

Chapter 1

Reflective Teaching Methodology in Pre- Service Education: Theory and Practice

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present chapter is to gain a deep understanding of how to teach and consequently improve new practices. As teaching becomes a lifelong learning process, teachers' inability to improve their teaching practices is considered an evidence of their incompetence. This vicious circle should be broken. The present chapter solves this problem relying on the reflective teaching methodology highlighting its importance, levels, and models of reflection ending with their pedagogical implications. Moreover, it suggests practical reflective teaching instruments to help student teachers enrolled in educational programs to detect their own teaching performances' strengths and weaknesses. In addition, it sketches carefully a Reflective Training Guide with its specific detailed hierarchical structures that can be adopted by TEFL professors in the pre- service Education Programs. Thus, teaching is not practiced haphazardly but practiced cautiously in an artistic way. The present chapter is an exploration in the field of reflective teaching methodology in pre-service education programs.

May be reflective practices offer us a way of trying to make sense of the uncertainty in our workplaces and the courage to work competently and ethically at the edge of order and chaos. (Ghaye, 2000, p.7)

INTRODUCTION

Closing the gap between theory and practice to stimulate professional development and self-awareness is a vital need. This goal can be achieved by binding critical thinking and reflection (Akbari, 2007; Boud

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et al., 1998; Schon, 1983). Research clarified that the process of reflection on professional experiences, rather than learning from formal teaching, results in professional development (Akbari, 2007; Atkinson, 2004; Jasper, 2003; Ward, 2004; Zeichner & Liston, 1996) as it can help novice teachers to assess the effects of their teaching decisions and actions in their classrooms (Christie & Kirkwood, 2006; Lar-rivee, 2000; Ottesen, 2007). Also, Collin, Karsenti and Komis (2013) clarified that

Since the 1980s, reflective practice has been included in initial teacher training programs as part of the international movement to reform teaching and improve the quality of education ...It is currently a mandatory competency in many university teacher training programs and it constitutes a dominant education paradigm . (Collin, Karsenti & Komis, 2013, p.104).

Research clarified that although reflective practice is now a key component in many teacher training programs, its theoretical background is still problematic (Calderhead, 1989; Duffy, 2009; Pollard & Collins, 2005; Zeichner, 1994). To shed more light on this issue, Harrison (2008) and Kreisberg (1992) noted that the reflective practice has brought with it heavy expectations. These expectations are illustrated by Hargreaves (2003) when he clarified that “Schools today serve and shape a world in which there can be great economic opportunity and improvement if people can learn to work more flexibly, invest in their future financial security, reskill or relocate themselves” but this necessitates the thinking of “how” to achieve the desired goals (p.1).

Khan (2014) stated that “Reflection has been a complex and at times elusive educational concept; however, in many educational programs it is often applied without acknowledgement of this complexity” (p.1). He clarified that practitioners focus on the “how” of teaching, ignoring the “what” and “why” of the teaching process. This means that the role of reflection in teaching is not really recognized or validated. In addition, research clarified that the role of the reflective teacher is more profound and effective than the teacher who only transfers general theoretical knowledge about education and teaching (Harrison, 2008; Lawrence & Ashmore, 2014; Parker, 1997).

Calderhead (1989) argued that reflection has been interpreted differently in teacher education programs depending on its “purpose”. The researchers who believe in the behavioristic approach to teacher education (Richardson and Maltby, 1995) approved the technical view of the term for enhancing the skills of student teachers. On the other hand, those who approve the critical and innovative approaches (Richards, 1990; Zeichner & Liston, 1987) extended the role of reflective teaching into more profound issues like “emancipation” and “professional autonomy” (Calderhead, 1998, p.45). The previous researchers caution against the overemphasis of reflection on the “technical level” and warn that if it stays at that level then that is not reflective teaching; it is more like explaining the teaching situation at a shallow level without meditating to learn the implied messages that help teachers to grow professionally.

On the other hand, Zeichner (1994) clarified that the selection and adoption of subject-matter and teaching method should be determined by the careful observation and description of students’ behavior at the various stages of their development. He advocated the implementation of the “generic” teaching skills and “strategies which have been suggested by research” (Zeichner, 1994, p. 24). Thus, according to the advocates of this notion, the “process” of reflection is more important than the “product” of the subject matter which is taught and should be extended to broader issues. It is worth mentioning that Zeichner (1994) attracted the attention to the fact that “we, as educators, must be interested in more complex questions than whether the teaching is reflective or not” (p. 29). This is crucial as it sheds light on the fact that reflective teachers should recognize the “complexity” of the concept of reflection or it

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