

Research Article

REFLECTIVE TEACHING AS METACOGNITION FOR INNOVATION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

¹Dr. Jyoti Trehan Sharma, ²Dr. Harsh Bala Sharma

*¹Associate Professor, Department of Political Science
Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi, Delhi*

*²Assistant Professor, Department of Hindi, Indraprastha College for Women
University of Delhi, Delhi*

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Abstract:

Once there was this young boy who went to the home of the great Greek philosopher and teacher, Socrates, to seek his wisdom on how to be a great success. As expected, the teacher agreed to tutor and instructed -‘walk with me’. Socrates began to walk, heading towards the sea, and once on the sand, continued to walk straight into the water. The young boy followed, and as the two were chest deep into the sea, Socrates placed his hands on the young boy’s head and quickly forced it under the water. Within ten seconds, the young boy fought his way to the surface and began to gasp for air. Socrates released the boy’s head, turned and walked away, leaving the young boy appalled, who had travelled a great distance to meet a great teacher whose style of teaching involved not conveying knowledge but rather asking question after clarifying question until his students arrived at their own understanding. The young boy vowed not to seek the advice of Socrates again.

However, as it was to be, he approached Socrates once again after a week and once again the entire episode repeated, except that now the boy was a little more ready and could hold his breath for almost thirty seconds under the water. Socrates left without a word. After a month, the young boy approached him again. Socrates repeated the entire thing once again, but this time as Socrates grabbed his head, he took a deep swallow of air, relaxed and could hold his breath under water for almost two minutes. By the time he resurfaced Socrates had left. Irresistible, the young boy ran behind Socrates, and yelled to find out as to why he was always dunked into the water? The method was complex but the secret of the teacher was simple:

‘When you want to succeed as much as you want to breathe, you will be a great success.’

With this, it is now easier to embark on the reflective approach of which Socrates was the greatest pioneer, who helped to test assumptions about things, and, if necessary, to reject assumptions, even long held assumptions, which, on examination, make no sense. At the bottom of his grey matter were two things-

1. Find out what’s really in a person’s mind, and
2. Determine how well that person understands the subject at hand.

To Socrates, knowing that we don’t know is wisdom because only when we realize that we don’t know, we earnestly seek to fill-in our knowledge gap. As we share the intellect and the wisdom of Socrates, we don’t do it without a reason.

This paper tries to find out the idea of knowledge and sharing it with the students in a unique and different way. This is what is called as Reflective Teaching. Reflective Method is introduced globally now, as teacher accepts that every child is unique and the aptitude of learning is also different. The teacher has to be creative, attentive and a great observer to become a Reflective Teacher. Teaching has to go beyond the boundary wall and nurtured according to the needs and aptitude of the child. If practiced, Reflective Teaching can actually be a real innovation in teaching pedagogy. In this paper, Reflective perspective is discussed to cater to the educational nurturing of the child in a unique way.

Key words: Innovation, Learning, Metacognition, Monitoring Reflection, Transformation,

Introduction:

It was accepted once that the Guru (the Teacher) is like or equivalent to God, and every word of the Guru is to be accepted without an iota of a questioning. Even the punishment given by the teacher was accepted as positive pattern of learning. As Kabir recited '*Guru kumhar shish kumbhahi, gadi-gadi kadekhot, bheetar hath pasar de, bahar mare chot*', which meant literally that teacher was like a potter and the disciple was like a raw clay pot. The Guru removes the evil of the disciples by hitting them from the outside, with the consistent support of his hand from within. The Guru creates the character of the disciple, and in the absence of the Guru, the disciple is only a piece of clay, which the Guru gives the shape of a pitcher, fills it with the content and builds his character. He removes the evils of the disciple and makes him respectable in the world.

The world is changing, as also this vision and perspective. Is it time to revert to the Reflective method that caters to the needs of the child in a very unique way, and makes him unique?

