

Enhancing Teacher Professional Development through Reflective Teaching Approach (Reflective Practices: A means To Teacher Development)

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Abstract:--Education is meant to enable learners to inquire not only without but within. This aim can be achieved only if the teacher can create a situation in which such an inquiry is possible. Through reflection, teacher can explore themselves and that of others. Reflective practice is a process that brings about changes in teaching, learning and understanding and it also has an important role to play in professional development. Students understand themselves better when they carry out systematic enquiry into themselves and also into their practices and their students. They professionally grow on their own by constantly looking into their own actions and experiences. In this study, a quantitative research was conducted to see the effectiveness of reflective practices in the development of student teachers to develop their reflective practices during their practice teaching sessions. The paper attempts to establish that reflective practice is a tool for student teachers to explore themselves and thereby leading to their professional development.

Keywords: Reflective teaching, Reflective practice, Student Teachers, Teacher development

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of education and the roles of teachers in the implementation of the curriculum cannot be overstated. No nation can develop beyond the capacity of its human resource; the survival of any society depends largely on the quality and perhaps quantity of human resource at its disposal.

Therefore Mujibu (2008) sees a teacher as an expert who is capable of impacting knowledge that will help learners to build, identify and acquire skills that will be used to face challenges of life.

Federal republic of Nigeria realized that no education system can arise beyond the qualities of its teacher. The society today is full of graduates who parade paper qualifications but lack the skills and competence needed in the labour market. The best teachers contemplate the manner in while they all present a topic and have a wide variety of instructional strategies at their disposal. A teacher with training is more mature and confident to perform is task more efficiently. The quality of our human capital depends on the quality of our teachers. What students learn is directly related to what and how teachers teach depends on the knowledge, skills and commitments.

The need to improve the quality of science teaching and learning for citizens so that they develop scientific literacy to cope with the demands of science and technology growth has been the learning of every nation in the 21st century Adediwura & Bada (2007) and Ehindero & Ajibade (2000) supports good methods of teaching that would make the learners develop and have sound education and to develop skills and professionalism on the part of the teachers. Therefore reflective teaching is an innovative approach that orientates teachers towards self-focus and self-evaluation which involves the transformation of professional values and actions of the teachers and that of others who he or she interacts with.

What is reflective teaching pedagogy?

Reflective teaching orientates teachers toward self-focus and self-evaluation. It involves the transformation of professional values and actions of the teachers and that of others who he or she interacts with. Reflective teaching means looking at what you do in the classroom, thinking about why you do it and thinking about if it works or not. It is a process of self-observation and self-evaluation in which strength and weaknesses are identified and then adjust to re-plan for better performance. It is a means of professional development which begins in the classroom. It is paying critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday action by examining practice relatively and reflectively, (Bolton 2010). Reflective teaching is in three phases: planning, teaching and de briefing.

Reflective teaching can also be seen as a process whereby teachers reflect on their teaching practices in order to examine the overall effectiveness of their instructive approaches. Improvement or change in teaching methods may be required, depending on the outcome of this analytical process, which is based on critical reflection. Reflective teaching is about a skilled teaching of knowing what to do. In this manner, reflective teaching is a professional alternative to action research. There are three modes of reflective teaching, the reflection that takes place before action as "reflection for action" the reflection that occurs during the action as "reflection in action" and the reflection occurring after the action as "reflection on action". Developing effective teachers has become one of the basic underlining principles of all

teachers' education courses and reflective teaching is an essential factor for the enhancement of the development of effective teachers.

Role of reflective teaching in teacher education

Reflective teaching is an innovative teaching learning process that is 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 (Schon, 1987). By collecting information about what goes in the classroom and by analyzing and evaluating this information, teachers identify and explore their own practices and underlying beliefs. This may then lead to changes and improvements in teaching. Navaneedhan (2006) said reflective teaching methodology involves questioning one own self to bring perfections by asking the following question:

- Which teaching model am I using?
- How does it apply in specific learning situations?
- How well is it working?

