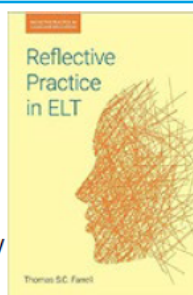


Reflective Practice in Language Education

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Being encouraged to reflect critically on one's own classroom practice with the purpose of making adaptations has become a central part of teacher education and professional development programmes. The principal aim of RP is to improve as an effective classroom practitioner and as a corollary provide excellent opportunities for students to learn (a new language) in a particular, unique context.

Reflective practice in ELT consists of seven chapters (179 pages) and discusses the concept of reflective practice in general, outlines the various known models and approaches currently in use and gives practical guidelines on cultivating reflective practice. The author's in-depth knowledge of the subject and many years' experience has led to the conceptualisation of an entire series dedicated to reflective practice in language education. The other books clarify different approaches that have been taken within RP and outline current themes e.g. using video to support reflection and the importance of RP in the induction years. Underpinned by cutting edge research and solid theory, the book is written in palatable English and structured as a self-study guide with prompt questions posed to the reader in shaded blocks. The chapters are self-contained, well-structured and assume no previous background in language teacher education or RP.

Chapter 1 deliberates over several definitions found in the literature on RP leading in with a famous quote by Socrates: "the unexamined life is not worth living" (p.7). Chapter 2 introduces various typologies starting off with John Dewey's original reflective inquiry model extended by Donald Schön. The typologies of David Kolb, Graham Gibbs, Christopher Johns, Stephen Brookfield and Terry Borton are also discussed. The author outlines his personal understanding of reflective practice using a typology from his earlier work and his updated framework for reflecting on practice. Chapter 3 presents six principles of RP which point to more than RP being just a means to fix or improve practice but extends beyond the classroom to encompass a teacher's career and life. Chapter 4 offers practical guidelines on reflective tools commonly used by teachers. These include dialogue writing, classroom observations, action research,

narrative study, case analysis and concept mapping. Both the benefits and the challenges of each tool are discussed. In Chapter 5 an experienced TESOL teacher shares his reflective journey using a holistic framework that covers his teaching philosophy, principles, theory and practice in and beyond the classroom. The complex and dynamic nature of RP is evident as he shares with the reader how he gained a full understanding of the factors which influence what teachers do in the classroom. Chapter 6 outlines how an individual can cultivate a reflective disposition and how RP should shift from being a (mandatory) ritual to a more meaningful and collaborative process. The final chapter discusses ten key questions related to RP in an attempt to dismiss the views of sceptics and to address some ambiguities associated with RP.

This text comes highly recommended and although the primary readership is described as those preparing to become language teachers or TESOL professionals, the book is not culture bound and has great applicability beyond the general ELT arena. Therefore, it is equally valuable to tutors, lecturers and practitioners involved in EOP, EAP, ESAP and academic literacies, since all these professionals need to embrace RP at some point in their careers. This also justifies the review of this publication in this Journal. The book ought to be a prescribed source for pre-service, novice and experienced teachers. Programme administrators, supervisors, and mentors will also find the contents useful as a refresher for evaluating their own practice.