



REFLECTIVE TEACHING IN ELT – EXPLORING TEACHER’S BELIEF, PRACTICES AND CLASSROOM PROCESSES

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ABSTRACT

Reflective teaching is a process of self- assessment and self- observation. Through reflective teaching, the teachers can explore and discover their own ideas and practices, which can make the teachers more proficient and skilled in teaching. Teaching is an intricate and highly accomplished process, and teachers must implement self evaluation (reflection) to make learning effective. The paper highlights the importance of reflective teaching and its impact on pedagogical process as well as language learners. It focuses on the teacher’s ideas; classroom practices to make teaching more refine and acquire a rich experience by amending the drawbacks. The paper further explores the underlying principles of a reflective teacher and endeavouring best to incorporate reflective teaching in one’s teaching process. It suggests few ideas to self evaluate and observe the delivery of content in the classrooms, and alter the modus – operandi.

KEYWORDS: self-assessment, intricate process, pedagogical, amending drawbacks, reflective teacher.

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INTRODUCTION

Reflective teaching leads to excellent quality of education imparted to the learners. It has emerged as solution to tackle the pedagogical problems. It enhances the concept of self assessment and observation a teacher should possess to gain professional expertise. Dewey promotes reflection by emphasizing on open-mindedness, responsibility and whole –heartedness. The rise of reflective teaching brought innovative thoughts and hypothesis to update one’s teaching pattern and gain competence. Various classroom approaches discussed throws light on teacher’s beliefs and collaborative teacher development activities. Journals, lesson reports, surveys and questionnaires, audio –video recordings and action research are some approaches for self evaluation.

Focussing on experience, knowledge, cognitive development and apprenticeship of observation, one can ameliorate weaknesses. Reflective teaching is a shift from conventional teaching to new paradigm where teachers get the opportunity to gauge their competence. It can assist the process of gaining better insights for teaching from both theoretical and a realistic perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching cultures are embodied in the work-related beliefs and knowledge, teachers share beliefs about appropriate ways of acting on the job and rewarding aspects of teaching, and knowledge that enables teachers to do their work. (Feiman-Nemser and Floden 1986: 508)

Reflective teaching or practice is defined as "the thoughtful consideration and questioning of

what [teachers] do, what works and what doesn't, and what premises and rationales underlie our teaching and that of others" (Hubball, Collins, and Pratt, 2005, p. 60).

Reflective teaching has its significance from the Enlightenment era. John Dewey, an early-20th century educational philosopher, was one of the first theorists in the United States to see teachers as reflective practitioners who could reform education (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). For Dewey, the underlying principle of reflective teaching is to reorganize and modify teachers' instructional practices in the classroom.

Dewey's Attitudes Promoting Reflection

Dewey (1933) states that the function of reflection is "to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort, into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled [and] harmonious (p. 100-101). He introduces three attitudes that delineate reflection teaching:

Open-mindedness: It relates to having an open mind to different types of ideas, approaches and implementations. It leads to multiple solutions with a broader perspective.

Responsibility: Dewey opines that responsible teachers bring changes in the students by their experimentation. Reflecting one's principles to enhance teaching as well as an active yearning to listen more, to pay attention to alternative possibility. Reflective teachers are constantly questioning themselves with questions like: What are they doing? How will they do? Is it right? What is the alternative?

Wholeheartedness: Dewey refers wholeheartedness as passion to restructure teaching by reflection. Teachers, who are enthusiastic, regularly scrutinize their own hypothesis and perspective. They aspire to learn something new.

Teachers realize the necessity of reflective teaching when they understand "a difficult, troublesome event or experience that cannot be immediately resolved" (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 8). In the early 1980's, reflective teaching came into sight in the literature about teaching and learning (Eryaman, 2007). Donald Schon (1983) wrote widely

about reflective practice. According to Schon, Reflection can be seen in two time frames- Reflection- on -action and reflection- in- action.

Education theorist David Kolb (1984) upholds reflection viewing as a necessary part of engaging and motivating the learner. Psychotherapist Carl Rogers (1982) expresses that reflection is an effective strategy to enhance self-discovery; he views self-discovery as the only learning which significantly influences behaviour. In 1986, educational philosopher Lev Vygotsky promoted reflection as building affinity between the teacher and student.

