

TEACHERS' INSTRUCTION From ACTION to REFLECTION



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Abstract:

Recently, reflective teaching has become a key factor in second language teacher education programs in recent years. The purpose of this study was to investigate reflective teaching in the English Teaching and Learning process. Reflective teaching has come to be recognized by teachers, teacher educators and researchers as a major characteristic of effective teaching. Initially, reflection on one's own attitudes, insights perceptions, experiences and assumptions, as part of the course and classroom enquiry; critical observation and reflective analysis of the practices of teaching, are some of the crucial elements of professional growth of a teacher, and are crucial for being an effective teacher. This paper reviews the conceptions and practice of reflective teaching in second language teacher education. be helpful in finding answers to questions raised here. This critical review sheds light on teachers' repertoire of knowledge and understanding of reflection, along with its versatile parameters, paradigms and strategies, to facilitate reflective teaching will be further enriched their instructional practices. The implications of these practices and findings can be of paramount importance for teachers instructional practices and students achievement alike.

Keywords: Reflection, Reflective Teaching; Reflective Teacher, Second Language Teacher Education; Second Language Teaching

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1. Introduction

In the field of education, Teachers are the pivotal assets of any educational system. They stand in the interface of the transmission of knowledge, skills and values. Initially, teacher education is gaining more paramount significance and prominence in reforming and strengthening the education system of any country. Teaching as complex and compelling task, tactful teachers are always learning: learning from students, learning from their own practice, learning through their interaction with other teachers, learning from teacher educator in their schools, learning from monitors and supervisors. Successful teachers continue to learn throughout their career, this is named “life-long learning” or “continuous professional development,” one instrument that can help teachers develop professionally is known as “reflective teaching practice”. Why should a teacher understand the concept of reflection, its dimensions, and levels? Why should a teacher engage in reflective learning and teaching throughout one’s career? What are the expected outcomes, if a teacher becomes a reflective teacher? This article sheds light on finding answers to questions raised here.

2. Reflection

Reflection as an umbrella term is predominantly defined as the deliberate and determined action in which teachers highly engage in order to hone their professional practice. Initially, reflection begins in a state of doubt or perplexity which, for teachers, is most likely to be encountered when working with learners, particularly new or unfamiliar learners (Sweigard, 2007). When we are encountered with challenges and uncertainties in practice, when things do not go according to plan or do not fit with the theory, we may feel powerless and unable to resolve the situation. Reflective teaching is a process where teachers look back at their teaching practices and find ways how their teaching methods can be improved or changed for the better learning of students.

Reflection is an optimal human activity in which people critically review their experience, think about it, and carefully evaluate it. Richert, (1999) explained that “A reflection in a mirror is a replica of what is in front of it. Daudelin stated that “Reflection is the process of stepping back from an experience to ponder, carefully and persistently, its meaning to the self through the development of inferences; learning is the

creation of meaning from past or current events that serves as a guide for future behavior ”

From a practical viewpoint, reflection on teaching occurs when teachers take time to think about what they are doing, why they are doing it and the consequences that their teaching has for students. Reflective teachers accept that their teaching practices, and the motives for those practices, should be questioned, and then actively pursue ways to improve their teaching

3. Types of Reflection

There are numerous theorists who address how reflection is used in education. A key theorist, Donald Schon(1983), describes Three different types of reflection: Reflection-on-Action and Reflection-in-Action. Reflection-on-Action occurs when a teacher reflects on their daily lessons and classroom actions and uses the information gathered to adjust their lessons/teaching (Liston, D. P.,& Zeichner, 1991). The goal of this form of reflection is for educators to become more effective and conscientious teachers. This type of reflection is reflecting back on lessons that have been taught and is a skill that teachers need to acquire in their early teaching experiences.

Schon (1983) thoroughly described the concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection- in-action refers to the process of interpreting, analyzing, and providing solutions to complex and situational problems during an action, “the period time in which we remain in the same situation” (p. 278). Reflection-on-action takes place when the practitioner has left the arena of endeavor and mentally reconstructs that arena to analyze actions and events.

The second type of reflection that Schon describes is Reflection-in-Action. This type of reflection occurs during teaching and involves acting immediately to improve or better your teaching. Paulson and Kenneth describe the difference between these two types of reflection; if a teacher thinks reflectively about an episode of teaching after class, he or she engages in reflecting-on-action. In contrast, if they think about the episode while in the midst of teaching, then reflection-in-action takes place (Paulson & Kenneth as cited in Sweigard, 2007).

Schon’s reflection theory has been used as a foundation for several researchers. Eby and Kujawa (1998) used Schon’s two types of reflection (reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action) and added a third type (reflection-for-action). Reflection-for-action is stated as the desired outcome of Schon’s reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. This type of reflection looks at what has occurred in the past and how this can help change our teaching process in the future. Consequently this will

provide students with an enriched learning environment. An example of reflection-for-action in the classroom is when a teacher critiques events from the past and makes a conclusion or judgment that that will impact future teachings/lessons (Cruickshank, & Applegate, 1981).

