PROFESSIONALISM IN FUTURE TEACHER EDUCATION: STRATEGIES FOR READING AND REFLECTING LANGUAGE TEXT

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Abstract

The focus of today's paper is bringing professionalism in teacher education. Any profession should be based on a sound theoretical knowledge and skills certified by examinations. A common code of professional conduct will further help in bringing about professionalism in future teacher education. The concept of 'Reading and Reflecting' on text is the common issue that has been dealt with in the current paper since there is a lack of common and standardized strategies to deal with teaching reading and reflecting skills to student-teachers so that they further their knowledge by bringing it into practice for students.

Key words: professionalism, programme, skills, teacher education

1 Introduction

1.1 General Introduction

The focus of today's paper is bringing professionalism in teacher education. For an occupation to be termed as 'Profession' it should, firstly, make the use of skills based on theoretical knowledge. Secondly, education and training in those skills should be certified by examinations. Thirdly, a code of professional conduct oriented towards the 'public good' should be applied. Lastly, a powerful professional organization should enforce all the above. The thought that teaching comes naturally to most of the teachers undermines the idea that teaching is a profession that can be developed intentionally with the help of a common technical language and practices. Teachers are often found saying that they simply follow their intuitions which makes us believe that teaching is individual. Predominance of 'style' over 'skill' is obvious when teachers say that they have developed their own style of teaching. If teaching is individual and must be figured out by each person in the occupation, then there is little hope of ensuring that all young people receive skillful instruction. **Therefore, an attempt has been made here to Provide strategies for reading and reflecting language text in order to give a common platform to all teachers in the making and help them acquire a professional skill.** "Education is carried out, primarily, through the reading and study of prose text." (Dewalt, Rhyne, Winkles, & Rubel, (1993).

Reading is a life-long skill to be used both at school and throughout life. According to Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, reading is a basic life skill. It is a corner stone for a child's success in school and, indeed, throughout life. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success inevitably will be lost (1985). Despite its importance, reading is one of the most challenging areas in the education system. Students' attitude regarding the purpose for reading also influences their ability to read. The idea or intention behind reading is to try to understand what the author is trying to convey. There are two realities associated with reading a text – the obvious meaning or the upper reality, and the hidden meaning or the reality that we cannot see. Therefore, the purpose of reading is to make visible and clear that what is invisible and unclear (Köse 2006). Teele asserts that the goal of all readers should be to comprehend what they read (2004, p. 92). Good readers are usually aware of the processes they use to understand what they read. Predicting, making connections, visualizing, inferring, questioning and summarizing are strategies shown by research to improve reading comprehension (Block & Israel, 2005). Reading is not just a technical skill. Students at the university level are required to be involved in many thinking processes such as taking up different positions in relationship to what a person reads, a position which is ultimately derived from values and attitudes related to what can count as knowledge and how that knowledge can be known (Boughey, 2009: 6, Van Schalkwyk, 2008:43). On the other hand, Reflecting, in its simplest form, is thinking about or reflecting on what you do, say or read. Reflective practice is closely linked to the concept of learning from experience. There is a lot of difference between thinking casually and reflecting. Reflecting requires a conscious effort to think deep about events and develop insights into them. Chris Argyris is the person who coined the term 'double-loop learning' to explain the idea that reflection allows you to step outside the 'single-loop' to recognize a new paradigm and reframe your ideas in order to change what you do. Reading and reflecting is an essential component of learning. The Reflecting means emerging understandings from a different perspective. The process of learning is in itself reflective which consists of an integration of new knowledge by accommodating, reflecting and transforming prior conceptions to account for new information (Perkins, 1998; Pintrich, Marx & Bayle, 1993). In order to improve upon their own investigation and learning processes, students need to think metacognitively, to reflect on their work (Glynn & Duit, 1995). They need to be self-monitoring to engage in strategic planning, reflect on strategies used and evaluate the outcome of using these strategies (Collins & Brown, 1988; Davis, 1996; Schauble, Glaser, Raghavan & Reiner, 1991; Schonfield, 1987). Lombard and Grosser (2008: 562, citing Barnes, 2005) agree by arguing that "critical thinking has not only persisted, but has also inserted itself into the fabric and fiber of educational missions and practices. **This paper intends to add value to the pedagogical strategies of preservice teachers.** It has been designed specifically to investigate into teachers' awareness of the strategic implementation of reading and reflecting skills. As a researcher and Principal of an English medium school, I decided to equip the pre-service teachers with basic skills of teaching to read and reflect in order to get better English language teachers in schools. Moreover, the new syllabus for two years B.Ed. programme also talks about pedagogy of language. It says that school education and teacher education share a symbiotic relationship. To have a qualitative improvement in education, both teacher education and school education need to mutually reinforce each other.

