

Title: Reflective Teaching in Teaching Social Skills: Utopia or Necessity?

By: Dr. Hakan Usakli

ABSTRACT

Social skills can be defined as the skills to be gained to the students at the beginning of the academic year, like engaging in, self introducing, and asking questions. Those skills can be gained by the teachers.

Reflective teaching is very significant for teachers. Teachers pay attention to everything in the classroom during their instruction. They think of the objectives and the targets to be advanced, do objective observations, and then diversify the methods with respect to the classroom atmosphere. Reflective teaching is among the most popular practices studied recently. In this study, the value of reflective teaching for both the guidance practitioner (psychological counselor) and the teachers (secondary education teachers) is reported.

Reflective teaching requires a lasting self-observation and self-evaluation in order to figure out both own and students' behaviors and responses. In this study, the effect of an application of reflective teaching in group counseling on teaching social skills is investigated. The teacher arranged a group counseling meeting with other teachers in order to give orientation to first grade secondary students. In the study, the researcher clarifies the importance of reflective teaching for teacher development. Instead of listening the teacher responses like "They do not know", "They are disregardful", "They haven't learned" or the whimpers like "These are all utopia, here come and do yourself", it is better to explain them the reflective teaching as a counseling action. Although the reflective teaching is not common in our country, the professionals of this area found abroad, especially in United Kingdom and United States, can be invited to our country. In order to have a maximum efficacy, teachers should improve themselves for systematically researching the education context.

Keywords:

Social Skills Teaching, Reflective Teaching, Utopia
Dr. Hakan Usakli Sinop Turkey hakanusakli@yahoo.com

Introduction

At the beginning of education year, especially for the first graders, skills like, engaging in, self-introducing, and reflecting understanding may be defined as social skills. Although such skills are considered to be simple when compared with science, history or philosophy education, these skills declare much complicated processes. They should be gained by the teachers.

Teacher has various roles in the classroom. They are the information user, controller, creator and information supply in the classroom. Reflective teaching plays a big role in teachers' self development. One can find the answer to the problem by making critical observations (especially with colleagues, Richards: 2009) . If one wants to be a criticizing reflective teacher, the first thing is to have good relationships with the students. The questions of "what" and "why" should be asked to the self. By this way, one can see his actions in the historical or cultural context. This is a way of developing yourself both as an individual and as society.

One can learn so much by realizing own faults. One can improve himself step by step. However, in order to do this, one should be open to every reform (Usakli, 2006: 2).

Processes of Reflection

Experience/continuous activity practice
Problem
Knowledge and observation
Solutions
Testing the ideas for evaluating validity

Teacher is directly or indirectly affected by the society.

The circle of activities in reflective teaching process

Map construction: “what am I doing as a teacher?”

- Recording the routines in the classroom in diaries
- Thoughts about teaching
- Observation and information collecting part

Providing information: “what does the education I give mean?”

- Developing self understanding of teaching method by communicating with colleagues and students
- Identifying the uncertainties about educational objectives.

Proving the truth: “how did I come up here?”

- With the help of the ideas of colleagues, students, family and other people, proving our assumptions about our teaching method from a critical point of view

Evaluation: “how else can I teach?”

- Researching different teaching methods that are consistent with our new understanding
- Evaluating proficiency

Performing the behavior: “what and how can I teach now?”

- Practical application of new ideas about education
- Deciding on what and how to teach for being a good teacher (Usakli, 2007).

The steps used by guidance counselor in social skills education:

1) Collecting descriptive information: teacher needs detailed and different points of view when collecting information about the events in the classroom. They can achieve this by the data collection instruments they selected. In order to create an objective analysis, four different “lenses” are needed:

- e) teacher’s self experiences written about both the students and his point of views
- f) students’ views
- g) colleagues experiences and views
- h) the existing theory based literature (Usakli, 2005).

Teacher wants from a colleague to observe his class twice. The classroom teacher takes notes about the responses students give to the activities. He collects the observations on a paper. And besides, he keeps a diary to record the events.

2) Analyzing the information: after the collection of the information, the data may be analyzed with respect to behaviors, assumptions, beliefs, objectives and results. Teacher asks these questions to himself:

“what happened in the classroom?”

“which theories are found in the data collected?”

“what are the results of teacher behavior?” (Usakli, 2008).

Each week, teacher summarizes what he recorded in the diary. He compares his notes with his colleagues' notes and observations.

3) Thinking about a different way for the situation or activity: the teacher should examine the alternative ways produced. The observer discusses with his colleague the ways to make the students active and developer. Teacher visits his colleague's class to observe the teaching method, and also talk about this concept with the two other beginning level teachers.

