for research study.

## Findings and discussion

In the research article by Smidt et al. (2018), the method of data analysis is well explained where basic themes are identified and grouped together to organize the themes and present the results. Further, results are presented under each theme with detailed explanation of the results, associated theme and inference derived from the analysis of answers given by the participants to the study. A detailed discussion

section is the major strength of this article where findings are linked back to existing research quoting relevant sources of information. It help the authors to answer their research questions and achieve the research objectives by focusing on contemporary sources of information defining themes for the study.

On the other hand Deng et al. (2017) specifies the exploratory approach to analyse the data collected through qualitative method of interviews. The analysed information is presented under certain themes identified from literature review allowing authors to answer their research questions efficiently. The findings of the study are linked back to existing research, however, such link is rarely available in the discussion and conclusion section of the research paper making reliability and validity of results limited in nature.

#### Recommendations for policy and practice

The article presented by Schmidt et al. (2018) provides new knowledge about the need of reflections and the way blogging as a way to reflections can be effective in managing stress faced by teachers while balancing workload and the need of innovative methods of teaching. However, the article raises more questions than it answers and calls for future studies in the field to explore role of reflections on university teaching in relation to broader societal issues. Authors of the study have remained successful in reflecting upon the implications of their findings for theory, practice and future research. They specified how their results advance understanding about role of reflections in academic teaching and provides a practical route for teachers to relieve their stress and discuss each other's challenges while balancing work. They have identified the troublesome learning spaces and suggested to make these useful by considering it as an opportunity to 'think otherwise' and bring transformation. However, there is a lack of reasonable recommendations for policy and practice related to teaching in universities and experiences of teachers. They have clearly identified the limitations of the research without leaving any gap in their conclusions. The findings of the study can be applied in early years setting in the UK where teachers can use reflective blogging as a tool for professional learning and development. Furthermore, reflections can help early years teachers to follow the route of critical reflection where they can use blogging to

connect with children and their families creating a positive impact of their decisions on children's learning and development.

The study conducted by Deng et al. (2017) provides new knowledge related with effectiveness of formal platforms in fostering in-depth cross-cultural communication. At the same time informal platforms can act as a route for relaxed interactions and therefore leveraging both formal and informal platforms can help in fostering empathy and mutual respect within a diverse group. While identifying the limitations of the study clearly, authors remained successful in reflecting upon their findings by linking back the results to existing literature and providing reasonable recommendations for policy and practice. However, there is no clear conclusion section given in the study making it difficult for the readers to get a summarized view of the research article. Early years settings in the UK can use formal and informal platforms to facilitate cross-cultural interactions among children from diverse backgrounds. Teachers can create safe and supervised online environments where children can engage in discussions, share their thoughts and experiences, and learn from their peers from different cultural backgrounds.

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Summary

In summary, both the articles offer valuable insight to their respective fields of study with some strengths and weaknesses that should be taken care in further studies in the field of education. The articles cannot be called as high-quality articles for their dependency on a single research approach and not taking the advantage of qualitative statistics and analysis. However, the authors remained success in following a suitable methodology to conduct qualitative studies and contribute by giving a direction to apply the results in early years settings in the UK.

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