According to Navaneedhan, teacher educator should apply this theory in classroom practice in order to observe and reflect on the results so that the classroom becomes a kind of laboratory where the teacher can relate teaching theory to teaching practice.

Navaneedhan (2006) opined that, reflective teaching involves recognizing, examining and ruminating over the way an individual teaches. As individuals possess their own background and experience, they bring certain beliefs, assumptions, knowledge, attitudes and values to teaching. A teacher finds his/her initial teaching effort stressful, but with experience he/she acquires a repertoire of teaching strategies that he/she draws on throughout his/her teaching, and invariably constitutes his or her teaching style.

Dewey (1933) on the other hand describes reflection as an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and other conclusions to which it tends that allows individual to think critically and scientifically. Reflective teaching strategies are important for instruction and learning Rogers(, 2001). Many theorists agreed that reflection enhances the quality and depth for knowledge (Cunliffe, 2004, Koster, Brekelmans, Korthagen & Wubbles, 2005,). Quality teaching results from a process by which educators experiment, inquire, reflect and consistently compare their teaching behaviours with their espoused theory of action.

Pickett (2005) describes reflective teaching as expanding in depth and range of question you ask about your own teaching undertaking a more systematic approach to practices and collaborating with others which have similar interest and questions. Supporting this claim Hui-wen & Pin-yin (2005) stated that reflective teaching is not a renewal in teacher-student's interaction but also a helpful means to facilitate teacher's professional growth. Jerez (2008) also said that reflective teaching allows students to express themselves.

Mellissa (2011) in his own opinion describe importance of reflective teaching as a teaching-learning methodology which involves self-evaluation technique adopted by teachers to promote motivation within oneself in order to make the teaching process more interesting and effective.

As opined by Schon (1997), reflective teaching should be a continuous process and involves the learner thoughtfully considering his/her own experience in applying knowledge to practice while being taught by professionals. It helps the individual to develop their own personality. Lieberman and miller (2000) pointed out that reflective teaching, reflective inquiry, and reflection on practice, results in gaining the personal and professional knowledge that is so important to being an effective teacher and in shaping children's learning. Han in Navaneedhan (2006) stated that, the process element of reflection emphasizes how teachers make decisions; content stresses the substance that drives the thinking and reflective inquiry which may set the stage for learning how to be a good teacher. Gibbs (2004) pointed that reflective teaching suggests that individuals develops analysis of feelings, evaluation of experience etc. Day (2002) proposed reflective teaching as that act of creating a mental space in which to contemplate a question of idea such as "what do I know about teaching young children now? this type of repeated questioning leads to mental transformation to a time and situation that leads to a deeper perspective in helping students.

Jasper (2003) associated continuous reflective teaching with lifelong learning resulting in the development of autonomous, qualified and self-directed professionals. Bartlett cited in Navaneedhan (2006) pointed out that becoming a reflective teacher involve moving beyond a primary concern with instructional techniques and how to question as well as asking "what" and "why" questions that regard instructions and managerial techniques, not as ends in themselves, but as part of broader education purposes. Asking the questions, "what" and "why" gives certain power over individual's teaching, resulting in the emergence of autonomy and responsibility in the work of teachers in reflecting on the above kind of questions, teachers begin to exercise control and open up the possibility of transforming everyday classroom life.

Navaneedhan, (2006) emphasized that research on reflective teaching over the past two decades has shown that, it is linked to inquiry and continuous professional growth. Reflective teaching can be a beneficial form of professional development at both the pre service and in-service levels of teaching. It develops critical thinking and promotes experiential learning. It enhances personal growth. It gives freedom to teachers to impose their own methodology enhancing rational thinking.

By engaging in reflective teaching, teachers show a capacity (or disposition) to analyze the process of what they are doing and to reconstruct their professional and personal knowledge schemes, while simultaneously making a judgment to adapt their practice to best match the needs of students. Reflective

teaching involves critical examination of our motivation, thinking and practice; this leads Narvaez (2010) to describe reflective teaching as an interpersonal experience leading to insight about ourselves as actors in our worlds.

