



ROLE OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICES IN SCHOOL TEACHING

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Reflection is a form of mental processing that we use to fulfill a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome. It is applied to gain a better understanding of relatively complicated or unstructured ideas and is largely based on the reprocessing of knowledge, understanding and possibly emotions that we already process.

--Jenny Moon

Wikipedia defines Reflective practice as "paying critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively and reflexively." This leads to developmental insight. A key rationale for reflective practice is that experience alone does not necessarily lead to learning deliberate [reflection](#) on experience is essential.

It is also an important way to bring together theory and practice together. A person is able to see and label forms of thought and theory within the context of his or her work. Reflection of a person on his/ her practice involves looking back on previous actions and taking a conscious look at emotions, experiences, actions, and responses. Then he or she uses that information to add to his or her existing knowledge and improves his practice. Reflection is necessary to give direction to education and to play an active role in shaping one's occupational identity. Reflection practices are essential for personal and [professional development](#).

Dewey (1933) defined reflective practice by explaining that the "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought"

Danielson explains that reflection is analytical and "affords teachers conscious deliberate insight to bring about learning, and encourages them to become students of their own teaching". Therefore, through reflective practice, a teacher will be able to focus on examining how their content knowledge and skills affect student engagement and may adapt processes to improve their teaching practice.

Perceiving motivation as a cause for his reflection on his teaching **Stewart** said "Part of it too, is that I want to get better. So if I'm thinking about my growth, that's one of the things that would cause me to reflect." Similarly **Wendell** pointed out how wanting to improve for the benefit of his students caused him to reflect on his teaching practice. **Wendell** stated, "So the reason why I reflect is obviously to improve for my students. The things that make me change are when I see things I think I could do better."

John Dewey pointed out three attitudes as pre-requisite for reflective practices:

- 1. Openmindedness** : A reflective teacher should keep an open mind about the content, methods and procedures used in classroom. He/she should explore alternative ways to apply existing teaching practices.
- 2. Responsibility** : It involves responsible behavior shown by a teacher. He/she should be fully aware of consequences of his/her actions. Reflection about the impact of teachers action in classroom is very important as hidden curriculum of a school has powerful impact on actual outcomes of schooling.

- 3. Wholeheartedness** : A reflective teacher should treat all students equally. He/she is committed to teach all students of his/her class. He/ She should believe in uniqueness of every student of his/her class.

There has been a great deal of discussion among educationist that in what ways a teacher can promote reflective practices in his/her classroom in schools. On the basis of above discussion we can suggest some practices which can enhance reflection in classroom:

- **Understanding learner**

Understanding learner means to acknowledge, respect and value learner's diverse and complex identities. A teacher should always respect and promote learner's voice. One should always acknowledge alternative ways in which children learn, e.g. culturally responsive learning styles, augmented communication strategies. **A reflective teacher is need to be explicit and put into practice our belief that a deep respect for each student is at the heart of his educational endeavor.**

It is the responsibility of a teacher to create space for diverse viewpoints in his/her classroom. Sometimes issues introduced in class can lead to highly-charged, differing and even opposing viewpoints. Sometimes teachers themselves are afraid of raising controversial issues as classroom discussion on such issues might get upsetting, unmanageable and may cause hostility between students Teachers need to have both the courage to raise these issues and the wisdom and skill to manage them intelligently so that a democratic environment can be developed into the classroom. Learning to express your own thought on an issue and listening to those you disagree with patience is a pre-requisite for an educated mind and democracy. When students are able to have a conversation that involves communicating their own views and listening to diverse viewpoints, their thinking is both enlarged and enriched. This helps them to mature and develop as a thoughtful and active citizens of a global society. They learn to give respect to others view and in this process they develop deeper understanding of problem.

A teacher should use learner's prior experiences to connect them with new learning experiences. It is the responsibility of teacher to link children's learning between settings of home, school and the community. We should use learner's prior understandings and experiences to scaffold new understandings and experiences. **A reflective teacher will encourage children to be agents of their own learning.** He collaboratively plan aspects of the curriculum with children. One should promote risk-taking, perseverance, sustained interest to aid task completion, motivate learning, extend learning in self-selected program.

- **Building partnerships**

Teachers who are reflective acknowledge the efforts, achievements and progress of learner. They provide children with feedback about their learning, e.g. through conversations, one-on-one discussions, parent teacher meetings. They should encourage learner's mentoring capabilities as "peer experts". Teachers provide opportunities for open conversations about the learning, and ways of doing, thinking and knowing. Their interactions with learners are reciprocal, sustained and promote shared understandings. They should promote working in groups and use conversations to create shared meaning. **Student-to-Student Discussions**

