



Reflective teaching for better learning

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Abstract: Reflecting teaching is a process where teachers look at what they do in a classroom, they think over their teaching practices and analyze how to improve them, it is a process of self observation and self evaluation. The most obvious purpose of analyzing one's own methodology of teaching is to improve one's own quality of teaching, thereby enhancing student learning. Various ways of teacher self reflection in classrooms include peer observation, journal writing, self reports, auto biographies, diary keeping and video recording one's own classroom behaviour. This paper focuses on the importance of self reflection in teaching, characteristics of a reflective teacher and the outcomes of self reflection which aids in the professional development of a teacher.

Keywords: reflection, self-study, teacher thinking, teacher educators, professional development

Introduction:

“If you are anything like me, you’ve spent years putting reflection on the backseat. Other things seemed more important. But, when I finally gave reflection the respect it was due and made it a daily practice, things changed in my own life and in my classroom for students” - A. J. Julians

Self study is a process by which the teacher critically examines oneself by means of records, conversations with colleagues, feedback from students, etc. Self study research is initiated and conducted by teacher educators, teachers and other practitioners who study and analyze their own practice to enhance professional learning, ways of knowing and knowledge generation.

Reflective teaching encompasses scrutinizing one's fundamental beliefs about teaching and learning and one's adjustment with actual classroom learning and one's adjustment with actual classroom learning before, during and after a lesson is taught. It necessitates strict control over oneself in class and increased self analysis can yield significant outcomes.

Self reflection is a necessity and beneficial for teachers as it is an activity that makes one accumulate, document and examine and analyze all the things that took place in the classroom during the lesson, in order to improvise one's pedagogy in teaching strategies.

Characteristics of a reflective teacher:

- Ability to self analyse
- Identify their own strategies, weaknesses, objectives and threats
- Good time management skills
- Self improvement of self and teaching practices
- Self acceptance
- Self observation
- Self evaluation

Objectives of the study: To explore whether engaging in self reflection practices in-action and on-action in the classroom enhances teacher performance and leads to professional development.

Statement of the problem:

What are the challenges faced by a self-reflective teacher?

Whether the self reflective tools utilized by the teacher leads to growth and positive outcomes?

Reflective teaching:

A good reflective teacher continuously devotes a lot of time to gauge their classroom practices and regularly reflects on how their own distinct style and methodology of teaching influences pupil learning. Reflective practices are integral to effective teaching and a sincere reflective teacher needs to be subtle and tactful and address the requirements and apprehensions very thoughtfully so as to provide quality education.

To develop reflective insights, a teacher needs to :

- View the events objectively from afar
- Be ready with other plausible reports of events
- Be critical of own actions
- Understand and accept that with passage of time, own viewpoints might change
- Use different available sources like journals

The five Rs of Reflection include

1. Reporting
2. Responding
3. Reasoning
4. Relating
5. Reconstructing

10 ways to become a good reflective teacher:

- Get feedback from students
- Photographs
- Peer observation
- Microteaching
- Personal teaching diary-reflective journal
- Hot notes
- Video recording
- Audio recording
- Student observation
- Observation by the Director of Studies (DoS)

4 principles of reflective teaching:

- ❖ Re-inhabit (relive the experience)
- ❖ Reflect (notice what was going on)
- ❖ Review (critically analyse the situation)
- ❖ Reframe (capture new understanding responses as they happen and using this information to choose what to do moment by moment)

Critical thinking and reflective thinking are often used synonymously. Dewy (1933) suggests that “reflective thinking is an active, persistent and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge, of the grounds that support that knowledge and the further conclusions to which that knowledge leads.”

Therefore a reflective approach to teaching encompasses changes in the way we generally regard teaching and our part in the process of teaching. Reflective teaching advocates that our experiences in classroom teaching by itself is not enough for professional growth but that if that experience can be integrated with reflection, then it can become a potent stimulus for professional development of teachers.

Teacher self reflection in classroom/ lesson plan

It is necessary and important for teachers to reflect in order to keep their teaching relevant to the students, permitting them to improve their focus and learning. Self reflection motivates the teacher to be original and experimental and up to date with the contemporary practices and development which would help to address the areas the teacher thinks needs improvisations. Reflective teaching is a distinctive and unique tool which teachers need to use to detect, perceive and assess the manner in which they conduct themselves in the classrooms and once they gather that information, they must take the time to peruse them and scrutinise them from afar which would make them realise what worked and what didn't. Teachers can use reflective thinking in the class by encouraging pupils' reflection by asking questions that need rationale and evidence and provide some explanations to guide students' thought processes for instance - a teacher can use previous teaching experience which may be their colleagues or their own to find solutions for pupils facing learning difficulties.

4 reflective models are discussed to become familiar with the core concepts of reflective thinking and provide a way to improvise the structure of learning

1. Boud's reflective model
2. Kolbe's theory of reflection
3. Gibb's reflective cycle
4. Dewey theory

David Boud has defined reflection as - "a conscious activity in which we engage, to explore our experiences and develop new understandings and conceptualizations."

