



Short Communication

Reflective thoughts of language teachers for professional enhancement

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

Received 30th July 2018, revised 17th November 2018, accepted 22nd December 2018

Abstract

The ability to do reflection is drawing global attention because it helps language teachers understand themselves better by engaging in a meaningful reflective thinking. Successful planning is a product of meaningful reflections. This study aimed to explore and discuss the essence of reflective teaching in the views of educators who have defined and illustrated the approach. This research employed content analysis of the references cited by the researcher. The researcher considered his experiences and reflections while he connected these to the reflective thoughts of the literature cited. At the end, advantages and perks of engaging in reflections were offered and highlighted. It was also concluded that through this approach, language teachers are placed in the process of professional development.

Keywords: Reflection, reflective teaching, planning, strategies, professional development, self-evaluation.

Introduction

Teachers are one of the steadfast and resilient workers in the world. This is magnified and attested by the kind of duties and responsibilities attached with them. In school, they direct, instruct, and manage classes-big or small, they do not mind if they will suffer or feel inconvenient as long as their loads are carried. Their heavy workloads in school still follow them at home since they have to check papers, record scores, and compute grades. In addition, they have to plan for their next lessons and make sure that instructional materials are available for their classes. It is so wonderful to know that true leadership is epitomized by our dear teachers. All who work in schools have been experiencing these scenarios since all who are involved in teaching are educators or teachers.

The situations are true with the English language teachers, who are known as ESL teachers in other countries. Knowing that language teachers have to do a lot of checking and recording, bundles and piles of papers are expected and felt in their homes. At some point, due to hectic schedule, academic pressure, and other personal problems, language teachers do not have the luxury of time to further their skills and competencies. Because of the massive stress, their lives are kept in the box and became stagnant. But in soaring high and reaching their goals, there is still a way to achieve professional development. It is the thrust of this reflective research to offer effective ways to enhance language teachers and empower them. In the boundless and borderless world surrounded by complexities of technology and innovation, how can language teachers achieve professional growth and development?

This study was explored to answer the following questions: i. How is reflective teaching defined? ii. How do language

teachers practice this approach? iii. What can language teachers get from their thoughtful reflections?

Through this paper, the procedures and benefits of engaging in reflective teaching were investigated. Relevant literatures were analysed and synthesized to form helpful insights and information that can assist language teachers in their endless quest for excellence. It must be noted that in this paper, a critical analysis of related studies was employed by the researcher as he linked his own reflective practices.

Literature review: To make this reflective article more meaningful and relevant, the writer intentionally cited references that have close connection with the existing conditions and issues in reflective teaching. These references were carefully scrutinized to give justice to the objectives presented earlier.

Rationale for reflective teaching: Reflective teaching is closely linked with constructivism because both have the belief that learners can create meaningful thoughts through the quality inputs and experiences provided by the teachers. In this part, the origin of this approach is briefly presented. Reflective Teaching was conceived by Cruickshank and associates (1987) as a result of a plan to provide a new form of training among novice teachers. Practically, reflective teaching allowed teachers to evaluate, plan, and explore lessons and tasks in order to modify their practices and develop their competencies. Knowledge on the subject matter was analysed through peer coaching and consultation with experts and seasoned educators¹. From these gleaming scenarios, it could be inferred that reflective teaching aimed to improve the qualities and capacities of the teachers; teachers were given the opportunity to retool themselves while were interacting with their colleagues. What was taught in the

past and what is being taught were looked into by the researchers and experts invited during the conduct of the study. It was also a platform where different methodologies and practices were shown by teachers and at the end; they formed new strategies for their own improvement.

Killen (2009) holds that there are several reasons why teachers need to do reflections. In the practicum stage, beginning teachers could observe and absorb new and existing ideas which they could incorporate or assimilate in their system. According to Killen, through organized reflections, teachers learn to examine themselves and their practices. They could get the chance to accept responsibilities with awareness on how they could execute and perform them properly. She further elucidated that in the changing and evolving dimensions of teaching, teachers have to be responsive and receptive. They should know how to welcome and adapt new trends and ideas. In the work of Killen, reflective teaching aims not only to develop the competence of teachers but to boost confidence and hone values. It says further that absence of reflections, it will be tough for teachers to make appropriate dispositions in their career².

Moore (2005) believes that reflective teachers can compare their thoughts, experiences, and theories from what they read. While they are engaged in teaching, they do deep reflections. They try to incorporate theories and models on the lessons, plans, and activities they conduct in school. It is a must for them to be sensitive to the individual needs and diversities of the learners because this act can serve as a springboard for construction and reconstruction of insights. Accordingly, if the delivery of the lessons was not successful, teachers can try new paradigms and methods for the adjustment and recovery of the mishaps incurred in the past³.

In the many settings and contexts visited by the teacher, new ideas and life lessons are learned by him/her. Sometimes, teachers are not able to explore on the issues and trends due to their busy and preoccupied professional and personal life. But every experience of the teacher can teach him/her invaluable lessons that can be a subject for critical reflection. Not only that teachers can get values from their work and tasks but they can also use substantial information for sustainable instruction. If teachers have knowledge on the events and experiences of them and of others, they can have a basis for developing new teaching strategies and principles for effective classroom instruction. Richards and Lockhart (1994) claim that through clear procedures and objectives, teachers can investigate many variables in the classroom which are useful and essential to critical reflective teaching⁴.

