

**REFLECTIVE TEACHING: A PROCESS OF SELF-OBSERVATION AND EVALUATION****Dr. Varinder Kaur****Assistant Professor, GTB Khalsa College of Education, Dasuya (Hoshiarpur)****ABSTRACT**

Reflective teaching means looking at what you do in the classroom, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about if it works - a process of self-observation and self-evaluation. By collecting information about what goes on in our classroom, and by analysing and evaluating this information, we identify and explore our own practices and underlying beliefs. This may then lead to changes and improvements in our 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.

**KEY WORDS:** Reflective teaching, Observation, Critical Reflection.

**INTRODUCTION**

Donald Schon is credited with introducing the concept of reflective teaching to the educational realm in 1983. Reflective teaching strategies, however, are much older, having been proposed, discussed and used by other educators such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Carl Jung.

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*Reflective teaching is a personal tool that teachers can use to observe and evaluate the way they behave in their classroom. It can be both a private process as well as one that you discuss with colleagues. When you collect information regarding what went on in your classroom and takes the time to analyse it from a distance, you can identify more than just what worked and what didn't. You will be able to look at the underlying principles and beliefs that define the way that you work. This kind of self-*

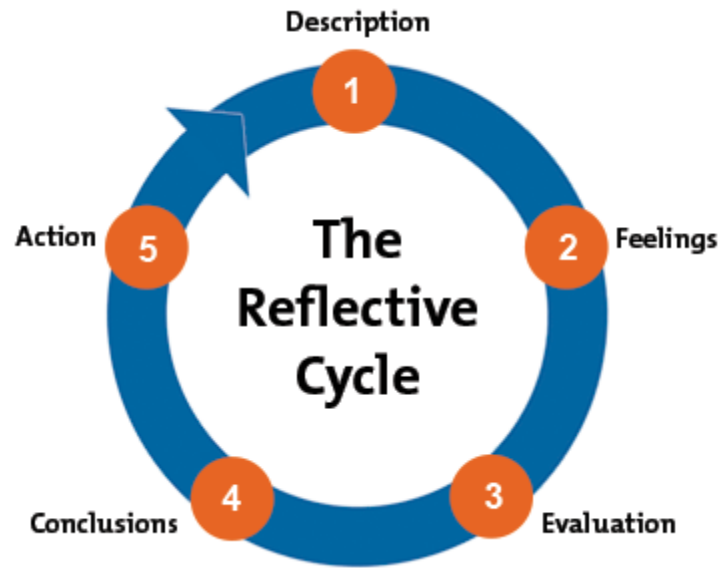
*awareness is a powerful ally for a teacher, especially when so much of what and how they teach can change in the moment.*

*Bratlett (1990) points out that becoming a reflective teacher involves moving beyond a primary concern with instructional techniques and "how techniques not as ends in themselves, but as part of broader educational purposes.*

## **APPROACHES FOR CRITICAL REFLECTION**

**Peer Observation** – Peer observation can provide opportunities for teachers to view each other's teaching in order to expose them to different teaching styles and to provide opportunities for critical reflection on their own teaching. Some suggestions for peer observation:

1. **Each participant would both observe and be observed** – Teachers would work in pairs and take turns observing each other's classes.
2. **Pre-observation orientation session** – Prior to each observation, the two teachers would meet to discuss the nature of the class to be observed, the kind of material being taught, the teachers' approach to teaching, the kinds of students in the class, typical patterns of interaction and class participation, and any problems that might be expected. The teacher being observed would also assign the observer a goal for the observation and a task to accomplish. The task would involve collecting information about some aspect of the lesson, but would not include any evaluation of the lesson. Observation procedures or instruments to be used would be agreed upon during this session and a schedule for the observations arranged.
3. **The observation** -The observer would then visit his or her partner's class and complete the observation using the procedures that both partners had agreed on.
4. **Post-observation:** The two teachers would meet as soon as possible after the lesson. The observer would report on the information that had been collected and discuss it with the teacher (Richards and Lockhart, 1991).



### **APPROACHES FOR EXPERIENCES**

Another useful way of engaging in the reflective process is through the use of written accounts of experiences. (Powell 1985) and their potential is increasingly being recognized in teacher education. A number of different approaches can be used.

#### **1. Self-Reports**

Self-reporting involves completing an inventory or check list in which the teacher indicates which teaching practices were used within a lesson or within a specified time period and how often they were employed (Pak, 1985).

Self-reporting allows teachers to make a regular assessment of what they are doing in the classroom. They can check to see to what extent their assumptions about their own teaching are reflected in their actual teaching practices.

