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### Continuing Professional Development: Reflective Practice Enhances The Competencies Of The English Language Teachers

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#### ABSTRACT

Continuing Professional Development is the need of the hour, as it helps the teachers to improve their standard of teaching both professionally and personally. Indeed, it is focused and planned in all the sectors apart from the educational sector. CPD has followed many frameworks like Conference, Workshops, FDP, In-Service Training, Pre-Service Training, Peer Review, Reflective Practices etc., in order to enhance the teaching competencies of the teachers. Among them, Reflective Practice acts as the best practice for the professional development of the English Language Teachers. It helps the teachers to do self-analysis of their own act of teaching in the classroom. Also, it encourages the teachers to find their own solution through self-observation or peer- observation. So, this study suggests the need of Reflective Practice in ELT classes as it meets the needs of both teachers and students in the classroom..

#### 1. Introduction

CPD is the ongoing process and so it is necessary to update the skills and knowledge of the teachers frequently. To become quality teachers or professional experts, it is mandatory to learn new strategies and techniques according to the current need of the educational sector. So, an effective

practice is in need to enrich the skills and knowledge of the teachers. Reflection, in the words of a layman, "... simply means thinking about something," but for some, "it is a well-defined and crafted practice that carries very specific meaning and associated action" [14]. Reflective Practices is considered as the best practices because it helps the teachers to self-reflect on their own beliefs and values.

Reflecting on practice generally means that teachers subject their own beliefs, assumptions, and values about the teaching and learning to a critical analysis [1, 2]. Since, it is the bottom-down process, the root cause of the problems is identified inside the classroom and the teachers are the problem solvers. It is an inextricable element of teaching and learning, enabling teachers to identify and solve problems [5]. Classroom is the place of research and the teacher does his/her research in the real field. So, the problems are identified in the actual teaching situations and the teachers themselves bring out the solutions with the help of tools in teaching. As Reflective Practice is the Bottom – Up process [3], it scaffolds the teachers to understand their level of teaching and to improve their quality of teaching. Hence, it is considered as one of the effective practices of CPD. In pursuit of high-quality teacher education programmes and CPD activities, reflective practice has received wider attention because teaching experience itself does not guarantee improved practices [7, 8].

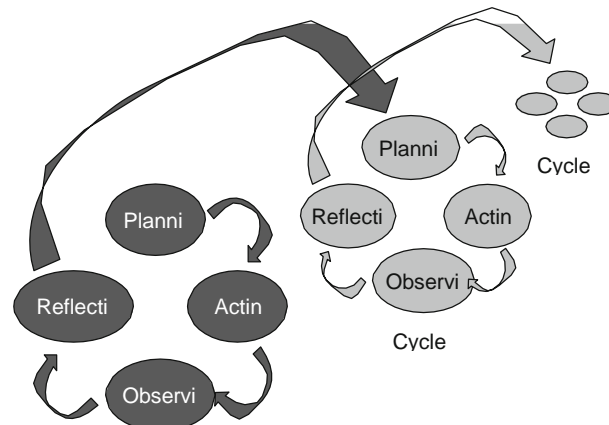
It helps the teachers to make critical analysis of their teaching by questioning themselves and their tasks. Also, it encourages the teachers to understand the expectations of the students through reflective questions. Apart from self-analysis, it empowers the teachers through peer observation too. Through continuous review or feedback of the colleagues, the teacher realizes their strength and weakness. This leads to the career enhancement of the teachers inside the classroom itself.

## **2. An overview of the paper & results**

Reflective Practice is one of the best tools in the world as it helps the teachers to bring out the solution of their problems. "Reflection is one of the most powerful tools teachers can use to explore, understand, and redirect their practice. Reflection is about learning to see and to understand what is seen. It is not simply being able to identify problems and frame solutions, although both are crucial." [9]. It also helps to access one's own thoughts and practices. It is essentially an ongoing process thinking and proactive assessment of own thoughts and practices, and their roots and effects [10].

This Reflective Practice helps the teachers to reach their destiny of success through best practices. It helps the teachers to plan, act, observe and reflect on their teaching practices in order to give the better outcome. It guides the teachers to assess their pedagogical techniques and strategies with unique thoughts through continuous assessment of their teaching in the classroom.

The teachers have the liberty to use different methods and approaches at various cyclic processes in order to bring out the best result.



**Figure 1** Action research spiral [2].

Further, it helps the teachers to analyze the fact based on the evidence gathered from their experience or research. So, it is in need for the teachers to record or gather the evidence for the problems in the classroom. To get involved in reflective practice, teachers need to collect information on the events on a regular basis then analyze and evaluate this information and ranks and compares them with the basic presupposition and credence, so that they could make modifications and enhancements in the teaching [1].

From the true evidence, the teachers sort their own problems with Reflective Practice tools to grow professionally. Some of the Reflective Practice tools are Journal Writing, Peer Observation, Audio Recording, Student's feedback etc., So with the help of these tools, the teacher analyses the way of teaching and also the expectations of the students. Johnson (2009) acknowledges that teachers need tools for analysing their practice against the relevant historical, cultural, political and social backdrops of their context [22].

Besides, the teachers follow the two forms of reflections, Reflection-in-action and Reflection-on- action. Reflection-on-action involves thinking back on events whereas reflection-in-action is 'thinking on your feet' [19]. The former is about the action taken by the teachers outside the classroom and also to take further steps to solve it. The lateris about the action taken by the teacher at the moment of teaching inside the classroom. Also, it is a continuing process, so a cyclic pattern of self-analysis is done by the teachers. Reflection and to help practitioners understand that their performance, as their reactions stimulated a conversation partner [12, 13].

