

Strengthening Teacher Professionalism Through Reflective Teaching Approaches

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Abstract: One of the core components of teacher knowledge is reflective knowledge which is defined as the teacher's capacity to reflect on and assess his or her own practice. In other words, as teachers, they should be able to do reflective teaching. Reflective teaching is the teacher's thinking about what happens in the classroom lessons, and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals and aims (Cruickshank and Zeichner in Richard and Nunan 1990). This paper discusses reflective teaching as a means of professional development.

Keywords: *reflective teaching, teacher, teacher professional development*

INTRODUCTION

According to the Regulation of Indonesian Education Minister No. 16 year 2007 about Teacher's Academic Qualification and Competence, it is stated that one of the standard competencies of being teachers which is related to Pedagogical aspects is that teachers should be able to do reflection. By means of reflection, teachers should do the following activities. First of all, teachers should do reflection on the teaching that has been conducted. Teachers should also use the reflection results for improvement and development of the subjects they teach. Finally, teachers should conduct classroom action research to improve the quality of their teaching.

It is in line with what is stated by Richard (2001). According to him one of the core components of teacher knowledge is reflective knowledge which is defined as the teacher's capacity to reflect on and assess his or her own practice. In summary, as teachers, they should be able to do reflective teaching. Reflective teaching is the teacher's thinking about what happens in the classroom lessons, and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals and aims (Cruickshank and Zeichner in Richard and Nunan, 1990). Furthermore they stated that the goals of reflecting teaching is to engender good habits of thought. That is why, reflective teaching is regarded as an inquiry intended to help teachers improve their practice. Therefore, improvement of teaching may be achieved through reflection. Reflecting teaching is also regarded as one way to develop teacher professionalism.

Although reflective teaching is very important for teacher professional development, it seems that most of Indonesian teachers are reluctant to do it because of several reasons. One of them is because teachers do not have well understanding about how to do reflection. They also do not have time for doing reflection because they have many things to do related to administrative matters. Therefore, this paper discusses Reflective Teaching as a Means of Teacher Professional Development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Teacher

To improve the quality of teaching there are several aspects to be considered. One of them is the teacher. Many scholars defined the term “teacher” differently. A teacher has been defined as a person who has knowledge, skills and special trainings in teaching, explaining and educating. Mbise (2008) said that a teacher is a person who is capable of creating behavioral change in terms of cognitive, psychomotor as well as effective domain. Moreover, according to Bartlett in Richard and Nunan (1990), the term teacher is defined as someone who engages learners, who seeks to engage each person wholly-mind, sense of self, range of interests and interactions with other people in learning (Duckworth 1986 in Richard and Nunan 1990). Furthermore, according to the Indonesian Government Regulation No. 74 year 2008 about teacher, it is stated that a teacher is a professional educator who has jobs to educate, teach, guide, direct, exercise, examine, and evaluate learners. In conclusion, teacher is a person who transfers knowledge and educate learners.

Teacher Professional Development

The word profession means different things to different people. But at its core, profession is meant to be an indicator of trust and expertise. Profession is also meant by admission of doing a certain job. To be considered as a profession, a certain occupation need to fulfill the following traits (Goode: 1960): (1) The profession determines its own standard of education and training. (2) The student professional goes through a more far reaching adult socialization experience than learners in other occupations. (3) Professional practice is often legally recognized by some form of licensure. (4) Licensing and admission board are mined by members of the profession. (5) Most legislation concerned with the profession is shaped by that profession. (6) The occupation gain incomes, power, prestige and, ranking and demand higher caliber students. (7) The practitioner is relatively free of lay evaluation and control. (8) The norm of practice enforced by the profession are more stringent than legal control. (9) Members are more strongly identified and affiliated with the profession than are members of other occupations of theirs. The profession is more likely to be a terminal of occupation.

Meanwhile According to Lortie (1975) in Richard (2001), a profession is characterized by: a homogeneous consensual knowledge base, restricted entry, " high social status, self-regulation and the legal right to govern daily work affairs.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that teacher is regarded as a profession. Richard (2001) argued that there is a much greater awareness today that an expert language teacher is a highly skilled professional. It is also mentioned in the Indonesian Teacher and Lecturer Law No. 14 year 2005 that teacher and lecturer are regarded as specific occupation done based on certain professional principles.

