Reflective practice in teaching

Education, Special Education

Reflective Practice in the context of teaching ESOL Reflective practice engages practitioners in a continuous cycle of self-observationand self-evaluation in order to understand their own actions and the reactions they prompt in themselves and in learners (Brookfield, 1995; Thiel, 1999). Reflective practice is considered as an evolving concept which views learning as " an active process of reviewing an experience of practice in order to describe, analyse, evaluate and so inform learning about practice. (Reid, B 1993 cited in Garfat, T. 2005). In my opinion, implementing reflective practice approach to professional development in order to expand our knowledge is a challenge. This challenge involvesteacher's ability to " reflect on his or her practice" in order to " bring about change and improvement", especially in the ESOL context that is represented by variety of learner groups, curricula, available resources, and amount and type of teacher preparation (Schellekens, 2007, p. 199).

To me, nowadays, teaching students to meet their requirements does not only involve the effective and professional use of methodology, training and concept alone. I think that it is all about the ability of integrating both theory and practice with highly exploratory process of reflective practice. I consider reflective practice as a reflective professional development tool, which I treat merely as a personal low-tech way of incorporating reflective practice in day-to-day classroom teaching in order to make my class more effective.

Developing own reflective orcritical thinkingskills should engage various aspects of teaching, such as preparation process, receiving feedback form the learners, self-evaluation process, feedback or criticism from the

colleagues, statistical data, teacher's diary, training/development and own teaching experience.

According to The Institute for Learning's policy statement on professional formation, reflective practice is a professional requirement to show reflection on the impact of professional development (Lifelong Learning UK, 2007). The Institute's online personalised learning space, REfLECT, requires teachers to submit variety of individual reflective practice evidence that includes: *self evaluation– an individual analysis of the applicant's learning needs andgoalsfor the next 12 months, * professional development planning – n individualised learning plan detailing the actions the applicant will take to address the needs and goals identified through self assessment, * reflective practice – reflection on the impact of professional development on the applicant's teaching practice, the benefit to learners and wider communities of practice: could include, or be a mix of, a personal reflection on the impact of CPD, peer review, learner observations, observation of teaching and learning, collaborative working, etc. (IfL, 2008)

The models of reflection, which I have chosen to mention in this paper, promote looking at what has been learned and planning how those lessons can be applied if similar experiences re-occur. The two models of reflective practice in the context of teaching are: Brokfield's model of four reflective " lenses" and The Reflective Cycle by Gibbs (1988). 1. Brookfield's model of four critically reflective lenses In his " model of four critically reflective lenses", Brookfield (1995) suggests that we should make use of the four " critical lenses" through which to view and reflect upon our teaching practice,

and he suggests the following: 1. ur own view (which he refers to asautobiography); 2. that of our students; 3. that of our fellow professionals; 4. and the various theoretical perspectives propounded in educational literature. Brookfield treats teacher'spersonal experienceas the most important insight into teaching to which teachers have access, and this personal experience should combine both: considerations of classroom and lesson management as well as whether or not thelearning experiencewas a profitable one for the students.

By talking to colleagues about what happened in the classroom, not only may we find solutions to problems but also share and broaden our teaching experience. (Brookfield, 1995; p. 31-36). 2. The Reflective Cycle by Gibbs (1988) Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988) encourages a clear description of the situation, analysis of feelings, evaluation of the experience, and analysis to make sense of the experience to examine what you would do if the situation arose again. This straightforward and therefore useful cycle appeals to me in several aspects. An incident is identified and thought about to provide a description of what happened.

The abstract aspects of the situation - the emotional dimension - are taken into account and reflected upon. This has to be done because if I can stand back from what happened and identify how I felt then those feelings can be evaluated. In the light of reflection I could see how perhaps extremes of emotion affected my outlook and thus actions. Was there anything positive that could be carried forward into the future or negative that needs to be

addressed? Is it possible to find the cause of these positive and negative aspects that I might examine later?

This analysis allows me to break down the incident into smaller parts that made up the situation. The question I ask myself is: What were the issues, key factors and influences and how did they combine to bring about the incident? Once I have this deeper understanding drawn from all the information I have about the situation I can try to work out what else could have been done at the time. Having concluded what, upon reflection, would have been the way to address the situation I can produce an action plan for the next time the same situation arises.

By applying this reflective practice cycle to similar situations the outcome should be steady, gradual improvement, associated with stimulating personal and professional growth, and closing the gap between theory and practice. DESCRIPTION My reflection below describes a critical incident involving my 17 year old, Entry 1 ESOL student from Somalia with undifferentiated Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). In undifferentiated ADD, the primary and most significant characteristic is inattentiveness but hyperactivity is not present. The student manifests problems with organization and distractibility, even though he may seem quite and passive.

