

RESEARCH ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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### ABSTRACT

Most Teachers think about their work either before they teach, while they are teaching, or after they have finished teaching a class. While many think this is reflective practice, it really only consist of fleeting thoughts that are based on hunches, intuition, or even some actions that happened in the class. So much is happening in the classroom during a lesson, though, that teachers Cannot really know or see all that transpires. Reflective practice means more than fleeting thoughts before, during, or after a lesson; it means examining what you do in the classroom and why you do it. Reflective practice also means thinking about the values related to English language teaching, and seeing if classroom practices are consistent with these beliefs and values. In order to engage in reflective practice, teachers must systematically collect information about their classroom happenings and then analyze and evaluate this information and compare it to their underlying assumptions and beliefs so they can make the changes and improvements in their teachings (Farrell 2007). Reflective practice can also be conducted outside the classroom by looking at the context of teaching, community or society, or how the community or society impacts their teaching.

**Key Words:** Reflective Practice, Classroom, Professional Development, Information.

### Introduction

Reflective teaching means looking at what you do in the classroom, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about if it works – a process of self-observation and self evaluation. By collecting information about what goes on in our classroom, and by analyzing and evaluation this information, we identify and explore our own practices and underlying beliefs. This may then lead to changes and improvements in one's teaching.

### Discussion

Reflective teaching is therefore a means a professional development which begins in our classroom.

*Why it is important:* Beginning the process of reflection

- i Teacher Dairy
  - ii Peer observation
  - iii Recording lessons
  - iv Student feedback
- What to do next
- ii Think
  - ii Talk
  - iii Read
  - iv Ask

*Why it is important*

Many teachers already think about their teaching and talk to colleagues about it too. You might think or tell some one that "My lesson went well "or "My

students didn't seem to understand" or "My students were so badly behaved today." However, without more time spent focusing on or discussing what has happened, we may tend to jump to conclusions about why things are happening. We may only notice reactions of the louder students. Reflective teaching therefore implies a , more systematic process of collecting, recording and analyzing our thoughts and observations, as well as those of our students, and then going on to making changes.

- If a lesson went well one can describe it and think about why it is successful.
- If the students didn't understand a language point we introduced we need to think about what we did and why it may have been unclear.
- If students are misbehaving – what were they doing, when and why?

#### Beginning the process of reflection

You may begin a process of reflection in response to a particular problem that has arisen with one or your classes, or simply as a way of finding out more about your teaching. You may decide to focus on a particular class or students, or to look at a feature of your teaching – for example how you deal with incidents of misbehavior or how you can encourage your students to speak more English in class. The first step is to gather information about that happens in the class. Here are some different ways of doing this.

#### Teacher diary

This is the easiest way to begin a process of reflection since it is purely personal. After each lesson you write in a notebook about what happened. You may also describe your own reactions and feelings and those you observed on the part of the students. You are likely to begin to pose questions about what you have observed. Diary writing does require a certain discipline in taking the time to do it on a regular basis.

*Peer Observation:* Invite a colleague to come to your class to collect information about your lesson. This may be with a simple observation task or through note taking. This will relate back to the area you have identified to reflect upon.

*Recording lessons:* Video or audio recordings of lessons can provide very useful information for reflection. You may do things in the class you are not aware of or there may be things happenings in the class that as the teacher you do not normally see.

Audio recordings can be useful for considering aspects of teacher talks.

I How much do you talk?

ii What about?

iii Are instruction and explanations clear?

iv How much time so you allocate to student talk?

v How do you respond to student talk?

Video recordings can be useful in showing you aspects of your behavior.

I Where do you stand?

ii Who do you speak to?

iii How do you come across to the students?

Student feedback:

You can also ask your students what they think about what goes on in your classroom and what do you do.

\*Think

You may have noticed patterns occurring in your teaching through your observation. You may also have noticed things that you were previously unaware of. You may have been surprised by some of your student's feedback. You may already have ideas for changes to implement.

\*Talk

Just by talking about what you have discovered – to supportive colleague or even a friend – you may be able to come up with some ideas for how to do things differently.

i . If you have colleagues who also wish to develop their teaching using reflection as a tool, you can meet to discuss issues. Discussion can be based around scenarios from your own classes.

ii Using a list of statements about teaching beliefs (for example, pair work is a valuable activity in the language class or lexis is more important than Grammar) you can discuss which ones you agree or disagree with, and which ones are reflected in your own teaching giving evidence from your self-observation.