Teachers are expected to look at school education in a holistic manner. Teacher, as a facilitator should be in a position to help the learner construct new knowledge and participate meaningfully in the process. The current paper, also supported by Unit 5 of the new B. Ed. Syllabus on acquisition of language skills, talks about Reading and Reflecting as an important aspect of language. The IRA, International Reading Association, the world's foremost organization of reading professionals, has focused significant research efforts on identifying essential qualities of effective teacher preparation programs.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

According to **Prabhakar M. Sapre,** in his book entitled **Rewards of Teaching**,

"Researchers should recognize that theory need not always be the starting point for research. Analysis of practice also can be a useful approach to identifying research problems." None the less, the current research is based on the following theory:

1.2.1 Cognitive Developmental Theory

Vygotsky (1962; 1978) suggests that reflective reasonable adults do not develop by chance, or simply as a consequence of their genetic endowment. In all cultures it appears that mediation by more knowledgeable others who are often, but not always, adult caregivers is vital. All human beings acquire the ability to make optimum use of the abilities made possible by the brain and nervous system. The primary means by which this happens is through language. It is believed that using language as a tool for thinking aloud together with others is a first step towards becoming able to think internally and privately (Cameron, 2001:38). Language eventually 'goes inside' to become thought. Conversations with others are the precursors of conversations with the self. Children can be supported to become aware of their own thinking process and to name and apply them appropriately. In other words they develop meta-cognitive awareness and are thus better able to manage their own thinking and learning. They need, not only to engage in processes such as questioning, noticing, guessing, predicting, checking and reasoning, but to know that they are doing this. If Vygotsky's is correct, then educations have the responsibility to take active steps to help children develop as effective thinkers. This does not mean that children should be force-fed with knowledge. As Meadows (1993:238) explains, "Cognitive development involves the internalization, transformation and use of routines, ideas and skills which are learned socially, from more competent partners…." Philosophy for children is a strategy designed for ordinary classrooms in order to help children think more effectively.

1.2.2 Constructivism,

Constructivism as a theory of knowledge, argues that, humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas. Jean Piaget's theory of constructivist learning has had a wide range of impact on learning theories and teaching methods and is also an underlying theme of many educational reform movements. Similarly, the current study can be based theoretically on the constructivist approach. The five basic operating elements of constructivism are:

 Activating prior knowledge

 Acquiring knowledge

 Understanding knowledge

 Using knowledge

 Reflecting on knowledge

2 Need And Importance Of The Study

2.1 Need

Present study is needed to -

 Find out gaps between knowledge, self-practice and classroom implementations

 Make student-teachers understand the process of reading and reflecting

 Design a strategic approach to reading and reflecting on text

 Overcome challenges in reading and reflecting on text

 Provide a ready-to-use programme for pedagogically trained and untrained teachers in schools

 Ultimately, improve the quality of school education through professionalization of teacher education.

Teachers face certain challenges in teaching reading. Those challenges can be attributed to language diversity, limited resources, class size, health and safety, equity, special needs learners and teacher education. It is extremely important to put a quality teacher in every classroom. Unless this is done, it will not be possible to address the challenges of reading achievements in schools. Knowledgeable, strategic, adaptive and reflective teachers make a difference in students' learning. The present study builds upon to develop a thorough understanding on reading and reflecting on English language text, be it prose, poetry, graphical and pictorial, from books of grade six to twelve. An attempt has been made to find out how can the process of learning to read and reflect on text be facilitated by teachers; how to create opportunities for learning conversations between students and teachers, to understand how to support teachers' activity in this context, to help teachers assess students' progress through reflecting in a qualitative manner. This also means providing reflective techniques through the coordinated efforts of teachers and students.