The symptoms I noticed in the classroomenvironmentincluded: * a short attention p, * occasionally impulsive behaviour, * difficulty sitting still, * a tendency to express the wrong answer, * inconsistent levels of task-attentiveness, * a tendency to appear forgetful as the consequence of inadequate access to actually well-stored information, * inconsistent levels of

task-completeness, often losing things necessary for tasks * an appearance of being forgetful, when in fact the information was never really received or processed, * compromised summarization/paraphrasing competencies.

FEELINGS I have found myself wondering whether this student might have a learning disability about three months ago as I noticed that his learning issue, ADD, is impeding his progress in English. At times I was also slightly frustrated with the students' classroom behaviour and lack of hisacademicprogress. I was advised to take a " wait and see" approach to this case. I decided that there must be a better way of handling these exceptional students.

In order to help me understand the complexity of the issue I decided to do extensive research on students with ADD and ADHD and how to tackle the issues in class, as well as how to help my student achieve in ESOL. EVALUATION After careful evaluation why my student may advance through his ESOL studies at a slower rate than their peers and having done a detailed " tick-off" evaluation sheet of all of the symptoms I noticed during lessons, I decided to explore future solutions to this problem.

Extensive research about students with ADD and ADHD helped me understand the complexity of the issue and how to tackle the issues in class. It really motivated me to find out how to help my student achieve in ESOL. ANALYSIS During my reflections after each lesson and reflective analysis of the student's action during lessons, I thought it was essential to uncover his special needs before he could get into disciplinary trouble, lose all self-

esteem, or drop out of school. I realised that a " wait and see" approach is this case was not a way to go.

Instead, I should act fast and refer this student to be professionally assessed by the Educational Psychologist and organise a Study Support Assistant. In conclusion, I became conscious of the fact that having a specialeducationaide in the ESOL classroom, cross-training of special education and ESOL teachers, and making resources on this topic (literature and trained staff) more available, would be of great help in recognising such learning difficulties and dealing with them on regular day-to-day basis of ESOL teaching. CONCLUSION

On the positive side, this reflective practice raised my awareness of the numerous reasons some ESOL students may reveal through inappropriate behaviour and/or limited language learning progress. I have learnt and I will continue to observe such students, incorporating teaching strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities in the classroom, analyse teaching and learning process to help them, make adjustments in delivery of the language when dealing with students with ADD/ADHD, and promptly refer students that present truly special education needs.

On a slightly negative side, the previous teacher did not identify the student's problems early enough or did not have enough evidence to justify my student's ADD/ADHD as a potential threat to his achievement in ESOL class. I started teaching this student about three months ago but it was only a month and a half ago when I started applying various strategies to meet his individual learning needs to help him success in ESOL despite his ADHD,

such as: student monitoring, self management, discipline, and encouragement.

In more detail, I provided supervision and discipline through enforcing classroom rules consistently, encouraging him to positive self-talk, trying to be very patient with him, avoiding all distracting stimuli and transitions, physical relocation, changes in schedule, and disruptions, developing an extensive individual learning program, simplifying instructions, giving extra time for certain tasks. I strongly believe that his learning difficulties should ave been identified much earlier and appropriate strategies put in place at the beginning of the course. ACTION PLAN Next year, I am planning to apply the background information obtained by this reflective practice in the new group of ESOL young learners and to relay it to my colleagues. I will also connect with a special education professional who will be happy to observe my ESOL students next year and to provide assistance with strategies to use in my classroom, if the students with learning difficulties are going to be identified.

I will also research some literature resources to educate myself more about placement procedures for students with special education needs, practical reading strategies for ESOL students with learning disabilities, and teaching teens with ADD and ADHD. As the most immediate action plan, I shall incorporate special reading and writing strategies for the student with ADD/ADHD. These may include the following strategies.

However, the student will be required to give me feedbacks which of them works best for him, and these include: * Using " previewing" strategies by

being aware of the following reading problems: 1. Reversals when reading (i. e. , " was" for " saw", " on" for " no", etc.) 2. Reversals when writing (b for d, p for q, etc.) 3. Transposition of letters and numbers (12 for 21, etc.) 4.

Loss of place when reading, line to line and word to word * Shortening or lengthening the amount of required reading * For all assignments, clearly identifying expectations in writing * Making required book lists available prior to the first day of class to allow students to begin their reading early or to have texts put on tape * Encouraging the use of books-on-tape to support students reading assignments * Providing students with chapter outlines, or handouts, that highlight key points in their readings * Having students make a chart similar to the one below of their strengths and challenges so that they, as well as I, can learn from their perceptions of how well they read, write, remember, listen, speak, attend and get ideas out. Skills| Strengths| Challenges| Comments| Reading| | | | Writing| | | | Memory| | | | Listening| | | | Speaking| | | | Attention| | | | Getting Ideas Out| | | | To sum up, reflective practice is perhaps best understood as an approach which promotes autonomous learning that aims to develop students' understanding and critical thinking skills.