Kullman in Ogonor & Badmus (2006) said a major focus of reflective teaching is personal growth. The reflective process involves continuous self observation and evaluation of the trainee to understand individual actions and the reactions of learners. The process was conceptualized as an action research model whereby people learn and create knowledge by critically reflecting upon their own action and experiences, forming abstract concept and testing the implications of these concepts in new situations. The value of engaging in reflective activity is enhanced if it is carried out in association with the colleagues, they may be trainees, teaching assistants, teachers or tutors (Pollard, 2006). Reflective teachers are likely to benefit from working together, experimenting, talking and reflecting with others. Apart from the benefits for learning and professional development, it is usually more interesting and more fun.

Reflection involves intuition, emotion, and passion. And is not something that can be neatly packaged as a set of techniques for teachers to use. Reflection is the key to successful leaning for teachers and for learners. Reflection is an underpinning value and is the key to become a professional teacher. Experience and length of service do not however necessarily make an expert, experience needs reflection if we are to become expert teachers, hence the process of reflection helps us to monitor our own development from raw beginners to experienced professional.

Reflective teaching is

- Personal fulfilling
- Increase in the quality of the education provided for children
- Satisfies performance, standards and competences
- Draws particular attention to the aims, values and social consequences of education
- Challenges

Pollard (2006) deduced seven key characteristics of reflective practice form Dewey's notion of reflective action

- (1) Reflective teaching implies an active concern with aims and consequences as well as means and technical efficiency.
- (2) Reflective teaching is applied in a cyclical or spiraling process, in which teacher's monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously.
- (3) Reflective teaching requires competence in methods of evidence based classroom enquiry to support the progressive development of higher standards of teaching.
- (4) Reflective teaching requires attitudes of open mindedness responsibility and wholehearted.

- (5) Reflective teaching is based on teacher judgment, informed by evidenced based enquiry and insight from other research.
- (6) Reflective teaching, professional leaning and personal fulfillment are enhanced through collaboration and dialogue with colleagues.
- (7) Reflective teaching enables teacher to creatively mediate externally developed frameworks for teaching and learning
- (8) Some Literature reviews on reflective teaching

Going through literature most of the works done on reflective teaching were based on pre service teachers and not in service teachers probably because of one reason or the other.

The ability of a teacher to reflect on his/her teaching is an important element of any successful teacher education program. Efe (2011) investigated science student's teacher attitude about reflective practice and found that science student's teachers attitudes towards reflective practice change in relation to the subjects and years of study.

Ojanen (2002) studied how student teachers develop skills necessary for reflective teaching during their field experience. He explored the role of the teacher educator as a coach and found out that teacher educators can most effectively coach students teachers in reflective teaching by using students personal histories, dialogue, journals, as well as small and large group discussions about their experience to help them reflect upon, and improve their teaching.

Similarly, Kettle & Stellars (2000) studied the development of third year teaching students'. They analyzed the students' reflective writings and interviewed them extensively about their reflective practices. They found that the use of peer reflective groups encouraged student's teacher to challenge existing theories and their own preconceived views of teaching while modeling for them a collaborative style of professional development that would be useful throughout their teaching carriers.

McIntyre as cited in Efe (2011) studied the way reflection was being theorized in the teacher education program of Oxford University. His framework of different levels of reflection drawing on the conceptualization of Carr & Kemmis (1986) in teacher education helps to clarify the level of reflection in student teachers practices. He asserts three levels of reflection for students' teachers, viz: Technical, which focuses on 'the reflective attainment of goals. Practical, which focuses on the assumptions, predispositions, values and consequences with which actions are linked, and Critical or emancipator, which focuses on wider ethical, social and political issues including crucially the institutional and societal forces which may constrain these individual's freedom of action or limit the efficacy of his or her actions.