#### **2. Journal Writing**

A procedure which is becoming more widely acknowledged as a valuable tool for developing critical reflection is the journal or diary. The goals of journal writing are:

1. To provide a record of the significant learning experiences that have taken place
2. To help the participant come into touch and keep in touch with the self-development process that is taking place for them

3. To provide the participants with an opportunity to express, in a personal and dynamic way, their self-development

4. To foster a creative interaction.

- between the participant and the self-development process that is taking place
- between the participant and other participants who are also in the process of self-development
- between the participant and the facilitator whose role it is to foster such development (Powell, 1985, Bailey, 1990)

### **3. Recording Lessons**

For many aspects of teaching, audio or video recording of lessons can also provide a basis for reflection. While there are many useful insights to be gained from diaries and self-reports, they cannot capture the moment to moment processes of teaching. Many things happen simultaneously in a classroom, and some aspects of a lesson cannot be recalled. It would be of little value for example, to attempt to recall the proportion of Yes-No Questions to WH-Questions a teacher used during a lesson, or to estimate the degree to which teacher time was shared among higher and lower ability students. Many significant classroom events may not have been observed by the teacher, let alone remembered, hence the need to supplement diaries or self-reports with recordings of actual lessons.

### **4. Self-Reflective Journal**

A journal is an easy way to reflect upon what just happened during your instruction. After each lesson, simply jot down a few notes describing your reactions and feelings and then follow up with any observations you have about your students. If it helps, you can break up your journal into concrete sections, such lesson objective, materials, classroom management, students, teacher, etc. In this way, you can be consistent with how you measure your assessments time after time. You can find specific questions to ask yourself below.

### **5. Video Recording**

A video recording of your teaching is valuable because it provides an unaltered and unbiased vantage point for how effective your lesson may be from both a teacher and student perspective. Additionally, a video may act as an additional set of eyes to catch errant behavior that you hadn't spotted at the time. Many colleges actually use this method to teach up and coming teachers the value of self-reflection.

## 6. Student Observation

Students are very observant and love to give feedback. You can hand out a simple survey or questionnaire after your lesson to get students' perspectives about how the lesson went. Think critically about what questions you'd like to ask and encourage your children to express their thoughts thoroughly. It'll not only be a learning experience for you, but also an indirect exercise in writing for them.

## 7. Peer Observation

Invite a colleague to come into your classroom and observe your teaching. Now this is much different than when you have your principal come in and watch you—it's much more casual and devoid of darting eyes. As a result, you'll be able to teach more naturally and give your colleague an honest perspective of your instruction methods. To help him frame your lesson critique more clearly, create a questionnaire (you can use some of the questions below) for your colleague to fill out as they observe. Afterward, make some time to sit down with him so he can more accurately convey what he saw.

### **BENEFITS OF REFLECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES**

There are many benefits that arise from reflecting on one's teaching. Some of these benefits are the following.

#### **1. Being a reflective teacher frees teachers from routine behavior.**

It is easy to teach in a routine fashion. Following a textbook exactly as the book is designed or teaching a lesson in the same way it was taught in the past does not require much effort or reflection. However, it often results in ineffective lessons since the teacher has done little to modify the lesson for a specific class. Being a reflective teacher frees one from following a routine and can result in more creative and effective lessons.

#### **2. Being a reflective teacher enables teachers to act in a deliberate manner.**

When teachers reflect on their teaching they often consider why they do something in a particular way. Thinking about the reasons one has for doing something allows teachers to act in a deliberate manner. Teachers are no longer doing something merely because that is what the textbook says or that is what

they have done in the past. Rather teachers are teaching the lesson in a particular way for a specific reason.

### **3. Being a reflective teacher improves teaching practice.**

Being a reflective teacher involves considering various ways of teaching a particular lesson. In deciding on which of these ways to teach the lesson, teachers often consider such factors as the proficiency level of their students, the interests of their students, the goals of the curriculum, and the teaching time that is available. Considering these factors in deciding how to teach a particular lesson will generally result in more effective classes. There are then many benefits that can arise from trying to be a more reflective teacher.

### **CONCLUSION**

Reflective practice is important to the development of all professionals because it enables us to learn from experience. Although we all learn from experience, more and more experience does not guarantee more and more learning. Twenty years of teaching may not equate to 20 years of learning about teaching but may be only one year repeated 20 times. There are many times when our normal reactions to events are insufficient themselves to encourage reflection. We should not rely solely on our natural process of reflecting on experience, but actively seek ways to ensure that reflection itself becomes a habit, ensuring our continuing development as a professional teacher.

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<<http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/resources/reflection/you.html>>