Talking about teacher as a profession, it cannot be separated from teacher professional development. Teacher professional development is defined as teachers’ learning; how they learn to learn and how they apply their knowledge in practice to support pupil’s learning. (Postholm ; 2012). Professional development is also defined as activities that develop an individual’s skill, knowledge, expertise, and other characteristics as a teacher. The activities are as the followings:

- a. *Conference participation*: Teachers can participate in professional conferences and seminars networking with other teachers and learning about, trends, issues, and practices.
- b. *Workshops and in-service seminars*: Specialists from outside the school or staff from the school can offer workshops and seminars on topics of interest to the staff.
- c. *Reading groups*: Teachers can put together reading groups and read and discuss articles or books of interest.
- d. *Peer observation*: Teachers can take turns observing each other's classes as a basis for critical reflection and discussion about teaching approaches.

- e. *Writing about teaching*: Teachers can keep a reflective diary or journal and share it with colleagues.
- f. *Project work*: Teachers can be given the opportunity to develop projects such as classroom materials, videos, and other teaching resources.
- g. *Action research*: Teachers can conduct small-scale classroom research on their teaching. (Richards and Lockhart 1994)

Reflective Teaching

Definition of Reflection

As it is stated previously that one of the standard competencies of being a teacher is to be able to do reflection on the teaching that has been conducted. In other words, teachers should be able to do Reflective teaching. Reflective teaching is the teacher's thinking about what happens in the classroom lessons, and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals and aims (Cruickshank and Zeichner in Richard and Nunan, 1990) Improvement of teaching may be achieved through reflection.

Reflection is more than thinking and focuses on the day to day classroom teaching of the individual teacher as well as the institutional structures in which teacher and students work. Kemmis (1986) described the meaning of reflection as follows:

Reflection is not just individual, psychological process. It is an action oriented, historically-embedded, social and political frame, to locate oneself in the history of situation, to participate in social activity, and to take side on issues. Moreover, the material on which reflection works is given to us socially and historically; through reflection and the action which it informs, we may transform the social relations which characterize our work and our working situation.

Reflection therefore has a double meaning. It involves the relationship between an individual's thought and action and the relationship between an individual teacher and his or her membership in a larger collective called as society. The first relationship involves the subjective meaning in teachers' heads. Meanwhile, the second relationship explores consciously the relationship (which may be a part of unconscious knowledge) between individual teaching actions and the purposes of education in society.

Meanwhile, Dewey's conceptualization of reflection assumes three constituent elements (Loughran 1996 in Richard and Nunan): open-mindedness, whole heartedness and responsibilities. Furthermore, Loughran explains these elements in this way:

Open-mindedness, as the term suggests, is the ability to consider problems in new and different ways, to be open to new ideas and thoughts that one may not have previously entertained,...whole heartedness is displayed when one is thoroughly involved in a subject or cause....Responsibility is bounded up in the need to consider the consequences of one's actions. It is the need to know why; to seek the meaning in what is being learnt. Intellectual responsibility underpins knowing why something is worth believing.

Process of Reflection

A lot of experts have proposed several processes of reflection inquiry. One of the ideas was formulated by Dewey (1933) in Bartlett (1990). Dewey's statement reinforces the need to consider a number of principles that guide a process by which teachers can become reflective:

1. The issue upon which the teacher reflects must occur in the social context where teaching occurs.
2. The teacher must be interested in the problem to be resolved.
3. The issue must be owned by the teacher – that is derived from his or her practice.
4. Reflection on the issue involves problem solving from the teaching situation in which the reader is located.
5. Ownership of the identified issue and its solution is vested in the teacher.
6. Systematic procedures are necessary.
7. Information (observations) about the issue must be derived from the teacher's experience of teaching.
8. The teacher's ideas need to be tested through the practice of teaching.
9. Ideas about teaching, once tested through practice, must lead to some course of action. There is a tension between idea and action which is reflective; once it is tested the action rebounds back on the idea which informed it.
10. Hence, reflective action may be transformed into new understandings and redefined practice in teaching.