2.2 **Importance**

The current study is important because -

 Student-teachers will be well equipped with new strategies to improve reading and reflecting skills in their students

 Students will benefit continuously and learning will become more meaningful to them due to improved critical thinking

 Language development will happen in the true sense because gaining fluency in reading is not the sole purpose of language but also, learning to analyze inner meanings.

 Better understanding of all subjects will happen due to improved reading and reflecting skills

The Skill Development Programme for Student-teachers will ultimately complement the teaching function since teaching constitutes the core of education. The programme will further help in energizing the major elements of effective professional teaching. Teachers of all subjects, where text in all forms is concerned, will experience high levels of motivation, careful planning and preparation as evidence of competent performance and, each one – students as well as teachers – will transact on clear lines of communication.

3. Review Of Related Literature

i) Trujillo, (2015). Reflective Inquiry on Strategic Reading Instruction.

The aim of this study was focused on the way the researcher improved her practice based

on the reflective inquiry method. This method consists on dealing with a problematic situation to better understand it and find out a solution for it through a constant reflection on the practice (Loughran, 2005, p.5). This study first aimed to encounter solutions to the difficulties the researcher had as reading comprehension teacher, considering that the researcher was educated as a translator, and second finding the best ways to help students become strategic readers. The findings from this investigation revealed that through a constant reflection on both teaching practices and experiences, it is possible to improve pedagogical practices. The general findings of this study included three main aspects. i) The positive changes that the reflective inquiry method brought, ii) aspects of instruction that needed to be improved. iii) The students' perception about the effects of strategic reading instruction regarding the use of the dictionary and the acquisition of vocabulary which as a consequence allowed them to be more strategic readers. This study was done for teachers of English as Foreign language at the university level. This investigation shows that any teacher with or without pedagogical formation can improve his/her practice by applying this method while students also gain from teacher's improvement.

ii) Kheirabadi Reza, (2013), Interactive Theoretical model of text processing reflected in reading comprehension: An Experimental study, Journal of language teaching and research.

Basing on the interactive model of comprehension and learning this study investigated the teaching of text structure among EFL Iranian students and its effects on their reading comprehension. It was designed with the assumption that readers who already have the knowledge of the organizational patterns of text will be aware of text structure and will use it as a strategy to comprehension. Therefore, the use of text structure, or the structure strategy, will enhance their comprehension and learning from text. Study results revealed that experimental students who employed text structure had significantly higher performance on the multiple choice reading comprehension questions than those who did not receive any training on text structure. This indicates that the knowledge of text structure may have facilitated their comprehension and learning from text.

4. Outline of the Programme Strategy :

The four types of texts – Prose, Poetry, Pictorial and Graphical – will be dealt with in the following manner:

Reading Reflecting

Orientation about the programme Orientation about the programme Orientation on the objectives of reading Orientation on the objectives of reflecting

Orientation on reading strategies

 Purposeful reading, scanning, skimming, information words, phrase reading, analytical reading, marking the text, note taking, managing vocabulary, group reading, sharing notes, explaining, asking, quizzing Orientation on reflecting strategies

 Programme will be designed on Gibbs Reflective Model (1988)

 Description – what happened?

Feelings –what were you thinking and feeling?

Evaluation – what was good and bad about the experience?

Analyzing – what sense can you make of the situation?

Analyzing – what else could you have done?

Action Plan – if it arose again, what would you do?

Technical aspects of the text type Creating concept/mind maps Demonstration of reading all types of text Think aloud

Videos and clips on reading styles Making inferences Creating a word wall Visualizing Silent reading Making connections Preparing flow charts to organize thinking Providing a task model Providing a task model Poster making Power point presentations Reflective conversations − Gibbs Model mentioned above can be used to standardize the approach in reflective practice.

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