Undoubtedly, how we think and reflect is of a classic origin but needs a version that adapts to the changing times. It is equally true that reflection is a continuous challenge that goes back to the Socratic times, but it was in 1999, when an article published by Ixer¹ titled '*There's no such thing as Reflection*', that attempted to act as a catalyst to the burgeoning debate on reflective practice, when already since the 1980's and through Schon's landmark publication on reflection in 1983, a new rhetoric had already emerged. Ixer explored the theoretical nature of reflection and purported it to be a contested area of knowledge, as knowledge that is available is contested, insufficient and incoherent. We are yet not clear whether

reflection is a thing in itself or something waiting to be socially constructed, although it is beginning to achieve some professional prominence. As we have seen Schon's quest for professional knowledge revolves around a search for an epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value-conflict. Professional knowledge is constructed through reflection-in-action and through reflection-on-action. While it is Donald Schon's work on organizational learning and reflective practice that tends to receive the most attention in the literature, his exploration of the nature of learning systems and the significance of learning in changing societies has helped to define debates around the so called 'learning society'.²

When one begins to put reflection in perspective to recognize that reflection can have an Eastern, reflective edge as well as Western scientific approach, to recognize its long and distinguished history and that the great men and women of the past reflected on their actions and on their own being; to understand that it has been used in teaching, but also to grasp at the essential elements of humankind; to recognize that it is not a method or a technique, but a way of life -- then one begins to sense the lack of power and the paucity of thought that has too often gone into the conceptualizations of many of the teacher preparation programs being heralded today. Therefore, one begins to understand why many will (and should) fade in a short time. All this also refers to teaching and learning that prepares young people for engaging in a complex and dynamic world deeply influenced by globalization and the revolution in the digital technology, creating by mankind but soon to be engulfing the world if not controlled.

This is also true that very little is being invested in examining the concept and the reality. Too few people are really concerned with thinking skills, the keystone of reflection. And while there have been some enlightened proposals for increased emphasis on higher-order thinking and reflective inquiry, we have not moved far enough in testing the real situation.

Reflection in the Indian system implies more than the scientific method, more than Western rationalism. Its power in preparing is in the breadth of approaches and the range of areas in which it can be implemented. The time needs that our perception of reflective inquiry is sharpened, and the ways in which it can be implemented successfully tested. To do so, one needs to use its concepts, skills, and values.

So, what actually lies before us? What is it that would enable us to sustain? It, therefore becomes mandatory that we-

- Reflect on our actions as teachers, and modify subsequent actions as a result.
- Demand that our students probe for deeper meanings in their reading, their study, and their actions.
- Press for sharply focused research on the impact of reflection in educating teachers, particularly in developing thinking skills of their students.
- Study broadly the concept of reflection in both the Eastern as well as the Western traditions, and seek to translate the relevant aspects of such study into viable actions.
- Act on reflection; as without action, reflection leads nowhere.
- Remember that reflection is developed through use; that it grows, strengthens, and matures.

Reflection is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2012) as “The action or process of thinking carefully or deeply about a particular subject, typically involving influence from one’s past life and experiences.” Jean Piaget and John Dewey³ were among the linguistics who took this discourse further in the field of Language. As understanding Language is a creative process it is necessary for a student to think out of box and see the world from his own understanding. Reflection theory focuses on the

development of the ideas based on questioning such as

- a. How and what did I learn?
- b. How did the team perform and did I play my role fruitfully as a team mate?
- c. What worked and what didn’t?
- d. How did I and my team feel during the process?
- e. What can we do better next time as a team?
- f. Did I reach my goals, why or why not?
- g. Did I have individual goal?
- h. Did the team reach the goal?
- i. Was there conflict, if yes then could we fix it? If yes then how? If not then why?
- j. Were we a TEAM?

It connects the reading with practical knowledge where a student can relate the language with his personal experience. Gibbs⁴ explores the idea as a cycle of reflection. He stated six dimensions or stages for reflection-

- Description: It describes text with an understanding of thought.
- Feelings: It means not to write an explanation given by a teacher but to have a feel of text and connect it with one’s own experience, and then express it in the form of writing.
- Evaluation: It has a two way process, first, to be done by oneself and then by others. First is self assessment and the other is evaluation. Evaluation should have a continuous process which enables the learner to examine his or her mistakes and not to repeat the same in future.
- Analysis: It has a clear relation with Evaluation which gives ample space to a learner to analyze text or situation.
- Conclusions: It works in a manner which can help a learner to be critically strong in his arguments and grow it further. In terms of literature a person can reach to a conclusion different from others and show the other side of the coin as well. Here, one can clearly see the reflection where a person can reflect on the content of the text and on the form of text, in which invariably the context also comes forth as a support.

- Action plan: It prepares the learner to come into action and plan his strategy beforehand.

