



Reflection as the Ultimate Sine Qua Non for Quality Teaching

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Abstract

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At a large scale, worthwhile in its extreme depth, reflection must be reconsidered, in the Algerian tertiary education, as the blueprint which boosts teaching so as to make it of high quality. By articulating the advocated investigations at a sporadic frequency, a teacher as a reflective practitioner embarks indubitably, along his professional career, in a never ending quest of better teaching. This paper significantly underlines the overall academic and pedagogic situation which has, for so long, been imbued by a fatalistic apathy induced by cynical teaching which has turned to be endemic and enduring. What strikes dreadfully, is the fact that neither officials, nor academics have tried to restrain this situation which has taken, for years on end, a form of a silent conspiracy, worsened by the spur-of-the-moment decisions of government officials towards rehabilitation that also led unavoidably to a downright dismay. It is widely known, however, that the unique solution, as practised throughout the globe, is to engage teachers of tertiary education in ongoing formal bottom-up training by acquainting them with the concept of reflective teaching that would, by all means, lead to lucidity in teaching practice and at a later stage to quality teaching.

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1. Introduction

Because of the new reforms in the educational system that have been carried out in many countries of the world, the professional development of teachers (pre-service and in-service training) is going to new dimensions, which consists in putting teachers on the track of an on-going learning process, in which they are engaged deliberately to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their learners. These needs may be targeted by articulating in teaching classes, issues of methodology, language and pedagogy. Moreover, teachers' professional development has become, increasingly, important as a way to ensure teachers to succeed in enabling their learners develop proficiency in the target language accompanied by implications on the target culture. Nevertheless, what is unfortunate, in our country, is that in tertiary education teaching system, jobs still continue to be filled by under prepared, or even unprepared teachers. And when there is a pedagogic preparation, it is often striking, that it is neither coordinated nor structured. As a result, this has given birth to a chaotic situation from which arises many enquiries about the real causes that have led to deficiencies of teachers' preparation to methodology and pedagogy and, hence, to the poor achievement of learners in official examinations. The goal of this study is to unveil the real state of teacher pedagogic preparation and to analyse teachers' professional development, in tertiary education, which include pre-service training (at the level of university for would-be teachers) and in-service training (for working teachers). The analysis also extends to the probable undertaking by teachers of some of the exploratory tasks that enhance reflective teaching, which, in turn, entails the critical examination of experiences, knowledge and values, and understanding of the consequences teachers' teaching and continuous development.

Generally, teaching is evaluated by the professional development teachers have been subjected to. It is in fact the process that plays an essential role in successful education, in which teachers work under supervision to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students. Professional development is also considered as a bridge between would be teachers and experienced ones having the same objective which is guiding learners in achieving high standards of learning and development, added to the long route teachers have to undertake in order to reach high performances, qualifications and therefore the intended credentials in their profession. Hereby, teachers are urged to examine their practices, to reconsider them and to refine them for better. This is now widely and utterly known by reflective teaching.

2. Reflective Teaching

Reflective teaching is a process where teachers think over their teaching practices, analyzing how something was taught and how the practice might be improved or changed for better learning outcomes. Some points of consideration in the reflection process might be what is currently being done, why it's being done and how well students are learning. You can use reflection as way to simply learn more about your own practice, improve a certain practice (small groups and cooperative learning, for example) or to focus on a problem students are having.

In this respect, the process of reflection denotes by assertion that teachers who get involved in this trend become aware of their jobs' ends and purposes relatively to the changes they generate in their teaching practices. This means that this can be considered as the process of understanding and improving one's own teaching experience. It can be also stated that this process of learning to teach continues throughout a teacher's entire career and

whatever the accredited implemented approach is, teachers learn how to formulate the purposes and ends of their work, examine their values and assumptions and therefore generate new knowledge about teaching. Writing in the same context Webb pointed out that: “If we are to become more effective teachers, we need to become more reflective teachers. To be reflective we need to articulate out theories of learning, critically examine and then replace those parts which we suspect or, better still, can show do not work”. (1996, p.30)

When teachers are engaged in reflection on teaching they become monitors of their teaching practices which they can alter whenever the change appears to be profitable for their learners. This involvement in reflective teaching provides teachers with data and with procedures which can shape or structure myriad of activities which, in turn, generally lead to achievable objectives. Likewise, Pennington posits that “the term reflective teaching has come to signify a movement in teacher education, in which students teachers or working teachers analyze their own practice and its underlying basis, and then consider alternative means for achieving their ends.” (1992, p.48) She goes on writing “The use of the term reflection in the context of instruction can be interpreted in the sense of (1) thoughtful consideration, as well as in the sense of (2) mirroring, symbolizing or representing” (ibid). Further, this approach is teacher initiated and directed, rather than imposed from elsewhere because it involves instructors observing themselves, collecting data for self-evaluation and for change and for professional growth. When teachers develop a reflective practice over a long period of time at different levels of action, observation, analysis and planning, they would be able to articulate their own practical theories, critically examine them, compare them with alternative theories and revise them. Griffiths and Tann(1992). However, what is worth noting, is that reflection can be exerted either during the performance of a lesson in the classroom setting, or outside of it. Hereby, many writers have

emphatically theorised two distinctive temporal dimensions of reflection.