On the other hand, Celce-Murcia notes that reflective teaching in language classroom is structured for beginning teachers who need to be guided in their quest and journey for professional development. The advantages and perks of being reflective are felt by the teacher if he/she can properly follow the procedures in this kind of approach. Murcia also stressed that adults are

more capable of engaging in reflective thought than children due to experiences and concepts. For professional development, reflective teaching as practiced by reflexive teachers can lead them to worthy activities such as understanding their own students, presenting papers local and abroad, participation in conference, doing scholarly research, and evaluating colleagues⁵.

Hartman, (2010) opines that students must be taught how to organize their thoughts as they reflect, remember, and perform academic tasks⁶. Dewey (1933) depicted reflective thinking as an active, persistent, and careful analysis of belief in the light of evidences⁷. Brookfield (1995) believed in the role of critical reflection to make teachers aware of classroom issues and concerns they need to fix⁸. Valli (1993) on the other hand, proposed a framework that can be used by teachers in improving themselves and their strategies⁹. Bolton (2010) emphasizes reflective practice through examination of what has happened in the past that has link with the present. Teachers want to be reflective because they want their students achieve maximum potentials¹⁰.

Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature and has employed phenomenology as its approach. Using personal observations and experiences of the researcher, he attempted to answer the questions stated in the introduction. Furthermore, he used content analysis in reviewing his references for analysing various points and drawing conclusions. The main ideas contained by the literature served as textual data for the progress of this study. The thoughtful reflections of the language teachers helped shaped and enhanced findings of this study. From the different views read and examined by the researcher, he was able to formulate better thoughts on reflective teaching.

Results and discussion

From the questions raised by the researcher, he carefully examined the contents of his materials in order to provide insights to the issues and conditions in line with reflective teaching. Although, this process required subjective treatment of the data, the researcher followed empirical and evident bases for his interpretations.

Lines from the Literature Review: i. *Practically, reflective teaching allowed teachers to evaluate, plan, and explore lessons and tasks in order to modify their practices and develop their competencies.* ii. *According to Killen, through organized reflections, teachers learn to examine themselves and their practices.* iii. *In the work of Killen, reflective teaching aims not only to develop the competence of teachers but to boost confidence and hone values.* iv. *Moore³ (2005) believes that reflective teachers can compare their thoughts, experiences, and theories from where they read.* v. *On the other hand, Celce-Murcia⁵ (2001) notes that reflective teaching in language classroom is structured for beginning teachers who need to be guided in their quest and journey for professional development.*

From the lines presented, we can say that reflective teaching is the process of making thoughtful reflection in order to organize ideas and evaluate one's capacity as a teacher. This is a form of introspection in which the language teacher learns from his/her past as he improves and enhances his/her career as well as his/her personal life. The approach involves a systematic method of analysing lessons, activities, objectives, and experiences of the language teacher.

Engaging in the process of reflection needs patience, determination, and persistence. Since it requires time, the teacher has to allot quality time for him/her to retool himself/herself by doing an organized method of reflection. Teachers can write their thoughts in a diary, consult fellow teachers to get ideas, attend lecture-seminars, and analyse their past teaching experiences. These are some of the best practices that mirror reflective teaching.

From the texts, it can be seen that language teachers can get many perks from the process of reflection. One is self-evaluation which allows the teacher to do introspection. If teachers are aware of their actions and behaviour, they can do adjustment and enhancement by planning and organizing future tasks and transactions. Through meaningful reflections, language teachers can evaluate their tools or instructional materials, teaching techniques and strategies, values and behaviour, objectives, learning assessments, philosophies of teaching, and future plans and prospective. Furthermore, this approach can help teachers become aware of themselves, their strategies, their objectives, and their own thoughts.

Based on the lines explored by the researcher, reflective teaching brings teachers to realities of the profession. Language teachers have their own beliefs when it comes to the practice of teaching. They should have their principles and philosophy that will guide them in their search for knowledge and growth.

Conclusion

From the essential thoughts explored by the researcher, insightful conclusions are made. i. What is reflective teaching?: Reflective teaching is an approach which guides and directs the language teacher to evaluate himself/herself by engaging in meaningful and thoughtful reflections. This approach may not be easy for others but through willingness and determination, all teachers can go through this powerful activity. The language teacher analyses his/her weak and strong points for him/her to do upgrading and enhancement through several ways. Reflective teaching is a form of introspection in which the language teacher reviews his past together with his methods and tools for possible retooling and modification. ii. How do language teachers practice this approach?: There are many ways how the language teacher can conduct or employ reflective teaching.

He/she can use diary where he/she can jot down all his thoughts and later review those reflections. He/she can attend in forums, seminars, conferences and so on where he could get new ideas and information. He can pursue graduate courses to meet new friends and gain knowledge that can upgrade him/her. Being reflexive means the language teacher is versatile and thoughtful. iii. What can language teachers get from their thoughtful reflections?

The teacher who engages in meaningful and thoughtful reflective teaching has the chance to improve for a better career. Since the process of reflection is systematic, the teacher undergoes training, discipline, and evaluation. He is more receptive and adaptive to bigger opportunities and dimensions. The approach leads to self-discovery and empowerment where the teacher tries to improve his teaching capacity by allowing new ideas to come. The quality of being reflective includes being receptive to other insights but being able to accept only the essential ones.

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