REFLECTIVE TEACHER: THE GREAT DEMAND OF THE LEARNERS IN THE AUTOMATED WORLD

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The most popular definition of a reflective teacher refers to one who “receives, reconstructs, re-enacts, and critically analyses her own and her students performances”. Schulman, (1990). This describes a reflective teacher whose functions are to reflect and to evaluate a past action, an experience, or a decision. It is simply thinking seriously about what one does with a view to analyse what worked well and what went wrong. It shows the willingness to evaluate one’s own plans and decisions, to accept the consequences and constraints, and finally revise the future actions accordingly. Hence, a good reflective teacher regularly and systematically reviews the results of her teaching, identify loopholes as well as success ingredients and in the end “reconstructs” future alternatives.

To illustrate, the reflective teacher asks: Why were the students interested or not interested in this part of the lesson? What could I have done to arouse their curiosity? Was my teaching strategy effective? If I were to teach this part again, what would I change? Out of her ability to reflect, she is able to construct her own alternative teaching approach.

A reflective teacher willingly embraces the decision-making responsibilities. These are coupled with flexibility in planning future instructional practice, taking into account the consequences of her own action. The next decision may turn erroneous or confronted with constraints, but a reflective teacher keeps on trying. The central idea is that she creates and construct her own approach to teaching by considering personal experiences and alternative instructional practices.
Shulman (1990) cites three characteristics of a reflective teacher: (a) an ethic of caring, (b) a constructive approach, and (c) a tactful problem solving. Ethic of caring refers to the teacher’s expression of thoughtfulness. A teacher cares because she is “ethically bound to understand her students.” When a teacher practices the ethic of caring, she is simply guided by three effective ways: (a) confirmation, (b) dialog and (c) cooperative practice.

To confirm the students, a caring teacher takes time to help students discover their individual inclinations and capitalize on them. She recognizes the difference among them. The dialogue means to “talk honestly and openly about one’s innermost concerns”. The goal is to understand and in the long run to care. This highlights the role playing by values, beliefs and attitudes. Cooperative practice facilitates learning through counselling and guiding rather than just imparting knowledge.

A reflective teacher employs a constructivist way of dealing with students. A constructivist approach to teaching considers students as active participants in the learning process and not passive recipients of information. She is a “builder of knowledge”. She constructed her own meaning based on past experiences and personal purposes. Problem solving demands a continuous adaptation of the learning activities to the student’s background, interests, and needs. To attain quality education, a reflective teacher practices sound judgment, imagination, and flexibility. Summing up, a reflective teacher is a proactive participant in the determination of wise decisions regarding instruction practices that impact on herself, the students, and the school. Reflective teaching is a consistent and systematic review of one’s educational practices and problems can foster growth in herself, students and the system.

References:

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