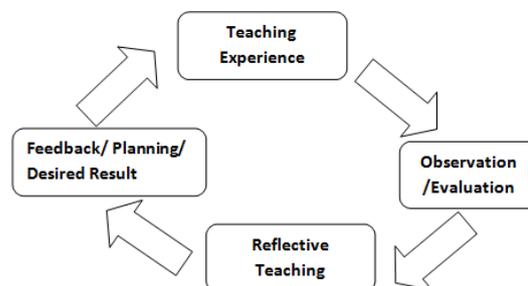


Figure1. KOLB'S REFLECTIVE TEACHING

THE RISE OF REFLECTIVE TEACHING IN ELT :

Reflective teaching emerged as a solution to tackle various practical problems which was considered too complicated to be solved through conventional methods. It was considered as a heterogeneous approach which involves deliberation of ideas and collaborative effort. It is quite motivating to ponder over that this emerging trend, reflection teaching has gained stimulant over the years in ELT and has immensely contributed in the field of education.

In this connection Farrell (2004) states:

Teachers can become more empowered decision makers, engaging in systematic reflections of their work by thinking, writing, and talking about their teaching; observing the acts of their own and others' teaching; and by gauging the impact of their teaching on their students' learning. In these ways, teachers can begin to locate themselves within their profession and start to take more responsibility for shaping their practice. This I call reflective teaching (pp. 5-6).

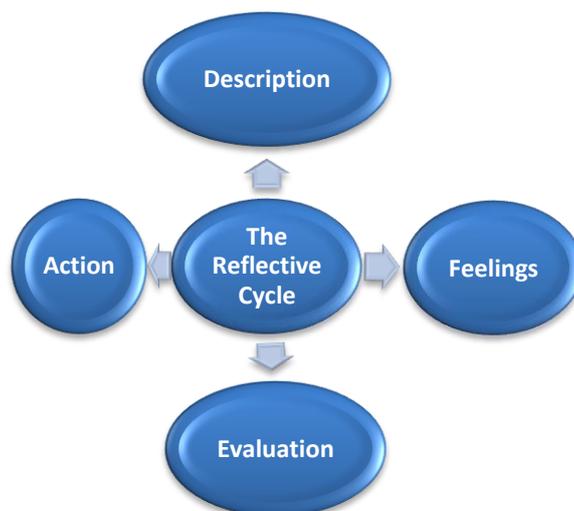


FIG.2. REFLECTIVE CYCLE

DEFINING REFLECTIVE TEACHING AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Reflection is a teaching learning process which requires both individual and collaborative effort to discover one's inner capabilities. Reflective teaching is about change and development. It can assist the process of gaining better insights for teaching from both theoretical and a realistic perspective; it can act as a facilitator for self-assessment and accordingly is extremely vital when it comes to professional growth and enhancement. The process of reflective teaching helps the teachers to scrutinize, evaluate & structure one's teaching as well as benefit from immature beginner to an experienced professional. Every learner is different with varying intelligence and abilities, a classroom is a miniature world of multiple aptitude and skilled teachers will try to distinguish themselves as their students perceive them. It can help achieve a better perceptive of one's own hypotheses; it can lead to a more affluent conceptualization of teaching and learning processes and serves as a foundation for self-evaluation.

EXPLORING CLASSROOM APPROACHES AND TEACHER'S BELIEF

1. JOURNAL:

- Events and ideas are recorded for the purpose of later reflection.
- The process of writing itself helps generate important aspects about teaching.
- It serves as a discovery process.

- Journal entry reveals how a teacher describes one's teaching activity, modus operandi in conducting the class.
- -Some concerns about the lesson and alternative procedures to use in the future.
- It enables a teacher to examine teaching in a way that is unavailable through other means.