Halton & smith (2011) found that reflection on action can be in the form of descriptive (seeking what is seen as best possible practice), dialogic (weighing competing claims and

view point and then exploring alternative solutions), or critical (seeing as problematic, according to ethical criteria, the goals and practices of one's profession). Reflection in action also has a technical (drawn from a given research/theory base, but always interpreted in light of personal worries and previous experience) form in addition to the other three forms.

A student teacher sharing her personal diary account as shared with a teacher education in class reported that:

"I assumed as a consequence of my own lack of enthusiasm that the students had a relationship with the subject. I sought to identify the factors contributing to their experience and experiment with alternative ways of teaching based on the feedback I record..... it was in their (students) Responses that I realized that my perceptions were not entirely accurate....."

"I was surprised to find that the students generally felt positive towards the subject but identified key elements that took away from their learning experience. This made me feel, confident that choosing to pursue ways of responding to some of these highlighted issues in my teaching practice make the environment more stimulating for my students".

The teacher here has demonstrated the value in questioning her taken for granted assumptions of practice. Her reframing (and subsequent actions) have helped her to learn more about the practice setting in a way that has been helpful for all, (teacher and students) clearly then, her reflection has had an effect to her practice. It could be regarded as effective practice. Narvaez (2010) expressing her experience on reflective teaching has this to say:

"Some years ago I had a problem and I tried to solve it through reflection, I was working with children and I realized I had a problem managing the group because I left the classroom with a headache due to the noise they continuously did while chatting, screening and playing. The first thing I did was to identify the issue and observed my class. I realized I did not know how to control the group. It was influenced by my belief that a good teacher should not take a student out of the classroom when they cause trouble but to find a way to work the situation out. Then, I started to ask for suggestions with my colleagues. They had more experience than me and provided me with good Ideas. However, I did not feel that was enough to solve the problems so I began to search through the internet and in different books to find more about classroom management after that I made decisions and put some suggestions and activities into practice to see how they worked.

According to the results, I saved the ones that worked best for me in my repertoire, changing my points of view therefore, I followed some steps that canning in Narvaez (2010) mentioned; to develop professionally in an active process of integrating the best advice of others (research, reports, methods, materials) my own experience what I believed was right and my experience, what I believed was right and my own goals related to what I wanted to change.

She concluded from her personal experience that reflective teaching can promote professional development in each of the constituent teacher's education such as knowledge, skills, attitude and awareness.

Frieduis (2002) describes a case study of one teacher/graduate student struggling to make sense of her beliefs and practices about what constitutes good teaching, her initial pedagogy for teaching was based on the traditions and practices of direct teaching. Her traditional socialization into teaching made it difficult for her to understand that her views of good teaching were being challenged in her practice. After implementing reflecting teaching techniques in her classroom, she was able to acknowledge and validate what she was learning.

Nnavaneedhan (2006) who studied reflective teaching pedagogy as innovative approach in teacher education through open and distance learning. The result was found to be favourable as it reflected on better academic performance of the students in whose class the reflective teaching learning pedagogy was practiced.

Ogonor & badmus (2006) on the other hand studied reflective teaching among student teachers in a tertiary institution in Nigeria. The findings from this study indicated that student teachers were elated and had opportunities for professional growth as they practice reflective teaching. However they stated that teachers of partnership schools could not provide specific professional support to them during the practice period because they have less knowledge of what they are doing.

This study was in line with Norsworthy (2008) in his research work where 59% of the study respondents who were pre service teacher in new Zealand find out that through reflective activities student teacher's prior approaches to learning was a hindrance to their capacity to learn in manners which is reflective. The respondents also identified specific problem which constituted the hindrance as follows: that their dependence on receiving note in form of handout from their teachers, inability to think for themselves or get deeply engaged with the learning task due to their beliefs and dispositions to rote learning and memorization as strategies to pass examination, their test strategy was to give back to the teacher one right answer, to regurgitate the content of their teacher's note.

Also the respondents reported a sense of inadequacy apprehension and boredom, an emotional state which they find out hindered their reflective learning.