3. Practicability of Reflection

When we become reflective practitioner, it comes lucidly to minds that a critical regarding of the one’s teaching turns to be the absolute end product of many inquiries. These critical facts, can be tailored to the adoption of the approach we are articulating in classroom settings. Thereby, reflection should in no way be one-off, but must be ongoing until positive learning outcomes become clearly and surely achievable on a daily basis. There are two main reasons for doing this. The first is that we often have practices that are convenient in the short term but in the long term do not actually help learners to learn effectively. A second and more fundamental reason for thinking critically is that we do not teach in a vacuum (Hillier, 2005). When teachers think critically about their present practice, their future practice will benefit, and they develop their theoretical understanding of their own purpose as educators (Benade, 2016).

So, reflection should take an important place in the teaching concept at, as it is through reflection that the teacher will be able to develop his sense of how theory feeds into practice. It has a central role to play in the cycle of teaching and learning.

The importance of reflection in tertiary education, and across disciplinary fields is widely recognized; it is generally included in University graduate attributes, professional standards and programme objectives. Furthermore, reflection is commonly embedded into assessment requirements in tertiary education subjects, often without necessary scaffolding or clear expectations for students (Mary & Michael, 2012).

To reflect means to remember with thoughtful consideration, come to recollect, imagine an alternative teaching practice; realize or consider in a course of thought. The term reflection is used to refer to deliberate thinking about something that has already taken place. Many definitions are given:

According to literature dealing with reflective teaching, the roots of the term reflection are traced back to Dewey (1933) and his influential book “How we think: a re-statement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educational process”, and to Schön (1983), (1987), (1991).

Also, reflection or “critical reflection, refers to an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to 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. Bartlett (1990) points out “*how to*” questions and asking “*what*” and “*why*” questions that regard instructions and managerial techniques not as ends in themselves, but as part of broader educational purposes. Asking “what and why” questions give us a certain power over our teaching. We could claim that the degree of autonomy and responsibility we have in our work as teachers is determined by the level of control we can exercise over our actions.

Moreover, Pennington (1992) says that “The use of the term reflection in the context of instruction can be interpreted in the sense of (1) thoughtful consideration, as well as in the sense of (2) mirroring, symbolizing or representing”.

Reflective practice can be an important tool in practice-based professional learning settings where people learn from their own professional experiences, rather than from formal learning or knowledge transfer. It

may be the most important source of personal professional development and improvement. It is also an important way to bring together theory and practice; through reflection a person is able to see and label forms of thought and theory within the context of his or her work (McBrien, 2007).

Note that a person who reflects throughout his or her practice is not just looking back on past actions and events, but is taking a conscious look at emotions, experiences, actions, and responses, and using that information to add to his or her existing knowledge base and reach a higher level of understanding (Colin & Chapman, 2013). According to Mary & Michael (2012), most researchers and commentators agree that there are different types or hierarchical levels of reflection .

Researchers	Levels of Reflection
Giroux (1988), Kincheloe (2003)	Critique serves to cultivate students’ abilities to question, deconstruct and reconstruct their own practices and imagine an alternative reality.
Bain et al (2002)	5Rs framework of Reporting, Responding, Relating, Reasoning and Reconstructing.
Leonardo (2004), Kalantzis & Cope (2008)	Such reflection is underpinned by a transformative approach to learning that sees the pedagogical process as one of knowledge transformation rather than knowledge transmission.