“Reflection-in-action” essentially entails experimenting, signaling that “reflection-in-action” and the new insight and ideas that evolve, as a result, must be tackled in a purposeful and professional arena — the classroom context. This is almost immediate and on-the-spot. When dispensing a lesson that you may, as a teacher, have carefully planned and prepared, you need to be instantly alert, and monitor the session as it proceeds (Davis, 2006). This awareness continuously allows you to make changes in the situation as you reflect on it. You may analyse and evaluate the learning-teaching process and make changes accordingly. This post-action reflection then informs your subsequent planning and preparation, leading to a cycle of continuing improvement.

According to Fade, (2005) it is widely acknowledged that the highly experienced professionals solve the problem on-the-spot. Skillfully, they draw upon their repertoire of knowledge and skills to understand the situation. Put differently, rather than randomly trying out any other new method or, the professionals use their accumulated experience and knowledge to address the problem instantaneously.

Reflection-on-Action occurs when a teacher reflects on their daily lessons and classroom actions and uses the information gathered to adjust their lessons/teaching. This process generally happens after the action has taken place in the classroom (Farrell, 2007). It is a determined and thoughtful process, including a greater critical analysis of the action and reflecting back at the situation, problem or event. According to Schon (1983), as practitioners continue to reflect, they improve upon their teaching practice. It is through reflection on our teaching, that we transfer to be more skilled, more competent, and better teachers.

This type of reflection, paves the way for future action based on past ideas, thoughts, and actions. It combines “reflection-on-action” and “reflection-in-action”. Interestingly, reflection-for-action is considered as proactive result for both “reflection-in-action” and “reflection-on-action”. It is the process of analysing events and behaviour, with the mere purpose of making changes in the future. The main purpose of reflection, more so of, reflective practice, is not merely to think about past events, experiences, or behaviour, but also to guide a positive future action. Teachers can practice “reflection-for-action” to prepare for the future, by assessing the information gathered from what actually

happened in the class and what they reflected upon after the class. In this regard, this would also allow them to identify any dissonance, between their beliefs and actual practices. Teachers who practise “reflection-for-action” will be enabled to move forward from focusing on non-desirable events and experiences of the present, and intensively focus on how to change the situation into what they want it to be.

4. Reflective Teaching Practice

In a review of literature on reflective teaching, one discovers that there is much variance in the definitions. Farrell, (1995, p. 47) defines reflective teaching as “a mirror that can help teachers in their field. Then, Fines (2014) points out that reflective teaching are the information that the teachers collected through classroom lessons about their own practice teaching through analysis: beliefs, behaviours, and use it as a foundation for critical reflection. Reflective teaching is the idea that comes in teachers mind about what happens in classroom lessons and think about the tools that they can use to develop skills or achieving goal.

According to Killen (1995) any meaning of critical reflection need to include the broader society. He says “that if the teachers decide to become critically reflective, they have to think further, the need to develop our instruction for teaching”. He sees critical reflection as “locating teaching in its broader social and cultural context” (p.25) From the previous definitions, we can say reflective teaching is an approach to teaching, which is based on the assumption that teachers can improve their understanding of teaching and the quality of their own teaching experience also reflective teaching means teachers have a particular idea about what happens in classroom lessons not just for the teaching itself, but also the learners response. As a result reflective teaching becoming an essential part of teacher education programs because it helps them during their career.

5. Reflective Teaching Defined

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Reflection as a critical component of teacher development, helping to move teachers from being primarily guided by “impulse, intuition or routine, to a level where their actions are leaded by reflection and critical thinking.” (Loughran, 2002,p. 76). Reflection is a way of getting students to realize that learning is about drawing on life experiences, not just something that takes place in a classroom. It enables students to think about what and how they learn and to understand that this impacts on how well they do . According to Troyer, (1988) reflective practice is usually considered a form of cyclical and systematic inquiry where teachers carefully collect evidence about their teaching practice in order to analyze, interpret, and evaluate their experiences with the intention to improve their future teaching Reflective teachers not only aim at gaining better solutions; they also attempt to deepen their understanding of themselves as well as how the solutions they have discovered connect to other experiences and ideas. Put differently, reflective practice provides teachers with an opportunity for their emotions, beliefs, and personal philosophies of teaching to be challenged and refined.

6. Being a Reflective Teacher

Most importantly, reflective teachers continuously ask questions, provide evidence, and seek for ideas that they can integrate to help their students succeed. The reflective teacher sets aside regular blocks of time to think about teaching activities and make new plans. Richert, (1990) described some characteristics of the reflective teacher, such as they understand the social context of schooling and accordingly use various instructional strategies. They know content matter and also care about students. They identify a problem then construct a plan of operation. The Reflective teacher uses problem-solving strategies for tackling complex issues and always thinks prospectively and retrospectively.