4) Creating a plan to combine new understandings: reflection aims to develop educational application so, teachers should combine the information and view they obtained by the reflective teaching they applied in the classroom. The important thing is to combine the understandings and continue to reflective process in the outgoing planning, deciding and observing the effect operations (Wetton, Cansell, 1993).

Significance: It is important for the first grade high school students to gain some skills from the classroom teachers at the beginning of the semester. Especially the skills like self introducing and engaging in the lesson should be gained by the students at the very beginning of the academic year. This can be achieved by a collaborative work of both the guiding teacher and the students. This study is important for both the guiding teachers' strategy development in making the students gain social skills, and for the teachers declaring the complicity they face.

Results

As a result, reflective teaching offers some practical choices that may lead to professional development. It encourages teachers to develop and share their ideas and theories about teaching.

e) Flexibility: this application can be used in educational contexts, student groups and curriculum programs. There exists related sources and sufficient teacher training in this subject. Reflective teaching addresses such a variation.

f) Usability: reflective teaching is useful for teachers who have limited time and sources.

g) Professionalism: it helps in the development of planning, in the application of education and theories and in the development of careful behaviors. Teachers develop reacting and responding skills when they are teaching.

h) Durability: reflective teaching requires a cycling process. If the issue is not achieved in the first application, same process is applied again.

Reflective teaching requires a permanent self development, and sufficient time to achieve this. In order to apply reflective teaching, teachers should be trained, time should be given for the experiment, and the chance for self development should be given for this application. The problems teachers face at the beginning of education:

In the construction of education, the priority of the teacher lies down his language, learning and teaching assumptions. The most significant differences are in alternative views, aims and objectives of reflective education.

In order to develop his teaching style teacher asks some questions to himself. There are two types of reflective teaching: micro- reflective teaching and macro- reflective teaching. Micro reflective teaching is concerned with the content and objectives, as can be seen from the following questions.

- How can I teach the vocabulary and grammar structures in the book better?
- How can I comprehend all the issues in the curriculum better?
- How can I achieve the group work better in a noisy class?
- How can I organize an efficient parents meeting?
- How can I organize staff meetings?
- How can I arrange better field trips?

Macro reflective teaching gives importance to lifelong teacher development and student education. It is concerned with the following:

- Do my students have the right to choose?
- Is autonomous, individual or collaborative education dominating in my class?
- Am I aware of student needs?
- How does my teaching style affect my students?
- Should I be a noisy teacher in a noisy class?
- How can I create an environment which makes the parents active?
- What is the educational meaning of quality?
- Where is my place in this area? Am I static or flexible?

In this article, the author used the research on behavior. According to the results of a study, teachers gave more importance to micro reflective teaching than macro reflective teaching.

Recommendations

One of the problems faced in reflective teaching is the over emphasis given to the technical aspect. Another problem is that teacher's personal and social theories about language education may not be harmonic.

Reflective teaching is not enough for professional development. One should also consider the qualitative aspect of reflection.

Teacher's mission is to handle with students' unexpected problems so they should improve themselves day by day. Teaching is a lifelong job.

Reflective teaching requires time, and teachers usually have difficulty in spending time and energy for this project when they are busy. This is a big problem for them.

One another problem is the difficulty of recording the observations and data on a paper. Data collection is usually fun for teachers but when it is time to record the data, teachers find it irritating and time consuming.

The active collaboration of the guiding teacher and other teachers in order to benefit from reflective teaching in social skills acquisition

Teachers' sense of belonging to a professional group should be developed. When this group is shared with other groups, the whole group will grow stronger. Moreover, the reflective teaching researcher assures collaboration among the people studying this area. This collaborative aspect among teachers, students, families and even school authorities reduces the loneliness feeling of teachers.

Reflective teaching is more beneficial in international level?

The international courses on reflective teaching provide several advantages for efficient professional development. No teacher should neglect that classes are different from each other. For example, like the developmental differences among first grade high school teachers, there are also differences between different high school types. Therefore, the social skills education is differing. One should not neglect the role of personal differences and culture on teaching.

Teachers usually find it discouraging to share their teaching style deficiencies with their colleagues. However, when the teachers are given the chance to talk with professionals, they may freely talk about everything.

Professionalism honor is an important aspect in teacher development. This sense may grow stronger with international teacher groups.

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Dr. Hakan Usakli

Drama Leader and teacher trainer in international and multi cultural educational settings.

Help Desk for Counselor and Guidance Practitioner Educational Psychologist