



Short Review Paper

Shaping and cultivating teachers: reflections of a trainer

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Available online at: www.isca.in, www.isca.me

Received 10th March 2019, revised 29th July 2019, accepted 15th August 2019

Abstract

In the fast-changing society, some educators are passive in one corner that they do not anymore follow the trends and emerging practices expected by millennial learners. Reading is one of the steps on how language teachers can expand their horizons; however, this activity is not enough. This reflective research article sought to explain and describe the personal experiences and observations of the writer-researcher in delivering and practicing teacher training for more than a decade. He illustrated his life experiences in a descriptive and narrative method. Part of his narration includes his quest for ideas, formulation of insights, interaction with others, and practices. Most of the insights shared and explored in this articles deal with the common issues and problems encountered by trainers and trainees. The author-researcher offers practical tips and interactive tasks which novice and beginning teachers may adapt for them to experience a difference and achieve excellence.

Keywords: Teacher training, reflective thoughts, continuing professional development, observation, feedback.

Introduction

Introspective Practices for Professional Development: This reflective-narrative article aims to describe and explain the different views and perspectives of the author in teacher-development using his reflections as a form of qualitative method.

It prudently explored the following reflective questions: i. Why does the language teacher need to undergo teacher training? ii. How does the author perceive the concept of teacher training? iii. How could language teachers practice critical reflections?

One prudent activity a teacher can do that may lead him/her to professional growth is reflective practice. Many teachers have been doing reflective teaching although they may not directly recognize it as the term itself. We can make our dull and dry moments fruitful and meaningful by involving ourselves with deep and critical reflections. What can we get from our self-analysis? We could capture bountiful ideas and concepts through exploratory thinking. Let us first analyze great concepts elucidated by theorists and educators who commenced studies on reflective teaching as a forceful approach in language teaching and career advancement.

Cruickshank and associates¹ note that reflective teaching encourages teachers to evaluate, plan, and explore lessons and tasks to modify their practices and develop their competencies.

According to Killen² through careful and organized reflections, teachers learn to evaluate themselves and their practices. As pondered by Killen, reflective teaching aims not only to develop

the competence of teachers but to uplift confidence and cultivate values. Moore³ believes that reflective teachers can compare their thoughts, experiences, and theories from where they research on. On the other hand, Celce-Murcia⁴ notes that reflective teaching in the language classroom equips and prepares beginning teachers who need purposeful directions in their journey to professionalism. Gleeson and James⁵ described the paradox of professionalism in their research project to analyze the concept of professionalism in FE Colleges in England. One particular area that was explored was how they became practitioners within the sector.

Reflection, according to Boud⁶ is an important human activity in which people analyze their experience, ponder about it, review it over, and evaluate it. It is working with experience that is linked to learning. Burrows⁷ notes that reflection involves change and professional practice, which are forms of meaningful development and conscious action.

Dewey⁸ on the other hand maintains that people who react impulsively lose control. They are forced by events – things happen on them; they don't make events happen. For them to learn and develop they must move from procedural action to reflective action as characterized by on-going self-assessment and development.

Brookfield⁹ suggests four critical lenses or perspectives by which people can examine and reflect their own professional practices. Finally, Moon¹⁰ states that reflective is about having the capacity and skills to engage in the rigorous process of decision making and problem-solving.

The author's thoughtful reflections and experiences

Shaping language teachers become fruitful and dynamic is a rewarding experience. I have been a part of teacher training programs for many years. To be in this field requires dedication, critical thinking, passion, and creativity. The trainer should have the persuasion to convince trainees that his/her presentations are invaluable. When you give training to others, in reality, you are also learning from the session. You examine various views, beliefs, and principles of language teachers. Teachers do gain a lot from the series of training they are joining. They see the light towards their career. They can meet other teachers from the field; hence, exchange of ideas takes place. As a teacher trainer, I am spending quality time to prepare my tools and instrument in coaching and training. In this case, reading is an indispensable tool. Through reading, my mind assimilates abundant ideas and thoughts I need for the training sessions. I also rehearse my presentations to a group of experts who serve as my critics. I am joyous when I see the development, progress, and willingness of trainees to learn and transform.