<p>Tarlier (2005)</p>	<p>Critical reflection can be used to facilitate ‘multiple ways of knowing’ as opposed to scientific evidence as a singular basis of practice in nursing.</p>
<p>Moon (2006)</p>	<p>Academic or professional reflection, as opposed to personal reflection, generally involves a conscious and stated purpose.</p>
<p>Mezirow, (2006)</p>	<p>When students are provided with opportunities to examine and reflect upon their beliefs, philosophies and practices, they are more likely to see themselves as active change agents and lifelong learners within their professions.</p>
<p>Grossman (2008)</p>	<p>Students can be scaffolded at each level to produce more productive reflections.</p>
<p>Barney & Mackinlay (2010)</p>	<p>Reflective journaling to write about and discuss both emotional and intellectual discomforts, and through this discursive exchange, to transform their ways of knowing</p>

	<p>about identity and learning.</p>
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Table1: Hierarchical levels of reflection .
(Mary & Michael (2012))

4. Preparation at the University

This is the initial stage where teacher education programmes are intended for entrants or would-be teachers who have not started working in the classroom. These would-be teachers, apart from the taught theoretical module wherein they learn the main teaching objectives of a variety of approaches, methods, techniques, they complete their master degree in English language with no teaching experience. Moreover, the programmes at this level are devoid of both entry and exit profiles, which can guide teacher trainers to set up objectives of each training course that must be achieved by the end of the in-service training. Therefore, many of the would-be teachers are sent to the Secondary schools with no experience in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language.

What is worthy to highlight is that university teachers who are in charge of teaching theoretical methodology continue to teach as before, focusing on the transmission of declarative knowledge about teaching, the way they learned to teach when themselves were university students. This is emphatically due to the absence of an official curriculum characterising the LMD system which includes the notions that define the nature of pre-service training and offer various visions of the core knowledge that teachers must possess and the way they must learn it. Likewise, these concepts of curriculum define what future teachers must learn and know in order to teach and in what way they must learn and know it.

Practically, teachers at the level of university must set up a model of pre-service training in which university ensures the theoretical knowledge, methods and skills, and provides

settings in which future teachers apply that knowledge and integrate all its elements in the way it needs to be done. Further, at the level of the university, the other disciplines are often taught unreliably to practice since they can contribute greatly in the acquisition of practical teaching. Relatively, these disciplines provide future teachers with tools in the form of theoretical, cultural and critical knowledge that would be truly useful to them in some classroom situations. As a matter of facts, many novice teachers are given demanding teaching schedules and do not have much opportunity to get involved in any activity for professional development. As a result many teaching jobs are filled by under prepared or even unprepared teachers, and many of them lack confidence in teaching methodology. This is because of their undergraduate courses which are often based on, apart from the subject matter of Teacher Education Development (TED), modules that have not the tiniest relation with didactics and deal very little with teaching practice. Generally, teachers with a deep lack of methodology, because of a non-structured and a non-coordinated teacher preparation, will never have the chance to get on more knowledge in in-service training that is after post graduation. Academic programmes around the globe, mostly MA TESOL and certificate programmes do a good job of developing knowledge, skills, and habits in teachers. (Freeman 1982). Prospective teachers are expected to come on their first day of class ready in ways that are effective, efficient, and appropriate to the learner's needs, but alas this is not the case in the Algerian context. On a worthier side, educators and teacher trainers insist nowadays, that language teachers, all along their professional development, should be involved in the new trend of teacher education development. Consequently, many pedagogues believe that workshops, within in-service training study days or seminars, are the most suitable academic setting wherein teachers can be acquainted by this concept because, simply, in workshops they have the possibility to exchange their teaching practices and experience with their colleagues.

5. Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to lay the ground for an empirical investigation whose objective is to analyse the EFL teaching practices, and through which we see to what extent, these practices are reformulated and reconsidered according to their beliefs and assumptions about tertiary teaching so that the change brings about improvement and betterment among both teachers and learners. Accordingly, in this study both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used. In order to check the accuracy of informants' responses, a questionnaire was administered to twenty EFL university teachers of different ranks. The questionnaire is chosen as an eligible and effectual research instrument, since it offers the possibility to gather a great amount of reliable data from anonymous informants in a very short period of time.

6. Questionnaire

If a teacher never questions the goals of his teaching or never examines his assumptions within the context in which he is involved, then it is believed that this individual is not engaged in reflective teaching. Viewing teachers as reflective practitioners assumes that teachers can both pose and solve problems related to their educational practice. Daily, hourly, even minute by minute, should teachers attempt to solve problems that are generally raised in the classroom. In this respect, the process of reflection denotes by assertion that teachers should be aware of their jobs' ends and purposes they have to thoroughly examine. The questionnaire therefore, backed up by eleven questions, on team working skills, decision making skills and beliefs and assumption skills, offers the possibility to concretise the afore-mentioned study's ends. Below are the results of the submitted questionnaire:

Rubric 1: Team working skills

Q1. Do you join a special group of teachers for the intent to refine your pedagogical practices?

Never 45% sometimes 25% always 30%

Q2. Do you keep your successful teaching in secret and never share with others?