The teacher should not be the center of class discussion. Studies have shown that student-to-student interaction deepens student learning. It can happen in a number of ways including encouragement of "No Hand Discussion", wherein students create their own criteria for a successful discussion. Student-led discussions and small group works should also be promoted They should discuss each partner's roles, rights and responsibilities as a member of this learning community. A reflective teacher uses classroom as space for their creative and intentional use. When a whole class discussion is going on, it is easier to talk to each other when participants can see the faces of fellow students. Arranging the furniture in a circle promotes a sense of community and can make a difference. Likewise, arranging chairs and desks in clusters for small group work facilitates discussion. And then there's the wall space. Relevant pictures, posters, and student work can play a role in generating a thoughtful atmosphere. . **It is also necessary to give importance to each learner's talents, abilities and interests. A reflective teacher involves parents/guardians, family and community members meaningfully and collaboratively in learning experiences.**

- **Establishing flexible learning environments**

A reflective teacher's classroom is always welcoming, warm and supportive that is inclusive of all cultures, gender, special needs, interests and capabilities. A teacher should always value and embrace differences positively. They should plan and create learning experiences that are inclusive and culturally responsive. create a sense of a learning community by positively recognizing children's group identities. The teacher should create flexible learning environments that are responsive to children's spontaneous inquiries. **They should develop a culture of questioning in classroom as questions promote active learning.** When the teacher and the students are involved together in a dialogue, they are engaged in a process of ever-deepening consciousness. A healthy questioning of causes, motives, and assumptions and values can only enrich learner and foster a deeper understanding.

A flexible learning environment can be established by providing open-ended learning experiences to learner. The teacher should plan and create learning environments which are challenging, stimulating and motivating. They should help children to make links between concepts in an integrated, holistic way. Each learner should be provided with equitable access to resources, storage and furniture. Learner should feel free to have "interactional space" to explore/test independent problem-solving strategies, for making choices and errors as part of their active engagement.

- **Contexts for learning and development**

A reflective teacher includes learner's diverse backgrounds, e.g. social, cultural, lifestyle, familiar setting, prior education/care contexts as a focus for curriculum decision making. They promote active, informed citizenship through contexts for learning, e.g. real-life situations, maintaining familiar environment. Integrate learning experiences to aid children making connections between concepts across interest topics. A learner should be provided with real-life learning that reflects and responds to community needs and interests.

A reflective teacher will integrate learning within contexts of play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching. Sculpture, music, poetry, artwork, dance, short stories, video productions, and other forms of expression can all demonstrate student learning and can deepen and enrich understanding of content. Providing different kinds of opportunities for students to express learning creates a classroom environment where a variety of student gifts are appreciated and celebrated. Considering the problematic nature of inquiry-based learning to acquire deep knowledge learner should be encouraged to talk about their learning while investigating projects. The teacher should promote knowledge as changing and contestable and encourage collaborative learning approaches in each context for learning.

- **Exploring what children learn**

A reflective teacher links real world problems and issues with learner's personal experiences, e.g. peace, human rights and conservation of the environment and use multimodal texts and information technology to investigate the world outside the classroom.

A reflective teacher should try to connect content to student's real world. When students can connect what they are studying with their own lives, it develops a deeper understanding of the content. They see the relevance and realize that this kind of learning can enlighten and enrich them personally. Instead of asking learners to discuss events from the past, we can connect historical case studies to the moral questions and dilemmas they face in their daily lives. Engaging students in this way enables them to understand that the choices people make has shaped history. Learners feel comfortable and enthusiastic in participating in a reflective classroom community and learn from each other.

They should provide opportunities for creative problem solving through substantive conversations, open-ended questions and resources. A reflective teacher should talk regularly about language — its use, construction, meaning structures and distinguishing features (spoken/written texts). Learner should be encouraged to begin to critically view their and others reflection when constructing their learning.

A reflective teacher should use conversations to develop critical reasoning, e.g. comparing similarities, differences, raising questions and applying new ideas. Learner's personal interests and experiences should be included when planning using the early learning areas assess what children know and can do with increasing independence in particular contexts for learning and development. They should actively involve learner to monitor and assess their own and others' learning. A reflective teacher should use and encourage narratives (i.e. personal stories, literary/cultural texts) considering learner's personal interests and needs.

Conclusion

Justification for reflection is not.... simply a matter of minimal necessity. It is rather a matter of desirability and a thing may be desirable, not because it is something that we could not do without, but because it transforms and enhances the quality of what we do and how we live.

- **Israel Scheffler**

So we can conclude that a reflective teacher is a builder of relationships, scaffolder and planner for learning. He/she always perceives himself/herself as a learner. Reflective practices facilitate self-monitoring and self-assessment for teachers. It helps teachers to access their teaching themselves by their own classroom experiences. It fosters teacher's growth. Reflective teaching practices helps teachers to make meaning from their classroom experiences and to take necessary steps towards improvements. Reflective practices in classroom improves quality of teaching-learning process. Teachers use their student's learning outcomes to investigate instructional techniques and resources that promoted teaching effectiveness. There are also challenges in reflective teaching practices. Teachers have less time to reflect as they have to complete their syllabus in prescribed time. Sometimes they resist change due to workload.

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