

## Reflective Practice in a Teaching Context

The purpose of this essay is to look at reflective practice and what skills are needed for teaching. The essay will also look outside my experience of working as a teacher at my placement.

Reflective practice is a concept that is used in education studies; it involves the learner considering incidents from their life experiences and thinking about what they are learning. As defined by Schon (1983), reflective practice involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline. Schon (1983) suggested that the ability to reflect on action as a process of learning is a key skill for a professional. Reflective practice is a process where teachers monitor their own teaching continuously which clearly requires a good attitude of open-mindedness and responsibility. It is also enhanced through communication and feedback from colleagues. Learning is all about change which we see through experience by reflecting on what we have learnt and how we have changed, as defined by Kolb (1984).

The importance of reflecting on what you are doing, as part of the learning process, has been emphasised by many theorists. Reflective Observation is the second stage by Kolb (1984). The other stages include concrete experience, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. The ability to reflect while doing something (in) and after you have done (on) it has become an important feature of educational practices, and it is highly encouraged. It can be argued that reflective practice needs another person as mentor, because it can be very difficult for one to criticise themselves or to realise that something can be improved.

When reflective practice is applied in a teaching context 'reflective practitioners' are usually referred to as adult learners who are engaged in the activity of teaching which they can use to reflect on their strengths, weaknesses and areas for development. Students on the other hand need to be encouraged to use situations, for example tutorials, group discussions or placements, as a basis for reflecting on what they have learned. Therefore reflective practice is happening through teachers and students. It is very useful after exams or coursework is finished to ask students to reflect on their learning. As a positive result of applying reflective practice in an educational practice can help to build up confidence amongst teachers. However limitations of Schon is the idea that we all need mentor, which point to the important role of language and interaction in developing shared understanding (Wiggotsky, 1978). Another criticism of Schon is that his focus is too much on the individual, without considering the interaction between the wider social setting, including the purposes of schooling and the professional.

There are certain skills required in order to be a successful at teaching, these include: Communication skills which is the most important. The tone, volume, and emotions of a teacher can play a very big role when talking to students. Teachers must be able to show that they care and are concerned when need be. Positive motivation helps students to want to learn. Feedback is important because good teachers show that they are actually interested in a student's opinions and feelings, it is also helpful in building relationships with students. ▲ good sense of humor helps to show students that they are a normal person, which helps them to learn and motivate in a relaxed but still firm setting. The ability to be reflective is a very important skill; a teacher must be able to learn from what they are doing as well as helping students to be reflective upon themselves.

During my course I attended a placement once a week at a local secondary school. Here I acted as a teacher's assistant although I was given the opportunity to teach a class. It was very important to realise what I was saying and how I was saying it. ▲After each lesson the teacher and I would always reflect on how the lesson went and whether or not we would want to change anything for the next class. I feel that my communication and confidence skills are good as I was able to continuously talk to students and I was able to keep the class calm whilst I was teaching. ▲ weakness of my practice skills is that I found it difficult to engage all the students in some of the activities. It was very difficult to pick out the shy students when the very confident students were so overpowering, this is something that I feel I need to work and reflect on. I regularly gave feedback to students on their class work and homework as well as praising students for getting answers correct. Regularly students came to me with problems such as finding work difficult and I made sure that I showed sympathy and made sure that they knew I was there to help them. Working in a classroom was an exciting and interesting experience. I feel that as a teacher, I played a very important role in society, education is a huge factor in everyone's childhood and youth as it helps you with your potential career. Some say that teaching is difficult because of all the problems that arise when working with teenagers however this is the reason why teachers must have all of the above interpersonal skills. Reflective practice is something that I feel is very helpful and it has helped me whilst I was teaching, as I continuously thought over what I was learning and teaching and how things could be made better. If you are continuously reflecting you are learning more and more.

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