Boud's reflection model concentrates on learning by reflecting on one's practice. The experience based on learning goes beyond the actions that the teacher does in the classroom. Boud's triangular representation is taken as the simplest model illustrating the central idea that reflection leads to added learning. Although it includes the central idea that experience and reflection leads to learning, the model does not lead us to think about what reflection might consist of or how the learning can lead to a unique experience. Boud, David & Walker, David. (1998). Promoting Reflection in Professional Courses: The Challenge of Context. *Studies in Higher Education* - STUD HIGH EDUC. 23. 191-206. 10.1080/03075079812331380384. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247281411_Promoting_Reflection_in_Professional_Courses_The_Challenge_of_Context



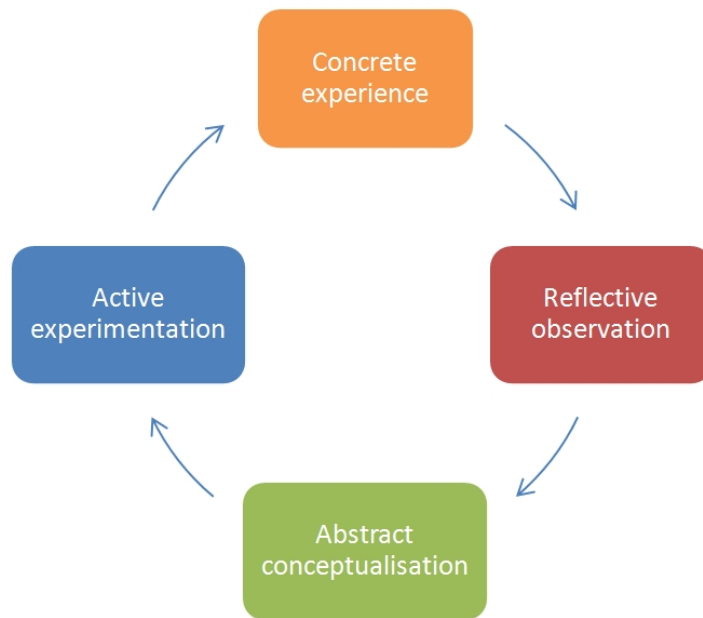
David Kolb's theory of reflection: According to this theory, one cannot learn only by observing or reading. He/she needs to participate in the activity so as to learn from it, then she/he can reflect on that experience and then make judgments. Kolb proposed that experience is integral in knowledge construction and development as learning only occurs via active

participation which leads to discovery and learning. “The process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.”

The experimental, reflective cycle analysed by Kolb for effective learning involves 4 stages

1. Concrete learning experience can be a scheduled activity
2. Reflective observation of that experience at a personal level
3. Formation of abstract concepts that needs to be analysed and generalised to form conclusions
4. Active experimentation which can arouse new ideas or modifications of existing concepts for professional development.

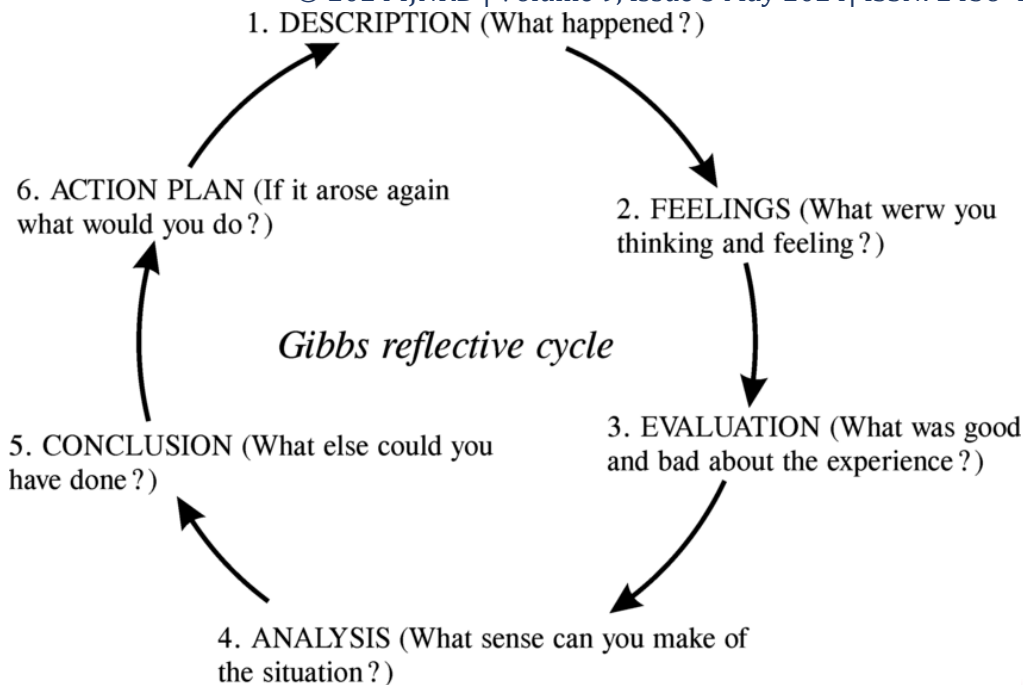
Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall. <https://www.nicole-brown.co.uk/reflective-model-according-to-kolb/>



Gibb's reflective cycle: encourages people to think systematically about their experiences during a specific situation, event or activity. Gibb's cycle emphasises that without the reflection on one's own learning, it is difficult to improve for the next time. Gibb's model of reflection includes description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan. Thus, Gibb's Reflection model is handy to use and easy to understand as it gives the learner ample time to learn based on personal experiences which in turn help the learner to judge and handle a situation more efficiently.

