

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICES FACILITATING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AMONG TEACHERS**

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Abstract: *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. 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.*

Introduction

Reflective practice is the process of thinking about one's own practice and taking personal responsibility for improving professional skills. Reflection enables one to review the positive aspects of own practice. Piaget, Lewin and Dewey proposed that theory is to be integrated with practices and experiences. Reflective practice is the habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, reasoning, emotions, values and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individuals and communities being served. In reflective practice, practitioners engage in a continuous cycle of self-observation and self-evaluation in order to understand their own actions and the reactions they prompt in themselves and in learners.

Modes and means of reflective learning

a) Reflective learning journals

A reflective learning journal is a collection of notes, observations, thoughts and other relevant materials built-up over a period of time and usually accompanies a period of study, a placement experience or field work. Its purpose is to enhance learning through the very process of writing and thinking about our learning experiences. It will reflect our personality and experiences. It can be a note book, an electronic document or recorded in a tape.

A reflective learning journal should focus on our own personal responses, reactions and reflections to new ideas or new ways of thinking about a subject that have been introduced to us through - Lectures, seminars and workshops; Research and reading; Conversations and discussions with other students and tutors & Significant experiences that have been happened in the work place or field trips.

Uses

- ✓ To provide a 'live picture' of our growing.
- ✓ To demonstrate how the learning develops.
- ✓ To keep a record of our thoughts and ideas.
- ✓ Helps in identifying strengths, weaknesses and preferences in learning.
- ✓ Get an opportunity to communicate the thinking process.

b) Critical Incident Diaries

A critical incident is an event in professional practice that provides a learning opportunity. The Critical Incident Technique (or CIT) is a set of procedures used for collecting direct observations of human behaviour that have critical significance and meet methodically defined criteria. These observations are used to solve practical problems and develop broad psychological principles. A critical incident can be described as one that makes a contribution—either positively or negatively—to an activity or phenomenon. Critical incidents can be gathered in various ways, but typically respondents are asked to tell a story about an experience they have had.

Major areas for using this are- determining and reviewing the incident; fact-finding - which involves collecting the details of the incident from the participants; identify the issues; decision making - how to resolve the issues based on various possible solution & Evaluation - which will determine if the solution that was selected will solve the root cause of the situation and will cause no further problems.

Advantages

- Flexible method that can be used to improve multi-user systems.
- Data is collected from the respondent's perspective and in his or her own words.
- Does not force the respondents into any given framework.
- Identifies even rare events that might be missed by other methods which only focus on common and everyday events.
- Useful when problems occur but the cause and severity are not known.
- Inexpensive and provides rich information.
- Can be applied using questionnaires or interviews.
- Easy to understand.

c) Fieldwork diaries

Research technique in which the ethnographer take systematic notes describing fieldwork situations. Basic practices which you should follow for the Fieldwork Diary Writing- i) Write daily ii) Be precise & iii) Remember your central theme.

Uses

- ✓ Use it as a source
- ✓ Improve your writing skills.
- ✓ Remember things many years into the future and can renew your dedication to work.

d) Personal development planners

A personal development plan helps you to structure your thinking. It is a process that consists of defining what is important to you, what you want to achieve, what strengths you already have that help to achieve your goals, and what you need to improve and develop with time. Personal development planning is the process of creating an action plan based on awareness, values, reflection, goal-setting and planning for personal development within the context of a career, education, relationship or for self-improvement. In higher education, personal development plans typically include a portfolio containing evidence of the skills gathered over a particular timeframe. It will assist in creating self-directed independent learners who are more likely to progress to higher levels of academic attainment.

An individual can often develop a five-year personal development plan to organize personal goals and to make them achievable within a certain time-period. We constantly plan and think in our head, but very often we miss important details and we don't create a realistic strategy to realize that plan. That's why many "plans" stay just in our dreams. There are some important things to consider when creating a personal development plan. Here are 9 steps that can help you to create a good personal development plan:

1. Define your goals
2. Prioritize
3. Set a deadline
4. Understand your strengths
5. Recognize opportunities and threats
6. Develop new skills
7. Take action
8. Get support
9. Measure progress

Uses

- ✓ Help to structure our thinking.
- ✓ Can create a strategic plan for achieving our goals.
- ✓ To assess our life
- ✓ Defines what is really important for us.

e) Portfolio development

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, achievements and reflection in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit and evidence of student self-reflection." (Paulson, Paulson, Meyer 1991). A portfolio is a living, growing collection of a student's work - each addition is carefully selected by the student for a specific reason which s/he will explain. The overall purpose of the portfolio is to enable the student to demonstrate to others learning and progress. The greatest value of portfolios is that, students become active participants in the learning process and its assessment.

Important Features:

- Documentation of growth over time
- Showcase accomplishments
- Written documentations (artifacts)
- Second-hand documentation (transcripts, letters, certificates)
- Indications of Reflection
- Evidence of professionalism
- "Value-added principle"
- Structured self-assessment

Uses

- ✓ To encourage self-directed learning.
- ✓ To enlarge the view of what is learned.
- ✓ To foster learning about learning.
- ✓ To demonstrate progress towards goals.
- ✓ To provide a window into student's heads and hearts.
- ✓ To intersect instruction and assessment.
- ✓ To provide a vehicle for students to value themselves as learners.
- ✓ To offer opportunities for peer supported growth.

f) Collaborative inquiry

In collaborative inquiry, teachers work together to identify common challenges, analyse relevant data, and test out instructional approaches. The idea behind this approach is that such systematic, collaborative work will increase student learning. Collaborative inquiry is among the most promising strategies for strengthening teaching and learning. At the same time, it may be one of the most difficult to implement.

The biggest risk in moving to establish collaborative inquiry is to do so without providing the necessary leadership and support. To start, schools and districts need to create a shared understanding of the purpose and value of collaborative inquiry among teachers and administrators. Other essential conditions include time for teachers to meet regularly and adequate investment in training and facilitation. Common lessons and student tasks that are meaty enough to merit collective investigation can serve as a structure for discussion. Becoming an effective inquiry team takes patience and persistence.

Conclusion

Reflective learning has become an integral part of our life and teaching-learning processes. It is the medium of daily activities and power of our professional growth. This can be an important tool in practice based professional learning settings where individuals learn from their own professional experiences. In reflective practices one is taking a conscious look at their own emotions, experiences, actions and responses and using that to add their existing knowledge base to draw out new knowledge, meaning and a higher level of understanding. Reflective teaching is therefore a means of professional development which begins in our classroom.

References

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