**\*Read**

You may decide that you need to find out more about a certain area. There are plenty of websites for teachers of English now where you can find useful teaching ideas, or more academic article. There are also magazines for teachers where you can find articles on a wide range of topics. Or if you have access to a library of bookshop, there are plenty if books for English Language teachers.

**\*Ask**

Pose questions to websites of magazines to get ideas from other teachers. Or if you have a local teachers association or other opportunities for in service training, ask for a session on an area that interests you.

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So much is happening in the classroom during a lesson, though, that teachers cannot really know or see all that transpires. Reflective practice also means more than fleeting thoughts before, during or after the class: it means examining what you do in the classroom and why you do it. Reflective practice also means thinking about beliefs and values related to English language teaching, and seeing if classroom practices are consistent with these beliefs and values. In order to engage in reflective practice, teachers must systematically collect information and compare it to their underlying assumptions and beliefs so they make changes and improvements in their teachings (Farrell, 2007)

Reflective Practice can also be conducted outside classroom by looking at the context of teaching, such as when teachers want to see the impact of their teaching on the community and society, or how the community or society impacts their teaching. Questions to consider may include Who makes the Curriculum?

And

What and whose values does the curriculum embody?

**Why Reflective Practice important?**

Teachers may ask why they should reflect on their practice beyond the quick after-class muse, which may lead to perceptions such as "That was a good class!" or "That was a bad class!" or "The students were not very responsive today!" Although these musings may act as a necessary starting point for most teachers, they do not produce any real evidence whether the perceptions they lead to are correct or not. For example, some teachers end class happy because they think it went well. Conversely, they may feel unhappy at the end of a class because they have perceived it to have gone badly and, worse, they spent a good deal of time preparing for that particular class. Some teachers base initial perceptions of their teaching on the way students respond (e.g., yawning) or do not respond during the class. This kind of evidence may not lead to correct interpretations of the teachers' perceptions because yawning may have nothing to do with the class and the teaching and everything to do with a student's tiredness. Likewise, if students do not respond to teaching and lessons, teachers should investigate why they were not responsive without becoming too defensive. Teachers need to know why some classes seem to go well and others not so well and how they define what well means. This investigation is called evidence-based reflective practice. As such, teachers need to compile solid data about what is really happening in their classrooms rather than what they think is happening. Reflective practice is important because it helps teachers make more informed decisions about their teaching-decisions that are based on concrete evidence systematically collected over a period of time.

What does reflection mean to you?

What is your metaphor for reflection?

What is your definition of Reflective practice?

When teachers think about their teaching they usually come up with the statements such as "My lesson went well" or "My students seemed not to be interested today" or "I did not like that lesson" and then they make decisions about how they will conduct future classes. Would this be considered Practice? If yes why? If not Why not?

It is suggested that instead of depending on workshops and literature on reflection focusing real classroom issues and providing ongoing support to teachers could be helpful in initiating and sustaining reflective practice. Reflection is a dominant notion in current educational literature considered to be significant for continuous professional development of teachers. Reflection helps people to open their hearts and minds to the experiences of others to acknowledge their wisdom and understand their resources, strengths and needs. Glazer, Abbott, and Harris (2004) believe that reflection is one of the authentic and valuable parts of teacher professional development. They found that reflection helped the participant teachers look for solutions to the problems raised in reflective sessions and meetings. Despite the enormous role and importance of reflection in teacher development, this model of teacher learning is uncommon among teachers especially in developing context.

One of the most effective solutions to this problem seems the introduction of reflective practice to teachers so that they can keep themselves updated through reflecting on their professional practices and instructional decisions. On the other hand, the teachers who even have the exposure to personal and professional development need to be reflective enough to adjust their new teaching strategies into the particular classroom situations to better help students having diverse backgrounds. The experiences of working with teachers of different educational sectors in this context reveal that some of the teachers have the idea of reflection but their reflections mostly focus on students' attitude and behavior rather than focusing their own teaching. This kind of reflection often makes students responsible for de-motivated learning behavior. Thus, the superficial level of reflection becomes responsible for teachers' professional stagnation rather than becoming a tool for professional development. Hence it can be said that the teachers in this context need facilitation of outsiders to be exposed to reflective practices in their respective systems, schools, colleges and classrooms. This paper aims at supporting teachers in improving their work at their workplace.