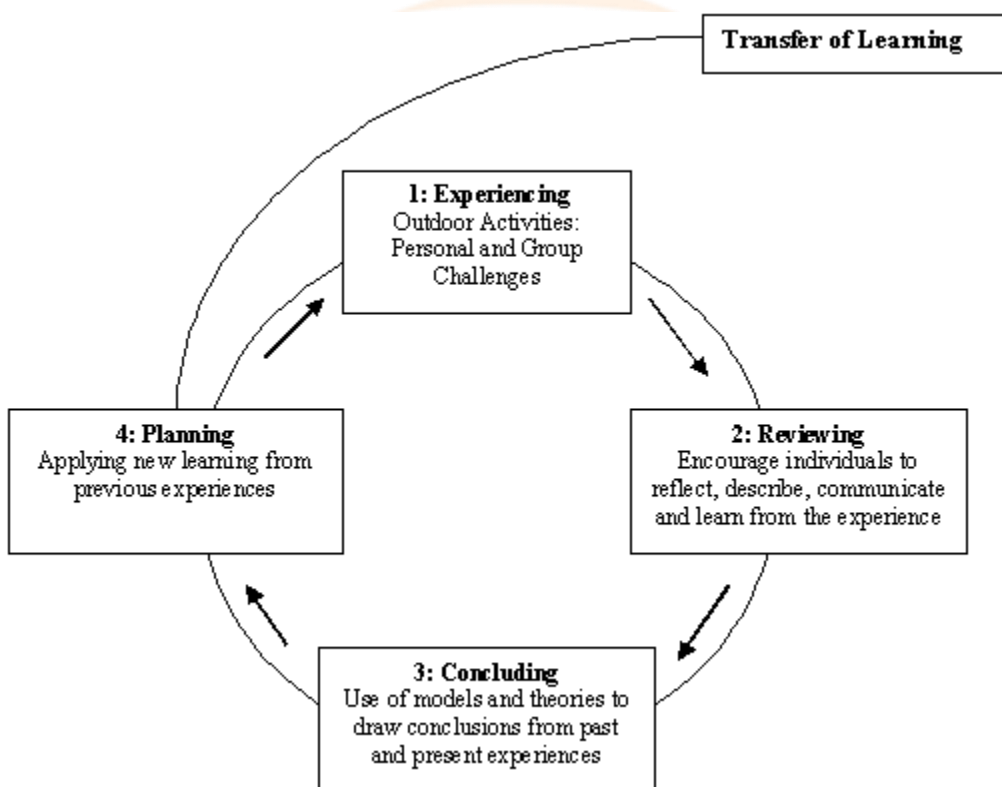
Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. London: Further Education Unit. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Gibbs-reflective-cycle-Gibbs-1988_fig1_281318373

Research Through Innovation



John Dewey was a leading proponent of the American school of thought known as pragmatism, a view which rejected the dualistic epistemology and metaphysics of modern philosophy in favour of a naturalistic approach that viewed knowledge as arising from an active adaptation of the human organism to its environment. Dewey believes that the two principles of continuity and interaction intercept and unite. Dewey believed in the continuity of experience or the connection between a student’s future decisions and behaviour and that teachers should not have preconceived notions about students' culture, religion, family background or pressurise students to conform to their expectations. Dewey suggested that “Reflection for learning must encompass recalling the particular event and asking questions to find out why things happened the way they did and what possible actions could have resulted in a different solution (outcomes)”

Dewey, J., 1938. *Logic - The Theory of Inquiry*. 1st ed. Read Books Ltd. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Dewey-s-model-of-reflective-thought-and-action_fig3_28368072



Benefits and Challenges of Teacher Self Reflection

Benefits of encouraging teacher self reflection (Kate Herbett - Smith - 2019 <https://blog.irisconnect.com/us/5-benefits-of-encouraging-teacher-self-reflection>)

“We do not learn from experiencewe learn from reflecting on experience” - John Dewey

Teacher Reflective Practice increases self awareness which is an integral element of one's emotional quotient and enables one to improve creative thinking skills which in turn helps to understand more efficiently and motivates one to be actively engaged in teaching and learning process. Teachers who have indulged in reflective practices often report that they themselves were surprised at the disparity between their assumptions and the actual reality in classroom situations. Reflective practice is “learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and practice” Finlay, Linda (2008). Reflecting on ‘Reflective practice’. Practice-based Professional Learning Paper 52, The Open University. <https://oro.open.ac.uk/68945/1/Finlay-%282008%29-Reflecting-on-reflective-practice-PBPL-paper-52.pdf>

Teacher reflection is not only important for teachers but also for learners. “Development excellence in teaching has the single most powerful influence on student achievement.” (Prof John Hattie)

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