Based on those statements proposed by Dewey (1933), it can be concluded that not only must reflective teaching be reflective but also that there is a cycle of activity in the process.

Cycles of Reflections

The cycles of activity in the reflection process consists of five elements: mapping, informing, contesting, appraising and acting. All elements are constituting the process of reflective teaching but the elements are not linear or sequential. It means that in reflecting on your teaching you may pass through several cycles several times, hence the process becomes reflexive; One element is not always or necessarily followed by the next element in the cycle and an element may be omitted in moving through the cycle, especially with different courses of actions are adopted.

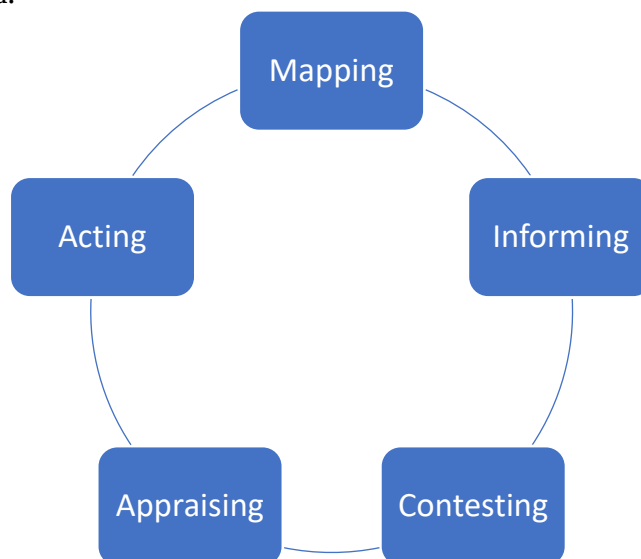


Figure 1. The elements of a cycle for the process of reflective teaching (Adapted from Mc Taggart and Kemmis 1983; Smyth 1987)

a. Mapping

According to Bartlett in Richard and Nunan (1990), mapping involves observation and collection of evidence about our teaching. When doing observation, the best means is to record our practice which can be done by audio or visual means (tape recording a lesson, using

photography, etc). However, the best means would seem to involve some form of writing. (Bartlett in Richard and Nunan, 1990). It is because in writing, a teacher begins not only to observe, but also takes the first step in reflecting on and about our practice.

The emphasis of mapping by using some form of writing is on a teacher's individual observation. One way of recording is by keeping a diary or journal. According to Bailey in Richard and Nunan (1990), a diary study is a first person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analyzed for recurring patterns or salient events. Holly and Tripp (1987) in Richard and Nunan (1990) also describe in some details how to start and what to do in keeping a journal which may be descriptive or thoughtfully analytical about teaching. The emphasis in this phase of reflection is on description. Therefore, the journal is more like a ship's log, where what happened and who involved form the main part of the record.

Teachers' writing will be about their routine and conscious action in the classroom; conversations with pupils; critical incidents in a lesson; their personal lives as teachers ; their beliefs about teaching; events outside classroom that they think influence their teaching; their views about language teaching, and learning.

There are some important points which seem worthy of mention in writing for reflection as stated by Bartlett in Richard and Nunan (1990). First, focus on specific teaching problem which can be improved. Next, keep the problem small; it means keep your observations focus on a particular aspect of teaching. Write in your own language of everyday experience, voicing your descriptions and concerns freely. Begin writing immediately after teaching a lesson or sequence of lessons.

b. Informing

Informing is the second element in doing reflection. It may occur after a teaching sequence or lesson. It may be also accomplished by the individual teacher or in discussion with others. Therefore, the element of mapping may be meant to be as much the basis for shared discussion and understanding of the meaning of teaching for our colleagues and students as much as it is for the individual self.

The element of sharing or collaboration with colleagues offers the possibility of extending one's insights about oneself as teacher to oneself as an individual member of a larger community. This supports the idea of teaching as interaction; the idea that teaching cannot be separated from one's student, one's culture, one's expectation about life, and how one participates in society.