To become a reflective teacher, one will need useful information about how students are responding to lessons as well as several critical attitudes

and abilities. Gaining insight into the effectiveness of teaching is best accompanied by continually monitoring students' progress through formative assessment. To become a reflective teacher, one needs both the willingness and the ability to question their assumptions about teaching and learning. According to Schon (1983) reflective practitioners who are not just skillful or competent but "thoughtful, wise and contemplative," whose work involves "intuition, insight, and artistry". Reflective teachers not only aim at gaining better solutions; they also attempt to deepen their understanding of themselves as well as how the solutions they have discovered connect to other experiences and ideas.

As Killen (1995) fully delineated, Reflective teachers analyze their teaching to make sure that learning activities fulfill the requirements of all students. Reflective teachers think critically about all their teaching practices and accept that what happens in their classrooms should be questioned and, if necessary, changed. It does not mean that reflection is concerned just with teaching techniques. It does mean that all aspects of teaching, including the teacher's attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and perceptions, should be open to review. The reflective teacher is deliberate, rational, and organized. Reflective teachers embody social aspects in their instructional planning. They cognitively make the necessary adjustments in their instruction so that all students have an opportunity to succeed.

7. The Significance of Reflective Teaching in Teacher Education

Interestingly, reflective practice widely implemented at both the pre-service and in-service levels of teaching. Recently extensive body of research have been carried out on how student teachers develop the skills necessary for reflective teaching during their field teaching and learning. An abundance of research studies have proved that critical reflection upon experience continues to be an effective technique for professional development.

Implementing reflective teaching technique in the classroom enabled teachers acknowledge and validate what they transmitting of knowledge. Arguably, Schon (1983) highlighted that reflective teaching practice is a continuous process and involves learner thoughtfully considering one's own experience in applying knowledge to practice while being taught by professionals. It helps the individual's to develop their own personality. According to Fade, (2005) reflective practice suggests that individuals develop analysis of feelings, evaluation of experience etc. In this sense, Killen, (1995) associated reflective

teaching practice with lifelong learning resulting in the development of autonomous, qualified and self-directed professionals.

Engaging in reflective practice is associated with the improvement of the quality of care, stimulating personal and professional growth and closing the gap between theory and practice. Davis, (2006) points out that becoming a reflective teacher involves moving beyond a primary concern with instructional techniques and “how to” questions and asking “what” and “why” questions that regard instructions and managerial techniques not as ends in themselves, but as part of broader educational purposes. Asking questions “what and why” gives certain power over individual’s teaching resulting in the emergence of autonomy and responsibility in the work of teachers. According to Schon (1983) pointed out that the practice of reflective teaching, reflective inquiry, and reflection-on practice, results in gaining of the personal and professional knowledge that is so important to being an effective teacher and in shaping children's learning.

Furthermore, Hatton and Smith (1995) stated that, the process element of reflection emphasises how teachers make decisions, content stresses the substance that drives the thinking and reflective inquiry may set the stage for learning how to be a good teacher. Reflective teaching is an indispensable element in student teachers’ initial training programme. It has also been extensively recommended by many researchers and scholars as an approach that could promote teachers’ professional development and improves the quality of teaching and learning. AS Zeichner and Liston (2014) contend that reflective teaching offers teachers the opportunity to renew their practice and to understand the effects of their teaching. They further stated that reflective teaching provides information on how teachers connect with learners meaningfully thus promoting sound teaching and learning practice. Davis, (2006) suggests that reflective teaching will make teachers question clichés that they have learned during their formative years and will also enable them to develop more informed practice. Teachers will integrate the knowledge they have gained during pre-service training with their practical experiences and make informed choices based on the situations they find themselves in.

Teachers need to question their practices and be open to different possibilities in their teaching experiences. Minott, (2010) indicates that critical reflection does not come naturally to most teachers, therefore appropriate opportunities for reflection should be provided to student-teachers. This suggests that reflectivity is a skill that needs to be acquired by learning and not by automatic occurrence. Teacher educators

should apply this theory in classroom practice, in order to observe and reflects on the results so that the classroom becomes a kind of laboratory where the teacher can relate teaching theory to teaching practice. By adopting reflective teaching practices, the teacher educator imparts inspiration among teacher trainees, so as to enable them to practice the same in their teaching practice sessions.

8. Conclusion

In a nutshell, this study examines the concept of reflective practice in language teaching. It includes a brief description of what reflective practice is and how it is operationalized by key theorists of its field. By incorporating the concept of reflection into teacher education programs, prepares teachers for a lifetime of reflecting on best practices the gristly impacts student achievement. A reflective teachers continuously examined their professional beliefs. The process of self-evaluation facilitate teachers to understand their motives behind classroom policies. Self-reflection is particularly valuable tool for teachers to engage in systematic process. The habit of reflective practices is the panacea for effective teaching. Reflective teachers always imagine what they are doing and how it might be made even better. Reflective teachers found the rationale of their teaching practices by developing a deeper understanding about their teaching style. Habit of reflection enhanced their ability to question and understand the results of their own actions. Reflective teachers can find out the rationale of their teaching practices by developing a deeper understanding about their own teaching style. Ability to question and understand of one's own actions results in professional growth of teachers.

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