The study of Ige & Olayode (2010) on two modes of reflective teaching on students' academic achievement in basic science showed that, there is the need to incorporate reflective teaching in Nigerian schools because the use of the combination of reflection for action and reflection in action increased academic achievement of students. This study is in line with Agoro (2012) who studied the effect of reflective reciprocal peer tutoring strategies on pre service teachers'

achievement in integrated science and recommended that, it enhanced student's achievement in integrated science, instructional strategies using reflective reciprocal teaching and reflective reciprocal peer tutoring should be adopted in colleges of education to teach integrated science.

Pollard (2006) showed that reflective teaching leads to a steady increase in the quality of education provided for children. Indeed because it is evidenced based, reflective teaching supports initial trainee students, newly qualified teachers, teaching assistants and experienced professionals in satisfying performance standards competence.

Maarof (2007) examined the reflective journal entries of 42 trainee teachers who underwent teaching practicum in schools in Malaysia. The study investigated the types of reflections, strategies, and perceptions of the trainees towards reflective journal/diary writing. The findings of the study indicated that 77% of the trainee stated that the task assisted them in evaluation their teaching methods, strength, weaknesses, problems in the teaching.

Ahmed & Al-khalili (2014) examine the impact of reflective teaching approach on teaching skills of primary science student teachers. Data analysis revealed that the approach was effective on developing the overall teaching skills of elementary education student learning, planning, introduction, use of new materials, classroom management and evaluating their teaching and learning process, furthermore students involved indicated that the approach helps them in identifying strength and weakness in teaching. They also indicated that it assisted them in discovering means of correcting and improving their teaching.

Similarly, Rigney & Tur (2003) in their reconciliation education topic for teacher education students at Flinders University also mention the value of interactive journals foster an important and intimate relationship between the tutor and lecturer and promote reconciled space in relation to the set themes for the topic. The interactive journal in there is a key tool for the translation and application of concepts and values underpinning indigenous education.

Walkington (2005) in her work with beginning teachers at the University of Canberra, she found that a supportive mentoring process during the practicum creates important opportunities for both the pre service and in service teachers to think out loud and therefore discover, challenge and celebrate their developing teacher identity.

Ogunbameru & Uwameiye (2012) studied the strategy for improving teaching practice in Nigeria colleges of education that suggested that reflective teaching should be adopted as a strategy for improving the teacher and learning competences of teachers in training, to adequately prepare them for their professional roles as teachers. Such skills as planning, decision making, teamwork, collaboration communication, adaptability, analytical, critical for survival in the twenty first

century work setting should be incorporated to teaching exercise to develop in pre service teachers

Zeichner (2007) noted that when educators reflect, they are able to make improvements in the quality of instruction. This and similar findings led Ostorga (2006) to conclude that because reflection informs teaching practices, strategies that aim to enhance reflective skills should be developed and implemented. Furthermore, national accreditation bodies such as the NCATE, certification bodies, such as the national board for professional teaching standards (NBPTS), and recognition organizations, such as the council for higher education accreditation (CHEA) all advocate for reflective thought on teaching as a valuable practice for the professional and future educators

II. METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative enquiry for the research and data was collected through a structured questionnaire and a semi –structured interview. The participant were 15 students enrolled for the three years B.Ed programme at University of Nsuka, College of education campus, Ikere-Ekiti. The student teachers completed the questionnaire about their experience of reflection on the activities conducted in the science classroom. The teachers conducted a qualitative analysis of the responses of the questionnaire and analyse the reflective journal maintained by each student.

Strategies to Practice Reflection

The findings of the research on reflective practices help the research to identify different strategies that can be practiced in the pre service training programme. The first step towards the process of reflection is to gather information about what happens in the class followed by analysis of the data. Here are some different ways of doing this.

(i). *Teacher's diary*– keeping a written diary remains an excellent way of recording classroom situation, feelings and perspectives, it can offer a safe space to express the emotional side of teaching as well as more systematic attempts to analyze and reflect. A diary is also a record and can be revisited in later days, weeks or years to consider both specific issues and the process of continuing professional development. While a diary can simply be a cathartic record, it has the potential to be more than this. Once you have it, then you do have a document which can be analyzed. It expresses one's feelings and perspective. It is the easiest way to begin a process of reflection since it is purely personal. After each lesson, the teacher writes in a notebook what happened. He/she describes his/her reactions and feelings and those he/she observed on the part of the students. It is likely the teacher begins to pose questions about what he/she has observed. Diary writing does not require a certain discipline in taking the time to do it on regular basis.