2. Lesson reports:

- Written accounts of lessons which describe the main features of the lessons.
- The main aim of a lesson report is to provide a quick and simple procedure of frequently scrutinizing what happened during a lesson, how much time was spent on different parts of a lesson, and how effectual the lesson was.
- Facilitates to evaluate teacher's teaching

3. Surveys and questionnaires:

- Activities such as giving a questionnaire or completing a survey, proposed to collect information on a particular area of teaching
- Surveys and questionnaires are constructive ways of gathering information about affective extent of teaching and learning.
- Such beliefs, philosophy, enthusiasm, and penchant enable a teacher to collect a large amount of information relatively quickly to evaluate language learning.

4. Audio and video recordings

- Recordings of a lesson, or part of a lesson.

- It can capture minute details of the lesson which help to avoid those errors which were unnoticed during the teaching process.

5. Action research

Implementation of an action plan intended to bring about transformation in some aspect of the teacher's class with consequent observing of the effects of the innovation.

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF A REFLECTIVE TEACHER

Reflective teaching provides teacher an opportunity to explore their beliefs, practices and approaches to make the class a learner centered. A Teacher needs to be:

- To be a resource person who provides language input.
- To assist learners to become self-directed by facilitating access to language data.
- To provide useful learning experiences.
- To help students discover effective approaches to learning.
- To promote positive attitude towards the language.
- To be conscientious about the lesson plan.
- To conduct pre-observatory and post observatory sessions for action research.
- To bring in modifications in the teaching methodology.
- To accommodate classroom practices to match with the students' expectations.
- To handle exceptionally classroom management.

AMELIORATING REFLECTIVE TEACHING AND PRACTICES

Teachers' belief systems includes fundamentals, innovative thinking, and enhancing learning process which constitute "culture of teaching", they have formed progressively over the time and consist of both subjective and objective dimensions. A teacher always tends to be more practical in reaching out the students. Few techniques given below explore their reflective teaching and improve their capabilities.

1. Teachers' own principles as language learners: All teachers were once students and their perspective about teaching are often a reflection of

how they were taught called as "*apprenticeship of observation*." This can help the teachers to know their calibre as well as gauge the classroom teaching.

2. Experience of what works best: A teacher experiments her teaching in the classroom and derives certain techniques to appraise her teaching and concludes that certain teaching strategies work out well and some don't. Thus, experience is the best assessor to a teacher and measures their endeavour in teaching.

3. Established practice: Certain institutions prefer some conventional as well as ingenious practices to promote the best teaching. It boosts their morale and they can work on the feedback they receive.

4. Focus on practical aspects: Practical aspects of reflection here refer to the different tools/procedure. They include 'journal writing,' 'lesson reports,' 'surveys and questionnaires,' 'audio and video recordings,' 'observation,' 'action research,' 'teaching portfolios.'

5. Focus on teachers' cognitive development: It is obvious that a reflective teacher, should pay attention to his/her professional development as a teacher like doing small-scale classroom research projects, attending the conferences and workshops related to one's field of study, and reading the literature will help

a lot in this field. In this study, such considerations have been grouped under the 'cognitive' factor.

6. Focus on moral/ethical parameters: The deliberative approach urges teachers to think significantly about their purposes and how to rationalize them from a moral point of view. Ethical values should be present in the teaching process which can lead to a holistic teaching and learning process.

7. Focus on learners: Students are the reflection in reflective practice. Their thinking ability, calibre of understanding the content, their opinion should be respected and valued.

8. Autobiographical approach : It is a critical reflective approach to judge one's own teaching. Varied teaching styles, demonstration techniques, subject knowledge and planning a session indeed helps to sketch one's progress and analyse the performance.

9. **Respecting Co-Workers' Suggestions:** Discussing with the colleagues about how to go about with the new concepts will open vistas of opportunities to venture into something new.

CONCLUSION

Reflective teaching is a professional requirement; this prerequisite quality brings teachers in the lifelong learning sector. It encourages understanding the learners, their aptitudes and needs. It also helps the teachers to develop emotional intelligence which subsequently contributes to their assessment. The basis of reflective teaching is to willingly accept the criticism and appraisal respect and value it. Reflective teaching desires to be truthful & sincere with the evaluation. Being a reflective practitioner, we are our own critical friend and observer. Thus, a right mental attitude needs to be developed. Reflective teaching provides

ELT practitioners and language teachers with a variety of techniques to become more cognisant of their own performance and beliefs in and outside the classroom.

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