

REFLECTIVE TEACHING AS A TOOL OF SUCCESS

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Reflection-in-teaching refers to teachers subjecting their beliefs and practices of teaching to a critical analysis. However, the concept of reflective teaching is not clearly defined, and a plethora of different approaches with sometimes confusing meanings have been pushed in teacher education programs. This article reviews some current approaches to reflective teaching and then suggests a method of providing opportunities for teachers to reflect on their work. The article seeks to examine: 1) reflective teaching and critically reflective teaching and, 2) the different approaches to reflective teaching. Five components of a teacher development model that can provide opportunities for practicing teachers are discussed.

One day a young girl was watching her mother cooking a roast of beef. Just before the mother put the roast in the pot, she cut a slice off the end. The ever observant daughter asked her mother why she had done that, and the mother responded that her grandmother had always done it. Later that same afternoon, the mother was curious, so she called her mother and asked her the same question. Her mother, the child's grandmother, said that in her day she had to trim the roasts because they were usually too big for a regular pot. Teaching without any reflection can lead to "...cutting the slice off the roast," and can also lead to burnout on the job. One way of identifying routine and of counteracting burnout is to engage in reflective teaching.

In a review of the literature on reflective teaching, one discovers that there is much variance in the definition. Pennington [1992:47] defines reflective teaching as "deliberating on experience, and that of mirroring experience." She also extends this idea to reflective learning. Pennington [1992:47] relates development to reflection where "reflection is viewed as the input for development while also reflection is viewed as the output of development. "Pennington [1992:51] further proposes a reflective/developmental orientation "as a means for 1) improving classroom

processes and outcomes, and 2) developing confident, self-motivated teachers and learners." The focus here is on analysis, feedback, and adaptation as an ongoing and recursive cycle in the classroom.

In a more recent article, Pennington [1995:706] says that teacher change and development require an awareness of a need to change. She defined teacher development as "a metastable system of context- interactive change involving a continual cycle of innovative behavior and adjustment to circumstances." She sees two key components of change: innovation and critical reflection. In her study of how eight secondary teachers moved through a change cycle as they learned about innovation, she noted that through "deep reflection, teachers were able to reconstruct a teaching framework to incorporate the previously contradictory elements" [1995:725].

Richards [1990:5] sees reflection as a key component of teacher development. He says that self- inquiry and critical thinking can "help teachers move from a level where they may be guided largely by impulse, intuition, or routine, to a level where their actions are guided by reflection and critical thinking." In referring to critical reflection in an interview with Farrell [1995:95], Richards says: "Critical reflection refers to an activity or process in which experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to a past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action."

The second notion of reflective practice is called *reflection-in-action* [Schon 1983, 1987]. For this to occur, the teacher has to have a kind of knowing-in-action. Knowing-in- action is analogous to seeing and recognizing a face in a crowd without "listing" and piecing together separate features; the knowledge we reveal in our intelligent action is publicly observable, but we are unable to make it verbally explicit. Schon [1987] says that we can sometimes make a description of the tacit, but that these descriptions are symbolic constructions; knowledge-in- action is dynamic, facts are static. For Schon [1983, 1987], thought is embedded in action and knowledge-in- action is the center of professional practice.

Reflection-in-action, again according to Schon [1983, 1987], is concerned with thinking about what we are doing in the classroom while we are doing it; this thinking is supposed to reshape what we are doing. There is a sequence of "moments" in a process of reflection-in-action: a) A situation or action occurs to which we bring spontaneous routinized responses, as in knowing-in-action; b) Routine responses produce a surprise, an unexpected outcome for the teacher that does not fit into categories of knowing-in-action. This then gets our attention; c) This surprise leads to reflection within an action. This reflection is to some level conscious but need not occur in the medium of words; d) Reflection-in-action has a critical function. It questions the structure of knowing-in-action. Now we think critically about the thinking that got us there in the first place; e) Reflection gives rise to on-the-spot experimentation. We think up and try out new actions intended to explore newly observed situations or happenings. Schon [1983, 1987] says that reflection-in-action is a reflective conversation with the materials of a situation.

The third notion of reflection is called *reflection-on-action*. Reflection-on-action deals with thinking back on what we have done to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected action [Schon 1987; Hatton and Smith 1995]. This includes reflecting on our reflecting-in-action, or thinking about the way we think, but it is different from reflecting-in-action.

The fourth notion of reflection is called *reflection-for-action*. Reflection-for-action is different from the previous notions of reflection in that it is proactive in nature. Killon and Todnew [1991:15] argue that reflection-for-action is the desired outcome of both previous types of reflection, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action; however, they say that "we undertake reflection, not so much to revisit the past or to become aware of the meta cognitive process one is experiencing but to guide future action the more practical purpose."

The fifth notion of reflection is connected to *action research*. Action research is the investigation of those craft-knowledge values of teaching that hold in place our habits when we are teaching [McFee 1993]. It concerns the transformation of research into action. As McFee [1993:178] says: "It is research into 1) a particular

kind of practice- one in which there is a craft- knowledge, and 2) is research based on a particular model of knowledge and research with action as outcome...this knowledge is practical knowledge." Carr and Kemmis [1986:182] say that action research: "is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants (teachers, or principals, for example) in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of a) their own social or educational practices, b) their understanding of these practices, and c) the situations (and institutions) in which these practices are carried out."

The five core elements are not isolated but are all connected: One builds on the other and all need to be considered as a whole. The five components are: Provide different opportunities for teachers to reflect through a range of different activities; Build in some ground rules to the process and into each activity; Make provisions for four different kinds of time; Provide external input for enriched reflection; Provide for low affective states.

Reflective teaching can benefit teachers in four main ways: 1) Reflective teaching helps free the teachers from impulse and routine behavior. 2) Reflective teaching allows teachers to act in a deliberate, intentional manner and avoid the "I don't know what I will do today" syndrome. 3) Reflective teaching distinguishes teachers as educated human beings since it is one of the signs of intelligent action. 4) As teachers gain experience in a community of professional educators, they feel the need to grow beyond the initial stages of survival in the classroom to reconstructing their own particular theory from their practice. Dewey [1933:87] said that growth comes from a "reconstruction of experience" so by reflecting on our own experiences, we can reconstruct our own educational perspective.

If English as a second or foreign language teaching is to become recognized as a professional body, then teachers need to be able to explain their judgments and actions in their classrooms with reasoned argument. Ways of achieving this level of reason include reflecting on teaching experiences and incorporating evidence from relevant scholarship into teaching routines, which can lead to growth and

development. Lange [1990] sees an intimate relationship between reflective teaching and teacher development:

"The reflective process allows developing teacher's latitude to experiment within a framework of growing knowledge and experience. It gives them the opportunity to examine their relations with students, their values, their abilities, and their successes and failures in a realistic context.

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