Collaborative diary keeping can also be used as a way of developing reflective view of teachers teaching. A group of teachers reported that: collaborative diary keeping brought

several benefits to their development. It raised their awareness of classroom process and prompted them to consider those processes more deeply than they may otherwise have. Collaborative diary keeping also provided encouragement and support, it served as a source of teaching ideas and suggestions, and in some sense it gave them a way to observe one another's teaching from a "safe distance".

These teachers observed however that: collaborative diary keeping is more effective if the scope of issues considered is focused more narrowly and a large block of commitment and time is needed. Participants must be comfortable in sharing both pleasant and unpleasant experiences and be committed to gaining a clearer picture of their teaching and their classrooms.

- (1) *Recording lessons*: video or audio recordings of lessons can provide very useful information for reflection. A teacher may do things in class that he is not aware of or there may be things happening in the class that as the teacher you do not normally see. Audio recordings can be useful for considering aspects of teacher talk. Poland (2006) said a video tape version of a lesson gives teaching team the opportunity to engage in self-observation, enable them to take a more objective look at teacher teaching strategies as well as noticed unobserved student, recording for one or two weeks period and them randomly selecting a cassette for closer analysis. This recording could be used as the basis for initial assessment. Where videos facilities are available in school, the teacher can request to have the lesson recorded or with access to video equipment, student themselves can be assigned this responsibility, A 30 minutes recording usually provides more than sufficient data for analysis.
- (2) *Photograph*: is about recording what happens in the classroom, it provides valuable source of information, it captures frames of action rather than the sequence of action itself, once taken and downloaded into a computer it can provide excellent basis for reflective discussions and others
- (3) *Students' feedback*: The teacher can also ask his/her students what they think about what goes on in the classroom. Their opinions and perceptions can add a different and valuable perspective. A considerable amount of evidences has been collected in relation to student ignoring the children views of teachers. Much of the evidence suggests that students like teachers who make them learn. They expect teachers to teach, by which they seems to take initiatives to be controlled and to provide interesting activities, they also like teachers who are prepared to be flexible and respond to the different interests of the individuals in the class and to provide some scope for pupils choice (Pollard et al, 2000 and Cooper & Hyland, 2002).If the working relationship

with the students is good, there will be a positive feedback from the students.

- (4) *Peer observation*: A teacher who is interested in improving instructional practices could be asked to observe the other teachers. The teacher should have a trait in mind on which the colleague will concentrate, for example, it could be the teacher questioning strategies, he/she will only need to take note of how many questions have only one right answers and how many are more open ended or the teacher might need to observe the use of wait time is given to student to think .Both the teachers come together during debriefing sessions, discuss about you and your colleagues perceptions of the lecture.
- (5) *Action Research*: action research is a kind of reflective practices. It is a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by teachers to understand their practice and improves the way the address issues and solves problems. It also help the student teachers to be aware of what Is happening in the classroom by identifying common problems and hypothesizing about possible causes and solutions and attempting to apply an action plan. Once the student teachers has some information about what goes on in their classroom, they must think ,talk, read and ask about the information they have collected. They can identify the patterns occurring in their teaching through the observation. Then, he/she should find out the ways to overcome it. In this research study, the student teachers adopted all the strategies and reflected on their practices. The researchers could find a significant change in the behavior of the student teachers.

III. CONCLUSION

Reflective teaching orientates teachers towards self-focus and self-evaluation. it involves the transformation of professional values and actions of the teachers and that of others who he./she interact with. It is a process of self-observation and self-evaluation in which strength and weaknesses are identified and then adjust to replay for better performance. It is a means of professional development which begins in our class.

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