



REFLECTIVE TEACHER EDUCATION

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Reflection is a natural process that facilitates the development of future action from the contemplation of past and/or current behavior. Reflection refers to the ongoing process of critically examining and refining practice, taking into careful consideration the personal, pedagogical, societal (including social, political, historical and economical) and ethical contexts associated with schools, classrooms and the multiple roles of teachers .

(Knowles, Cole and Presswood, 1994)

Dewey implies that two distinct components are involved in reflective thinking: the process and the content. In order to have a better realizing about teachers' reflective Thoughts, both the process and the content of reflective thinking must be considered simultaneously.

Kemmis (1999) presents five propositions about the nature of reflection, that not only clarify what reflective teacher education entails but also argue that reflective teacher education is a complex approach, not easy to put into practice and even less to evaluate:

1. Reflection is not biologically or psychologically determined, nor is it pure thought; reflection expresses an orientation towards action and is about relation between thought and action in real historical situations.
2. Reflection is not the individualistic working of the mind as a kind of mechanism or speculation; it presupposes and shapes social relations.
3. Reflection is not value-free or neutral as regards values; it expresses and serves concrete human, social, cultural and political interests.
4. Reflection is not indifferent or passive towards social order, nor does it extend socially accepted values; it either reproduces actively or transforms the practical ideologies that support social order.
5. Reflection is not a mechanical process or a purely creative exercise to construct new ideas; it is a practice that expresses our power to restructure social life through participation in communication, decision making social action.

The role of Reflective teaching in teacher education

Reflective practice is used at both the pre-service and in-service levels of teaching. Coaching and peer involvement are two aspects of reflective practice seen most often at the pre-service level. In a 1993 study of how student teachers develop the skills necessary for reflective teaching during their field experiences, Ojanen explores the role of the teacher educator as coach. Teacher educators can most effectively coach student teachers in reflective practice by using students' personal histories, dialogue journals, and small and



large-group discussions about their experiences to help students reflect upon and improve their practices. Kettle and Sellars (1996) studied the development of third- year teaching students. They analyzed the students' reflective writings and interviewed them extensively about their reflective practices. They found that the use of peer reflective groups encouraged student teachers to challenge existing theories and their own preconceived views of teaching while modeling for them a collaborative style of professional development that would be useful throughout their teaching careers. Sellars (1996) analyzed the students' reflective writings and interviewed them extensively about their reflective practices. They found that the student teachers by practicing reflective teaching enables them to challenge existing theories and their own preconceived views of teaching resulting in professional development that would be useful throughout their teaching careers. Several research studies have proved that critical reflection upon experience continues to be an effective technique for professional development. Freidus (1997) describes a case study of one teacher/graduate student struggling to make sense of her beliefs and practices about what constitutes good teaching. Her initial pedagogy for teaching was based on the traditions and practices of direct teaching. Her traditional socialization into teaching made it difficult for her to understand that her views of good teaching were being challenged in her practice. After implementing reflective teaching technique in her classroom enabled her to acknowledge and validate what she was learning. The present paper work highlights the importance of practicing reflective teaching pedagogy by teacher trainees during internship, so that they develop competitive attitude.

A reflective teacher

A reflective teacher (also called a researcher of teaching) is a person who transcends the technicalities of teaching and thinks beyond the need to improve his instructional techniques. Being reflective draws on the need for asking “what” and “why” questions. In reflecting on what and why questions, we begin to exercise control and open up the possibility of transforming our everyday classroom life. The process of control is called critical reflective teaching. By being critical, a teacher will have the ability to see his actions in relation to the historical, social, and cultural context in which his teaching is actually embedded. Such a teacher will develop himself both individually and collectively (in relation to society). (Salmani - Nodoushan 133)

Advantages of Reflective Teaching

1. Improving your teaching practice

If you take the time to reflect on your teaching, and reflect on how different parts of what you do work well, where aspects of your teaching can be improved, and how problems which arise could be solved, that is bound to help you to improve your teaching.

Learning from reflective practice

There is a good range of evidence that purposeful reflection helps ‘deep’ learning take place, and for you as a teacher, it will help you to make connections between different aspects of your teaching and what goes on around your teaching. Reflective practice will help you gain new learning and use it in your teaching.



2. Enhancing problem solving skills

When starting off with reflecting on your teaching you may tend to concentrate on problems which arise. By carefully and honestly considering and analyzing those problems, you will improve your own capacity to find solutions.

3. Becoming a critical thinker

Critical thinking is about ‘thinking well’, and ‘taking charge’ of your own thinking (Elder and Paul, 1994), and reflective practice will help you recognize and adjust what you think to take account of changes in contexts, and by doing that help you to be better equipped to find solutions which work.

Making Decisions

As you reflect on your practice, you will find you need to make decisions about what to do (or not to do) next. You may well have a number of choices which you have to weigh up, and deciding which one to take can be difficult. If you regularly reflect on your teaching in depth, you are regularly going to come across the need to make decisions, but the results of your reflective practice will help you to make those decisions in a more informed, thoughtful and objective manner.

Improving your own organizational skills

You will notice as this section progresses that the benefits of reflective practice can reach into every aspect of your professional work as a teacher. If you are thinking carefully about what you are doing, identifying possible actions and choices, trying out solutions, and adjusting what you do to take account of the results, this involves a good deal of organisation. By breaking down issues and problems into steps or stages, you will get better at organising your time and your activity to concentrate on the important, ‘solution-focused’ actions.

6. Managing personal change

Working in education involves managing regular, rapid, pressured and often confusing change, which can be one of the most difficult aspects of being a teacher. If you are using the techniques of reflective practice, which involves, calm, thoughtful, honest, critical and organized thinking and action, this should introduce a calming and less emotional response to that change. As reflective practice is itself focused on seeking positive improvements and solutions, managing change more effectively should take place.

7. Acknowledging personal values

There will be things which take place within your professional situation as a teacher which you will wholeheartedly agree with, and others which will worry or alarm you. This is because they may agree or disagree with your own personal values such as what you believe in, and what you think is wrong or right. How these are affected by teaching will vary, but you will almost certainly come across major clashes of values as part of your work.



Reflective practice is an excellent way of acknowledging and recognising that those values exist and have an effect, but which concentrates on helping you to choose approaches and actions which can help you to resolve those clashes without it adversely affecting the professional balance of your work as a teacher.

8. Taking your own advice

Teachers are often more critical of their own teaching than anyone else, and it could be possible for this to develop into an attitude about teaching which is negative and destructive. The techniques and accesses of reflective practice will place you in a position where you are an informed, positive agent in your own development and improvement and one where you can ‘take your own advice’ with a confidence that it is reflective, focussed and informed advice.

Recognising emancipatory benefits

If you reflect on the nine benefits of reflective practice which have so far been described, you will clearly see that this is a model of practice which comprises the teacher as someone with influence over their own teaching and their own fortune as a teacher. This is what is at the heart of reflective practice, and as such it should help considerably to free you from some of the burdens which can weigh teachers down, and refresh your confidence and your teaching.

References

- 1) <http://reflectivepractice-cpd.wikispaces.com/Definitions4>
- 2) www.mu.ac.in