It is important to examine reading a text from the perspective of a learner. It becomes a lifelong process to read, understand and critically analyze the text. First of all we read and take a description of the text and context. This includes both active and passive reading. When we read a text closely we get a feel of it. This is the moment where we decide if we are really getting into the idea of the text or just passing through. Here the learner can stop for a moment and decide if he/she wants to continue with the text or wishes to change the same. Nowadays syllabi are also giving this option to the students as young but intelligent learners. The decision depends on Feeling of the text.

This follows that Evaluation, Analysis and Conclusion is consistently related to one another. When a learner puts in one's effort to get the feel of the text, then he usually evaluates the content and form. One analyzes the text and understands the meaning between the lines. It is not just mere reading but actually connecting with a text and leading the one towards creativity and cognition. Reaching to a conclusion does not end up the world in literature and in Language but opening up new horizons as the learner. Here a learner can pursue his passion to become a reviewer, a critique or an editor of the lingual text, or to be a fulltime writer or editor, or even a good reader or an orator too. Re-writing a text or re-interpreting old texts may create some interesting examples or anecdotes, and enable the reader to read it further in different ways.

It is getting to be amply clear that reflection is not just a report of factual information. It is a construction of three basic elements-

1. Retell- It states the basic facts of the incident or activity but also examines how a learner feels about the text and describes the situation with a blend of emotion and thought.
2. Relate –It relates the feelings or events to other examples as to re-interpret the old text in a new dimension. We can see this in folk tradition, in orality and in history also.

3. Reflect – How will the knowledge gained from the event or experience be used either in your professional or personal life by giving examples. This also talks about possible alternatives, other perspectives or meanings. Reflection may result in biography, Autobiography or any kind of critical analysis.

This theory puts emphasis on learning to become an active learner. While teaching a vernacular as second language or encountering with a foreign language it focuses on four things as—

1. A practical learning experience within the course
2. A review of your learning in a unit
3. A response to a text
4. A past experience

When a student or learner is engaged in Language acquisition it helps him in improving his metacognitive learning and in enhancement of capacity as reader and writer. A student when engaged in writing with the sense of purpose responses to a text with one's own opinion. Language Acquisition is achieved through continuous learning.

Meta-cognition is used in educational psychology, but when we discuss the idea and nature of Meta-cognition, and then it connects with each and every discipline of learning. Although the nature and details seem very abstract from the metacognitive, we all are engaged in meta-cognitive activities everyday which enables us to be successful learners, and associate ourselves with intelligence. Borkowski, Carr and Pressley and Sternberg put emphasis on day to day learning activities. Meta-cognition refers to higher order thinking which involves active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning. Activities such as planning to approach a given learning task, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating progress toward the completion of a task are meta-cognitive in nature to determine the ways to teach the students to apply their cognitive resources through meta-cognitive control.

Thus this theory implies very clearly on learning and acquisition of Language, where, with metacognition activities a learner co-relates its own experience with

the text and relates it with the self to be a better learner.

Metacognition is often simply defined as "thinking about thinking." Education Professor Hope Hartman⁵ has described reflective practice in education as teacher metacognition.

- Students and teachers also develop meta-cognitive awareness to become conscious of their own thinking processes as they grapple with diverse texts.
- This enables student-teachers to enhance their capacities as readers and writers by becoming participants in the process of reading.
- This theory offers opportunities to read a wide variety of texts where students analyze various text structures to see how these contribute to the comprehension of a text.
- Student-teachers get opportunities to write with a sense of purpose and audience through tasks such as responding to a text with one's own opinions or writing within the context of other's ideas.

John Flavell⁶ defines Meta-cognition in two components- one is knowledge and other is cognition which includes the process of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation. Metacognition is a particularly important aspect of modern Reflective Practice. There is a broad correlation between metacognition (being aware of one's own thinking) and conscious competence (being aware of one's own capability)

We can conclude by accepting that Reflective Teaching works in all the areas of learning to take into account the action of the individual and the collective reflection. It reflects the mental process of thinking, and enables the student / learner to draw conclusions for building new knowledge. Simultaneously it encourages the teacher to monitor his own learning and develop their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. It further helps to understand the wider socio-political perspectives and other relevant diverse contexts and to analyze, understand, evaluate and interpret events and experiences in which we all are involved.

In conclusion, whether one uses human thinking or divine thinking, it is always the result that matters. It is important to understand how to enhance the excellence of men and material. Reflective thinking

builds the capacity to consider failures at each stage, and perhaps, plan alternative moves at the very beginning. This would be one of the most effective, significant and relevant manner in contribution to the field of knowledge.

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Online Resources:

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