Training programs for teachers are like planting the seeds which will grow into towering trees. The task of being a trainer is colossal. We assess the traits of the teacher-trainees. From this, we can determine the weaknesses and strengths of teachers. We capture the loopholes in which we can formulate bigger ideas to address the issues and problems existing within them. Planting the seeds is cultivating the essential competencies that they have. Although they are not aware that they have these potentials, through proper guidance and motivation, the effective trainer can uncover the seeds which can be scattered to find their places. There are instances when novice teachers prefer to hear the words of speakers and trainers for them to gather encouraging tips they can use in teaching. They need carefully follow the timely practices and techniques they can apply in their own classrooms.

In the age of technology, we can infer that our students are prone to online games, gadgets and so on. In this view, we can say that interruption and disruption are huge among students. As students step on the shadows of technology, language teachers have to insert intervening programs and activities. We need to teach and encourage them to follow right way. However, we cannot do that if our minds dwell on traditional ways and styles of teaching. There are benefits of being able to participate in seminars and training with qualified and seasoned trainers as facilitators.

During the training sessions, language teachers are advised to have open hearts and minds to receive the information and listen to directions they can follow to modify their teaching pedagogies. In the future, novice teachers who have been working hard to improve their crafts can become sought-after trainers in the future. They will dig from their own experiences in teaching as their weapon in delivering quality and relevant

lectures to other teachers. Rising on the top is not a piece of cake. We will always go through the process of knowing ourselves, searching for ideas, exploring new concepts, and synthesizing conclusions to prepare and equip ourselves for future endeavors. Evidently, teacher training is one of the most exciting and challenging fields in the academic environment. Each year, new teachers join the world of teaching. Some teachers were prepared to engage in instruction while others still need further improvement and motivation.

Through proper and forceful teacher training we can ensure that our language teachers can build the foundations they need to handle students. We can also do introspection on the experiences of the novice teachers. From this angle, we can ponder on the best alternatives and solutions to improve the qualities of teachers. Training is also an avenue to observe characteristics of other teachers. How important is it to have a background of other teachers? We compare practices, pedagogies, skills, and reflections of individual teachers. We can highlight the best features from which new and bright thoughts emerge. When we compare and contrast, we can view vivid descriptions and qualities that we validate for future references.

Trainers also have unique perspectives and principles when it comes to pedagogies and practices. Even if there are polarities of views, trainees need to understand that these thoughts can help them get engaged in meaningful reflections. They ask questions to explore the ideas and verify their expectations. Trainers need to be open-minded and flexible in dealing with the needs of the trainees. They should provide a healthy learning atmosphere where learners, teachers, and trainees can feel they are supported and encouraged to participate actively and meaningfully. They should carry the light of knowledge which serves as nutrients to upgrade and develop the mind.

More importantly, in the training venue, participants are encouraged to share their experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and views as these are carefully processed and filtered by the trainer. In this point, balanced ideas includes taking all angles and do not let gloomy thoughts interrupt the flow of discussions. For sure, participants will feel that they are welcome in the various activities and sets and regardless of different views. All are one in attaining the target objectives of the training which are professional development and upgrade of skills and knowledge. Trainers hold the key to make any sessions successful and memorable. They are the makers and builders of activities or tasks that will take place. Trainers have all the capacity to initiate actions and events that can create changes in the landscape of language teaching and all other specializations under the world of teacher education. In this age of modernization, when all of us see glitter like gold, we need to retool ourselves not only the trainees but also teachers. We have to adjust with the demands of the globalized society. We need to offer what they lack and not what they already have. Pondering on these areas is the most effective step toward identifying the needs of language teachers who want to embrace changes and

innovations. Despite large papers to evaluate, teacher-trainees deserve to discover options and plans in honing and molding themselves. Choices are around the corner, all they need is to pick out the most suitable ones for their advantage. But how you as a teacher make wise decisions matters a lot. If you commit a mistake, if you lapse, chances are your life may be affected and inflicted to perils of politics. But if you have a determined hope and uncompromised integrity, you will be able to climb the ladder of success. After all, your steps and actions can either break or make you. The trainers will give their ideas; if you have the passion and desire to change yourself, then, let these ideas enter your door. Teachers should not limit their professional career to finishing their courses and passing the licensure examinations; they need to continuously upgrade themselves through holistic and relevant training, forums, and seminars. It is a fact that people can collect ideas not only from books but from interaction with others, personal experiences and observations, and attendance to training.

