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DEVELOPING REFLECTIVE SKILLS OF FUTURE ENGLISH TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This research paper focuses on the development of reflective skills in teaching and learning, and provides diverse possible factors to enhance reflective skills of future educators of the English language. Moreover, some qualitative research methods such as observations and conducting interviews, a pre-post questionnaire to examine changes in the future English teachers' perceptions of reflective skills were employed. According to the results, the learners have improved their introspective skills somewhat. To support aspiring English teachers in enhancing their reflective skills, a more regimented practice teaching program, time, and plenty of opportunities for practice and reflection are required.

KEYWORDS

Reflective abilities, guided oral and written reflections, observations, teacher performance.

INTRODUCTION

Fostering reflective thinking in student teachers entails encouraging them to reflect on their experiences, evaluate their knowledge, beliefs, and values in light of these experiences, and explore possible courses of action (Ferraro, 2000). It is important to remember that reflection is a dynamic process. It is not about being passive, staying there, and looking back; rather, it is about actively engaging with knowledge and

experience. As a result, reflection helps you create fresh, deeper understanding and communicate information in a more meaningful way. The act of reflection frequently results in the reality of experience challenging theoretical learning. This is particularly crucial for professionals because it helps them start to understand the practice experience without discounting the fact that, beneath the surface of

practice, there are always values, presumptions, beliefs, and individual viewpoints that impact the practice and the experience of the practice.

The aim of the research is to investigate the methods, approaches, and tactics used to foster the reflective abilities of student teachers. These techniques included portfolios that offered facilitated oral and written reflections, post-lesson discussions, and lesson observation and evaluation. The role of a pedagogical advisor is framed by the current thinking on English as a Foreign Language instruction (EFL), which requires student teachers to develop their reflective thinking skills through employing a variety of approaches, strategies, and techniques, evaluating them and offering alternatives (Richards and Farrell, 2011). According to Boud, Keogh and Walker's model (1985) of understanding the process of reflection three basic stages are highlighted:

- returning to experience - a detailed recounting or recollection of the events
- attending to the feelings, both positive and negative, that have been prompted by the experience
- re-evaluating that experience in the light of these stages and the learner's intent, and self-knowledge, bringing in new knowledge that has been gained through the process.

THE STUDY

Barriers to obtain reflective skills

Many obstacles can prevent people from reflecting; they have lessons for both teachers and students. Some of these factors may be internal to the learner—these could include prior negative experiences, presumptions about one's ability or lack thereof, confidence, and self-awareness—while others may be external (people, environment, larger personal circumstances, social forces, including issues that might be associated with experiences of discrimination and oppression). To illustrate, assumptions about what is/is not possible, assumptions about how to learn, confidence/self confidence, previous (negative) experiences, expectations of others - expectations of self, inadequate preparation, environment, lack of space/time, tiredness and other barriers.

Possible solutions to develop reflective skills of student teachers.

Whereas there some possible strategies are suggested to enhance reflective skills. Initially, negative experiences should be replaced by positive experiences step by step. Secondly, indicating one good activity or commenting the interaction between the pupils and the teacher with reasons are appropriate continuation of developing reflective skills. Moreover, in the next stage it is expected to suggest alternatives to the less successful activities. One-on-one feedback should be taken into

consideration early on until the student teachers feel comfortable enough to hear remarks from the pedagogical advisor in front of others, since they tended to hold back while sharing their evaluations and thoughts during the post-lesson conversations. Program organizers should think about replacing post-lesson evaluations in the weekly team meetings—especially in the beginning—with individual meetings between the student teacher and his or her teacher educator because the student teachers did not always take criticism well.

This qualitative research work recommends available strategies to enhance reflective skills of future teachers in the following steps:

1) It is expected of teacher educators to be cognizant of the cultural norms and prior learning experiences that influence the conduct and effectiveness of student teachers. Consequently, teacher educators would need to adhere to a systematic three-year plan for pre-service teachers to build their reflective thinking skills in order to successfully integrate reflective practice.

A program like this should be centered around written reflections. It should also be planned out and carried out gradually. They will have to report in the first phase only in relation to positive experiences. In the second step, the negative experiences will be discussed along with any plausible explanations. The student

instructors will offer substitutes for the less successful activities at the third one.

2) Teacher educators are supposed to consider non-directive approaches instead of sternly confronting student teachers who refuse to consider the work of their colleagues. Offering a list of written questions, for instance, would be a wise move, particularly when the teaching practice is just getting started. Giving them access to such a list is intended to motivate them to report on their peers' performance and to think back on both their positive and negative experiences. The list would include the following: 1) Indicate one good activity in the observed lessons today. 2) How was the interaction between the pupils and the teacher? 3) Are you fully satisfied from the pupils' participation? In subsequent phases, the student teachers will have to justify their responses. They will be asked to offer alternatives to the less successful activities at the third stage.

3) One-on-one feedback should be taken into consideration early on until the student teachers feel comfortable enough to hear remarks from the pedagogical advisor in front of others, since they tended to hold back while sharing their evaluations and thoughts during the post-lesson conversations. Following the session, individual student teachers should meet with their school mentors to discuss the student's performance using a customized form that consists of both closed- and open-ended questions.

Open-ended questions should be used for commentary and reflection on the performance, with some closed questions pertaining to planning and others to the actual teaching. For example, the list of closed questions would include the following: 1) Which of the activities you used is the most satisfying? 2) Are you fully satisfied from the participation of the pupils? 3) How many new words have you taught

in your lesson today? At later stages, they will be required to add the reasoning for their answers.

4) Program organizers should think about replacing post-lesson evaluations in the weekly team meetings—especially in the beginning—with individual meetings between the student teacher and his or her teacher educator, as the student teachers did not always take criticism well. Furthermore, it is recommended to hold more regular one-on-one meetings with the pedagogical advisor. The pedagogical adviser will gradually bring in more students to these discussions to talk about typical problems that arise from the reflective forms.

5) It is important to first encourage student instructors to focus solely on their good experiences. They will eventually be expected to share their thoughts on unpleasant experiences, including justifications and recommendations for different approaches to teaching lessons in the future.

6) The goal of the workshop should be to assist student teachers in practicing reflective tactics in addition to helping them comprehend the importance of developing reflective abilities.

CONCLUSION

Encouraging student teachers to reflect on their experiences, assess their knowledge, values, and beliefs in light of these experiences, and come up with possible action plans is a key component in cultivating reflective thinking in them. Teaching and learning are now lifelong processes rather than being ends in and of themselves. Trial and error and investigation are constant processes. Consequently, student teachers are expected to be reflective thinkers, and teacher educators advise them.

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