In informing, a teacher begins to search for principles that underlie his/her teaching, the search for reasons which are the basis for his/her theory of teaching. However, the search is not for the correct or most certain solution, but for the best possible solution based on informed choice.

c. Contesting

This phase involves contesting our ideas and the structures that hold them in place. Contesting is most effectively achieved through sharing with colleagues (including teachers, parents, and community members) or understandings and reasons we have for teaching in particular way. Contesting ideas and reasons is meant to uncover teachers' assumptive world. In mapping and informing, we considered our espoused theories about teaching. Meanwhile, in contestation, we confront and perhaps begin to dislodge the complex system of reasons for our teaching actions.

Moreover, contestation involves a search for inconsistencies and contradictions in what teachers do and how they think. A contradiction exists when our reasons for an action or the premises on which a course of teaching action is founded cannot all be realized simultaneously. There are varying levels of contradiction in our teaching. Some are quite visible; others are less

visible. Quite often our wish to improve our teaching may be distorted by visible institutional requirements; for example, the requirement to demonstrate improved grammatical or communicative competence in student learning as defined by the syllabus.

d. Appraisal

Appraisal begins to link the thinking dimension of reflection with the search for teaching in ways consistent with our new understanding. One way of appraising is by asking question "what would be the consequences to learning if I changed....? Therefore, with regard to measuring proficiency, we might understand whose interests are being served in assessment of student learning if we more frequently negotiate what will be learned; or we might negotiate the criteria upon which students will be assessed.

Most importantly, we might ask ourselves whether criteria for making assessments are made public for students; and whether we attempt to make public our assessment against these criteria.

e. Acting

Acting is the last phase in the process leading to reflective teaching, but it is not the final phase. According to Freire (1972) in Richard and Nunan (1990), reflection without action is verbalism: action without reflection is activism –doing things for their own sake. In this case, there is a continuing dialectical relationship among the preceding phases and the idea of acting out new ideas about our teaching. We arrange our teaching practice after mapping what we do, unearthing the reasons and assumptions for these actions, subjecting these reasons to critical scrutiny, appraising alternative courses of action, and then acting. Although there is nothing magical or imperative about this cycle, it offers a systematic approach to the process of making committed choices as the basis of good teaching.

Reflective Teaching as a Means of Teacher Professional Development

One of the activities which is related to teacher professional development is *writing about teaching* (Richard, 2001). In this case, teachers can keep a reflective diary or journal which consists of what happens in the classroom lessons, and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals and aims. In other words, teacher can do reflection on what he or she has done.

In the learning process, reflection is a key activity. Lempert-Shepell (1995) defined reflection as the ability to make one's own behavior an object of study. Reflection on teaching is also one of the activities which can be done toward teacher professional development. It is supported by Postholm (2008) who has described reflection as the key to teachers' learning and development of teaching practice. It is because in reflection on teaching, a teacher thinks about what has happened in the classroom, the weaknesses and the strengths of his/her teaching as well as thinks about how to have other means of achieving the goals effectively. By doing the reflection, teachers will be more aware of their teaching. The improvement of their teaching may be also achieved through the reflection. Later on the teacher's professionalism will be increasing.

A relationship also appears between reflection and action. As it is stated by Lempert-Sheppell (1995) that reflection changes the character of the action. Furthermore, it was explained that an acting person stops dealing with the situational action but regards the sphere of possible action. The structure of an action can also change. Finally, it was concluded that the content of activities of reflective teaching which are covered in several elements (mapping, informing, contesting, appraising, and action) are vital to promoting teacher professional development.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

As a profession, teachers should join or do many activities in relation to their professional development. One of the activities is by writing about teaching. In this activity, teachers can write about what has happened in their teaching in the journal or diary or what we call it as reflective teaching. Reflective teaching is defined the teacher's thinking about what happens in the classroom lessons, and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals and aims (Cruickshank and Zeichner in Richard and Nunan, 1990). Since the goals of reflecting teaching is to engender good habits of thought, therefore, reflective teaching is regarded as an inquiry intended to help teachers improve their practice. In other words, reflecting teaching can be used as a means of teacher professional development.

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