Never 50% sometimes 25% always 25%

Q3. When in pedagogical troubles, do you seek help and ask for advice?

Never 10 % sometimes 55% always 35%

Q4 Have you ever solicited a peer to observe you while teaching and comment on your teaching?

Never 70% sometimes 20% always 10%

Q5. Were these observations judgmental and evaluative?

Never 40% sometimes 30% always 30%

Rubric2: Decision making skills

Q1. Do you keep teaching the same lecture with the same teaching practices for many years to many group of learners?

Never 50% sometimes 25% always 25%

Q2. Does each of your teaching session has a specific objective?

Never 25% sometimes 50% always 25%

Q3. Do you adapt and create new strategies for students' needs and situations?

Never 20% sometimes 40% always 40%

Rubric3: Beliefs and assumption skills

Q1. Are you applying in your teaching what you learnt in your formal training?

Never 20% sometimes 40% always 40%

Q2. Do you feel that you are acquiring Further experience from your teaching?

Never 40% sometimes 10% always 50%

Q3. Is teaching nowadays taking a form cynism and inertia?

Never 60% sometimes 20% always 20%

7. Data interpretation

It is high time we asserted that training courses in Algeria whether presets or insets can be criticized for a considerable number of shortcomings. Actually, many prospective teachers have become teachers without adequate preparation in TEFL methodology. Moreover, owing to the succeeding methods and approaches, many teachers have barely benefited from training for the newly global teaching methodologies. However, this has led to a low quality of teaching English as a foreign language which prevails now at different levels in our universities We can even say that the situation is now chaotic because of the inadequate presets, absence of insets, lengthy and non-adapted to the LMD system programmes as practised all over the world for advanced learners and of course a flagrant confusion about the teaching skills etc... What is also growing worse is that official decisions have become undesirable, contradictory and liable to give rise to nebulous teaching situations.

The need for teacher education development arises from the inadequacy of training courses, which alone cannot fully enable teachers to be dynamic and competent in their job. But in the Algerian context we are diverting the counteraction with which we can lessen the difficulties encountered by both the teachers and the learners. Moreover, hopefully, along with teacher training teacher development can be a vital component in teacher education, it can fill the gap in training by giving teachers opportunities to reflect on classroom practice, gain insight into teaching experiences, view education as a long-term process and deal with change and divergence. Unfortunately nothing has been done, in this respect, to trace out for teachers a way of teaching full of determination and commitment.

8. Limitations

This study is only limited to the department of English of the Faculty of Letters and Languages in Tlemcen University. However, it can be assumed that without accredited teacher education development, the flagrant lenience which has prevailed on end has never been restrained by any political decision. Therefore the situation in Tlemcen University can generalised to the whole country.

9. Recommendations

As an official substitute to continuous professional development, reflections is by all means put at the vanguard of any educational system throughout the whole globe Dymoke & Harrison(2008) recommend to teachers of tertiary education to undertake the following reflective skills:

- **Observation Skill**

The tools of observation take account of noticing teachers feeling and behaviours, and include noticing, marking and recording in order to distinguish something from its surrounding.

- **Communication Skill**

Communication tools in relation to reflective practice can be developed in a variety of ways: through the keeping of a personal learning journal or diary, or through a more formal professional portfolio, supported by a system of formal tutorials with a mentor.

- **Beliefs and assumptions Skill**

In order to analyse a classroom, event or situation, teachers should try to be absolutely clear what that event or situation consists of. As a judge, it is important to find the best idea and not wait for the perfect idea.

- **Team working Skill**

Teacher will find themselves working in a number of teams from the start of their teaching career. Co-teaching, collaborative practitioner enquiry and action research are tools that prop team working skill of teachers.

10. Conclusion

Educators, trainers and others must give a concerted attention to the dynamics of new ways of teaching so as to launch a well-prepared teaching work force. These new ways may offer the teachers the opportunity to integrate the passions, beliefs and judgements. Teachers, as it is known, cannot, on their own, solve the many educational issues confronting the school. Such a fact has tremendously contributed in giving rise to the reluctance among teachers to take on new responsibilities which can alter the overwhelming

unsuccessful and more importantly ineffective teaching practices. The remedy of such shortcomings is believed to be possible only through reflective teaching. It is, then, assumed that the teacher who reflects on his teaching becomes more skilled, more capable, and in general a better teacher. Likewise, if teachers can demonstrate growth based on their own self-evaluation and the product of their investigative practices, they will be equipped to exercise control over their teaching, to critically question educational reforms to support teaching as a respectable task, and to demand the appropriate recognition in their society.

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