It also helps students to understand that learning is individual. It is an act of being able to reflect on our strengths, weaknesses and areas for development. It is also an emotional response that complements our knowledge and what we understand about a subject, and which enables us to act in a situation. Personally, I strongly agree that the importance of reflecting on what we are doing, as part of the learning process, is one of the

defining characteristics of teaching professional practice. References * Brookfield, S. (1995) Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher. San Francisco: Jossey Bass * The Excellence Gateway http://excellencegateway. org. k/tlp/cpd/assets skills_life_basic_key. rtf (accessed 13/05/2011) * Gibbs, G. (1988) Learning by Doing: A guide to Teaching and Learning Methods. Oxford: Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic. * The Institute for Learning http://www. IfL. ac. uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/4640/ProfessionalFormationStatement. pdf (Accessed 13/5/11) * Lifelong Learning UK, 2007, New Professional Standards for Teachers, Tutors and Trainers in the Lifelong Learning Sector. http://www. lluk. org/documents/professional_standards_for_itts_020107. pdf (Accessed 05/5/2011) * Reflection Models http://www. brainboxx. co. uk/a3_aspects/pages/ReflectionModels. tm (Accessed 16/05/2011) * Root, C. - A Guide to Learning Disabilities for the ESL Classroom Practitioner http://www. cc. kyoto-su. ac. jp/information/tesl-ej/ej01/a. 4. html (Accessed 16/05/2011) * Schellekens, P. 2007. The Oxford ESOL Handbook. Oxford: Oxford University Press. * Strategies For Teaching Students with Attention Deficit Disorder (AD/HD) http://www. as. wvu. edu/~scidis/add. html#sect0 (Accessed 16/05/2011) Professional Values and Ethics Values are enduring beliefs, both hard-wired (meaning acquired genetically) and shaped by cultural context, about preferred " end states" (Urbany, Reynolds, & Phillips, 2008, p. 75).

According to Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2009), ethics is discipline dealing with good and evil and with moral duty or moral principles and practice. Professional ethics and values guide the decision-making process of

all companies and organizations. Most businesses and organizations state their values and ethics in their mission statement and in their code of ethics. The professional ethics and values of a business or organization will set the tone of how they conduct their operations, how they interact with customers and how employees interact with each other. Sources of Professional Values and Ethics The three groups include the Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs (CEJA), Ethics Resource Center and the Institute for Ethics.

The CEJA develops ethics policy for the American Medical Association by preparing reports that analyze and addresses ethical issues (AMA, 2009). The Ethics Resource Center develops practical solutions for physicians who are confronted with ethical challenges and provides continuing education and outreach programs for medical students, practicing physicians, and residents. The Institute for Ethics is an academic research and training center on ethics inhealthcare. The Institute covers issues such as, professionalism, health information policy and health preparedness (AMA, 2009). Association of American Educators (AAE) The ethical conduct toward students outlines how teachers should interact and communicate with their students. This principle states that teachers hould takeresponsibilityto ensure that students learn qualities that will help them evaluate the consequences of and accept the responsibility for their actions and choices. The second principle, ethical conduct toward practice and performance instructs teachers on assuming responsibility andaccountabilityfor their performance and maintaining the dignity of their profession. Ethical conduct toward practice and performance also covers official policies and laws. The third principle, ethical conduct toward professional colleagues discusses

issues such as confidentiality among colleagues, and making false accusations about colleagues or the school system.

The final principle, ethical conduct toward parents and community includes issues such as, effectively communicating with parents, respecting the values and traditions of the diverse cultures, and manifesting a positive and active role in school/communities. Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) How Ethics and Values Affect Success Professional ethics and values can have both positive and negative affects on a business' or organizations' success, " Values, whether neutral, virtuous or not so virtuous, drive our decision making" (Urbany, Reynolds, & Phillips, 2008, p. 76). Many companies have made millions using unethical strategies, while others have been destroyed by them. For example, several banks were lendingmoneyto individuals who they knew could never pay back the entire amount owed as a result most of the banks went bankrupt.

However, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the biggest offender in this situation was bailed out by the government with a slap on the wrist. On the other hand, there are several companies that pride themselves in choosing to make the tough ethical decisions. For example, companies that recall millions of dollars worth of products to ensure their customers safety, or companies that choose to operate in the United States although they could operate at a lower cost outside of the United States. Conclusion {text: bookmark-start} {text: bookmark-end} References American Medical Association (AMA). (2009). American Medical Association. Retrieved from

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