### 3. Tools of reflective practice

As mentioned before, reflective tool, journal or diary writing is one of the best tools to practice reflection process inside the classroom. Daily recording in a notebook both by the teachers and the students help to understand the root cause of the problems. It also aids the teacher to rectify the mistakes in the classroom. This simple method brings a solution to the problems faced both by the students and teachers effectively.

Next tool is the collaborative learning process. Collaboration is an important aspect, where new ideas are shared, explored, justified and exhibited by the colleagues. They assist the fellow-teachers to analyze the difficulties and support them to face the challenges inside the classroom. It is also considered as one of the important tools in the reflective practice.

Followed by, video and audio recording is also one of the key tools for the reflective practice. It is the best evidence because it pictures the happenings of the class and highlights the strength and weakness of the teachers. These tools enable the teacher to move forward with the positive attitude by their own self-assessment process.

Subsequently, the other tool is reflective inquiry, which means asking questioning or questioning themselves. The teachers raise questions to themselves in order to find out the best answer from their experience inside the classroom. Good set of questions brings out the best answers or solutions. So, it is an important tool for the teachers. Anderson (1990) defines classroom-based research as “a disciplined attempt to address questions or solve problems through the collection and analysis of primary data for the purpose of description, explanation, generalization and prediction” [21].

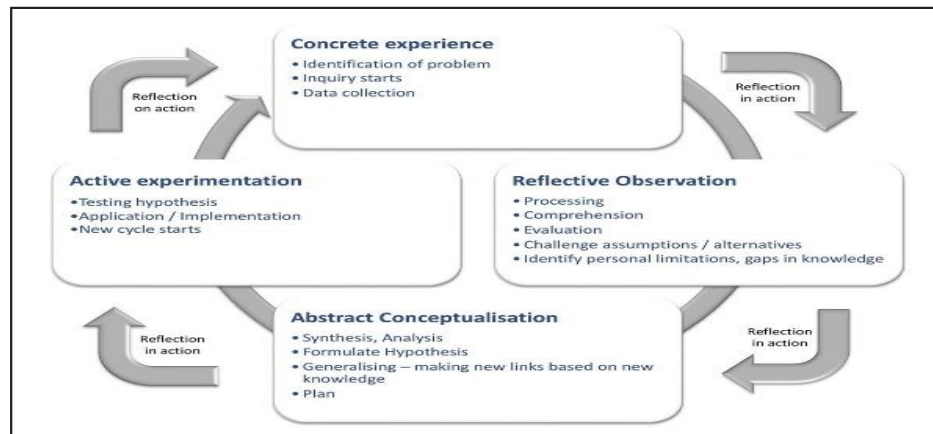
Further, the feedbacks of the teacher educator or the students really give a helping hand for the teacher to do critical analysis of their teaching. It directly helps the teachers to evaluate their mistakes and also to put an end to it.

Then, peer observation acts as an important tool because the peer members observe the happenings inside the classroom and suggest their opinion on the new techniques of teaching. Good observation or suggestion creates a positive impact and also to step forward towards the career development.

As, action research is one of the tools of reflective practice, it helps the teachers to become researcher inside the classroom itself. AR is a reflective process that aims to solve a particular teaching-learning problem that has been identified [17].It backs up the teachers to explore different or new strategies inside the classroom. It also encourages the teachers to use any

mode of teaching –learning process so as to bring out the best learning outcome. The pattern of plan, act, observe and reflect is an important process in action research. Action research enables practitioners to reassess learning-teaching difficulties and other issues of classroom transaction strategies and solve immediate problems in learner development....[16].

**Figure 2** Reflective learning cycle and the conservation process [20]



It guides the teachers to use creative methods, approach or techniques to enhance their professional skills. Action Research is the best supplementary source for the teachers because it motivates the learners and helps the teachers to teach effectively. Also, it improves the classroom dynamics and encourages the learners to develop better learning strategies [18].

In this connection, Reflective Practice follows a cyclic mode of practice which creates a practical sense of knowledge. It also provides second chance for the teachers to apply their critical analysis skills in order to root away the obstacle in the teaching learning process.

#### 4. . Conclusion

Continuing Professional Development is an ever learning process and it is practiced in all genres for the betterment of the career. It helps everyone to improve their knowledge and skills efficiently through innovative or new pedagogical methods. In the field of teaching, quality teachers are produced through best CPD. In such a way, Reflective Practice acts as a best practice to produce quality teachers with updated skills and knowledge. It also encourages self-analysis or self-assessment process with a view to find the problems faced by the students and teachers inside the classroom by themselves. As mentioned before, so many tools are used to sort out the problems and the teachers identify their own solution by themselves or with

the help of their peer members. It makes the teachers to be comfort in their decisions as well it paves way for new exploration inside the classroom. So, classroom becomes the field of research and the teacher is the researcher. As the teacher themselves act as the problem – solver, it enriches the teacher’s knowledge and skills towards their career development. Moreover, this new method is followed in many parts of the world and it also has its hold in our country. Thus, Reflective Practice is considered as the best practice, as it brings out the better learning outcome from both the teachers and students. In addition, it is considered as one of the best practices of CPD because it gives way for the ELT teachers to grow professionally in their career.

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