In the next years to come, new dimensions of teaching may probably change the academic world, and as receptive educators and trainers, we have to keep on reading and researching so that we can logically follow the trends and perspectives of language teaching, applied linguistics, and educational design. We can find ways and means to reinvent, retool, and realign our pedagogies and techniques to persuade others – new teachers who hunger for concepts and ideas. We can offer not only good thoughts but insightful advice; this can help trainees create pleasant dispositions and decisions in life. We have to articulate in our classrooms all the information and facts we have collected or gathered during the seminar. If those are not applied then knowledge will just be wasted. Teachers are always at the forefront of the curriculum and instruction. It is they who justify and epitomize the contents of the syllabus. Through their resourcefulness and creativity, they can provide a positive learning atmosphere for their students amidst cultural diversities and traits.

I am with the thought that trainers scatter the seeds of knowledge. Teachers who attend the seminars and workshops will carry the seeds which will grow into trees of wisdom the future. Who will benefit from all the training and lectures attended or participated in by our teachers? It is the students, first and foremost. As we celebrate World Teachers Month, we should recall how our teachers, who became our mentors, fought for our right to gain knowledge, build skills, and develop values. In a community, the teacher has a gigantic role of imparting ideas to others, sharing of thoughts, guiding confused individuals, and training children to become productive citizens someday. I firmly believe that in all corners of the world, quality teaching and training will be made accessible and feasible by the governments and heads of the states. All teachers deserve the best workshops to reinforce their ideas and enhance their pedagogical approaches. They can imprint silver lining and create a big difference in the lives of others particularly the youth.

As a language trainer, my tasks are challenging and tremendous. I know each day, I am reflecting on what I can contribute to teachers especially those who work in far-flung areas. Technology is one of my instruments so that I can connect with them and send them my pieces of advice through online consultation. Helping other teachers is feasible if we only have the willingness and patience to extend our hands and be of service with them.

One of the challenging situations of being a trainer-facilitator is responding to questions that are a bit deviated from the content and context of the topic. Having encountered such many times, I do my very best to address the queries by exemplifying situations and narrowing the topics and focusing on the key ideas. I also try to understand clearly the point raised by the audience-participants during the sessions. To be a trainer is a rewarding occupation. I am fortunate to be assigned in this profession regardless of the different forms of pressure. I am glad and proud to mentor other teachers who need the torch to be versatile in their areas.

Trainers devote their time to preparing and equipping novice teachers and those who need retooling. Guided by principles and commitment to the field, they do not get tired of sharing their ideas and cultivating the potentials of trainees. The significant contributions of trainers are mirrored by the numerous teachers who became dynamic and receptive in their fields. Trainers provided them the learning plan for their growth and career upgrade. Indeed the world would be vague and lonesome in the absence of teacher trainers. These trainers had their humble beginnings too. From my thoughts, it means that even those who think they are beginners can one day rise and become icons of profession and agents of change. Trainers are of course aware of what they can do with the status and outlook of their trainees. It is through the hands of the trainers that teachers from all walks of life explore and imbibe the useful methods and strategies to be used in the classroom. There is hope in this world amidst all the tragedies and calamities confronting some countries. Teachers have the primary task of opening the minds and hearts of the youth to become productive, committed, kind, God-fearing, and dynamic workers of the world. Of course in all situations that will happen, trainers are there to assist teachers and their students in making decisions and formulating bright ideas for their improvement.

Conclusion

On the whole, my reflections proved and emphasized the power and authority teacher trainers have in guiding and persuading teachers and trainees establish their capacity and competence to teach. Despite workloads, stress, and streamlining of organizations, teacher-trainers still endeavor with their mission of spreading knowledge and ideas to change the landscape of teaching and coaching. Teachers and students benefit from this scene. After some time, these teachers who once sat and listened

to the training would one day become the sought after, adored, respected, and well-applauded trainer!

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