As the notion of reflection is equally complex, even more complex is the process of introducing it to teachers and to make them reflective practitioners. To overcome the anticipated and unanticipated complexities, the researcher used action research model of Lewin (cited in Kemmis et al 2004) the model goes in a spiral way such as a plan based on the data analysis. In order to move on systematically and to inform the planning processes, first, their existing perceptions and practices of reflections were explored. As a reflective coach, the researcher sometimes challenged the teachers' ideas, validated their reflections, showed disagreement in agreeable manner and raised critical questions. "A teacher can enhance his personal and professional expertise working hard and getting help from others" and "A Teacher can enhance his personal and professional growth getting more and more education. It is important to note that both the teachers ignore the aspect of reflection that a teacher can improve his/her practices while reflecting upon his/her practices and learning from work based experiences. Moreover, it was found that unless teachers have SMART objectives for their lessons, they will teach each lesson in the same way and there would be hardly any situation and incident to reflect upon. Teachers can better be helped in becoming reflective practitioners through helping them to reflect on classroom practices rather than conducting workshops on reflections. In order to reexamine and reshape their assumptions and get used to the reflective practice, teachers need a lot of support and facilitation. The study suggests that through challenging the practices and views of teachers, they could be provoked to think deeply and critically into their practices. An improvement in the level of his reflection has been observed but still the belief systems of the teacher has not been changed perhaps it was the struggling stage of re-conceptualization. Moreover, this process is highly influenced by teacher's perceptions and awareness about the importance and possibility of reflection in their professional growth. The teachers who did not involve in reflective practice were unable to appreciate that their professional capacity can be enhanced through workplace experiences. In this context, the participant teachers only attributed

their personal and professional growth to academic and professional qualification. While writing their reflective journals, the teachers went back to the successes and failures of their classroom practices and sometime pondered over the underlying causes. It shows that writing reflection was an opportunity for the teacher to revisit their instructional decisions of the day in the classroom which might not be possible in any other way. Another important aspect of reflective journal revealed from this reflection is that that teacher is that the teacher questions and critiques his own professional practices, which ultimately lead a teacher to better professional practice.

Although introducing the concept of reflection through action research was found to be an effective strategy for the professional development of those teachers who hardly avail any opportunity for their ongoing development, it was also revealed that this is a very challenging test to make teachers familiar with the concept and put the concept into practice. Through the researcher had entered the research context with some anticipated challenges but there were unanticipated challenges as well.

For example, they themselves had language difficulty and this issue was influencing and reflection as well. Their low proficiency in English Language was a hindrance in understanding the given literature and writing reflections. Through allowed them to write reflections in English as the purpose was to understand and practice reflection they preferred writing in English as they wanted to improve their writing skill through this way.

#### **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, the perceptions and assumptions of teachers with regard to professional development influence the introduction and implementation of an teacher model in the workplace. The teachers who believe that professional development is possible only through external training, they might not easily be motivated to adopt any workplace teacher learning model. However, through working with teachers and showing the importance and possibility of workplace learning models, they could be motivated to benefit from such models. On the other hand, the quality of

reflections also depends upon the professional background especially the pedagogical knowledge of teachers. Teachers' reflections could be critical and deeper if they have knowledge of a wide range of teaching alternatives. If the teachers are not familiar with teaching techniques and developing lesson plans, there is less possibility to reflect on their teaching. Most importantly, teachers should be familiar with the concept of SMART objectives in order to reflect on their practices vis-à-vis the objectives. It shows that teachers need professional support from external sources in order to develop their capacity. Moreover, the reflective practice of teachers could be improved through asking critical questions which also necessitates the availability of reflective coach. The study also suggests that compares to sharing literatures or theories, the reflective practices could be accelerated through supporting teachers in reflecting on real situations. Since the level of teachers in this context is to understand the benefit from literature, while using this strategy, the level of teachers should be kept in the mind. The literature must be in such language which is easy and comprehensible for teachers. Anyhow, if workplace learning is suggested as an effective way of teacher learning, reflective practice is the best model of workplace learning. It certainly helps teachers improve their professional capacity. However, reflection is complex to understand and practice. Since it requires full commitment, hard work, enough time and ongoing support, it is very challenging to sustain the practices a compulsory component of teacher education institutions and extending ongoing support to teachers at the workplace could be helpful to make teachers benefit from this effective source of teacher learning.

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