

Application of self-reflection in education of pre-service teachers

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Abstract

Reflection, especially, self-reflection is in education considered as thinking about one's own acting and looking back to one's own performance. It is an essential factor in teachers' professional development. However, self-reflection may be used also when preparing future teachers. It is beneficial for pre-service teachers to see their own teaching and to reflect on it. One of the ways how to use self-reflection as a teaching tool in teacher training programmes is videotaping of microteaching. Videotaping may reveal not only the mistakes but also inadvertent gestures, movements or frequently used words. The students of teaching training programmes at University of Prešov use videotaping of their microteaching and their reactions are rather positive. Majority of them commented that watching themselves in action is helpful and useful for their improvement in teaching practice.

Introduction

Teaching is extremely demanding occupation and it requires high level of ability to reflect on one's own performance. The possibility of pre-service teachers to observe themselves, to see them from the audience's perspective, gives them the opportunity to see how they behave in the classroom and what impression it may leave in potential students. Moreover, it is the chance to pay attention to details. Knowing their own acting in front of the class is the key element in preparatory phase of future teachers. One of the ways is to practice it in front of the mirror, however, when getting immediate feedback, they normally avoid unwanted facial expressions or gestures. Only when they concentrate on other things, unintentional flaws or shortcomings may appear. Thus videotape can be beneficial tool for self-reflection when revealing those imperfections. This kind of reflection may lead to improvement and self-development.

The role of the reflection in education

Reflection is used in different fields for instance physics or psychology; however it may be used even in education. The term reflection comes from Latin and it can be translated as the image of something as reflected by a mirror. Concerning pedagogical practice, reflection can be understood as considering, because as Hupková and Petlák (2004) say, the teacher must reflect on their own work and activities, equally they need to reflect on the activities of their colleagues and learners, which should serve them as a tool for their own professional development. In addition, self-reflection is reflection of oneself in pedagogical situation. Pedagogical dictionary defines self-reflection as "one's general thinking about oneself, about one's own personality, looking back to their attitudes and feelings. Summarizing of a certain part of one's own life or behavior or decision making. The aim is to evaluate oneself, decide what and how to change and to choose the future strategy" (Průcha, et al., 1995, 196). Regarding to that, reflection and self-reflection are the key factors during the phase of preparation for future teaching profession and also help in teachers' professional development. "The power of self-reflection in education demonstrates that reflective teachers are better able to recognize problems in their practice, which empowers them to reframe the problems in order to seek solutions" (Osipova, et al., 2011, 158). When teachers are involved in self-reflection they start to be aware of their own beliefs, decision making in the classroom and

also their own instructional practices. The awareness of teachers' own acting gives them chance to make changes if necessary.

The idea of reflection or self-reflection as an innovative element in the preparation of pre-service teachers, was established on the necessity of a potential teacher to see their performance and to reflect on themselves. As Kolář and Vališová (2009) state, self-reflection should be based on well-developed diagnostic competence as well as on personal qualities of a teacher such as competence in terms of subjects, didactic and psych didactic competence, pedagogical competence, diagnostic and intervention competence, social, psychosocial and communicative competence, managerial and normative competence and the competence leading to professional development and self-education. Each of the competences consists of particular skills a teacher is expected to have at their disposal. The ability of self-reflection is conditional by the ability of being critical to oneself and one's own activity just as by the skill to join reverse analysis of own activity and results of the activities with the skill to draw the conclusions for one's further perspective activity. When talking about teachers, the further perspective activity is determined by the quality of their learners. Very often students do not ruminate on their own teaching, they only rely on the assessment provided by their teacher. Also Geraldine Ditchburn based her research on this belief because as she said "a heavy reliance on the feedback and assessment provided by the mentor teachers and university supervisors that characterise a hierarchical, clinical model of supervision does not encourage pre-service teachers themselves to theorise about their practice, engage in pedagogical risk taking, or to assimilate critical reflective practices as a considered and natural part of their work". Not having a chance to reflect on one's own performance may cause troubles in real teaching practice because it creates blocks to be self-critical and to further professional development.

Videotaping with pre-service teachers

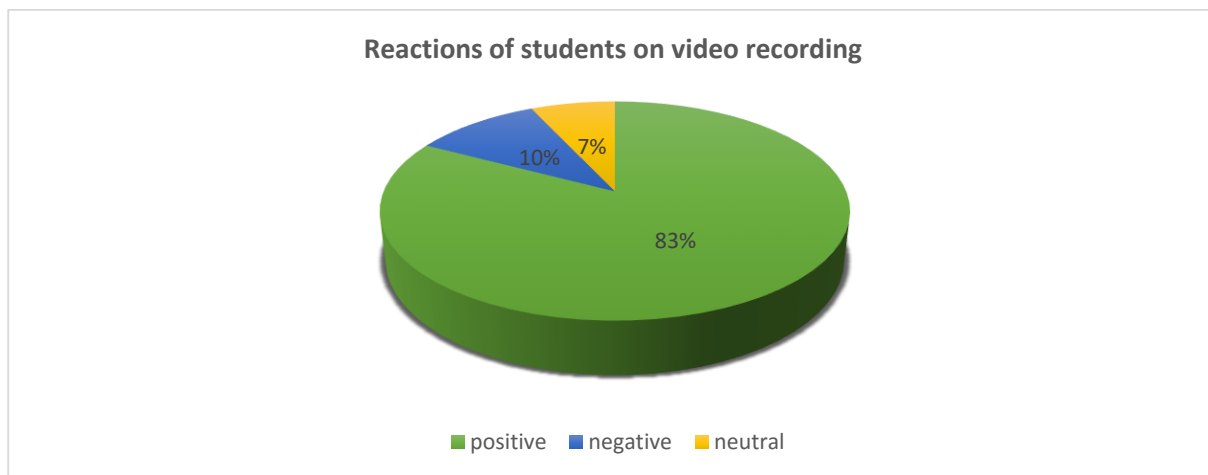
Numerous research studies were carried out in connection to videotaping and reported prosperous findings using videotaping as a self-reflective tool in pre-service teachers' education. Michael Woodlinger (2015), for instance, used videotaping in combination with interviews to point out teachers' decision making in the classroom. The results displayed that decision making occur frequently during every lesson, yet the decisions are predominantly instructional and managerial. Osipova, Prichard, Gould Boardman, Kiely and Carroll (2011) crafted a research study with 15 upper elementary special education teachers around the idea that rating the solutions and noting what worked may bring the suggestions for future lessons. As cited teacher beliefs are "tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms and the academic material to be taught" (Osipova, et al., 2011, 158). Regarding to the fact that decisions in the classroom are implicit, it is very difficult to evaluate them and to reflect on them. Thus, using videotaping may play a valuable role in teachers' self-reflection.

Even students of teaching training programmes at University of Presov use videorecording as a part of the methodology course. The purpose is to videotape the microteaching of students for their own self-evaluation. By way of explanation, the microteaching is a class lesson prepared by learners which takes up to 15 minutes. The lesson is, as a rule, concentrated on one of the language aspects like reading, listening, writing, speaking, grammar or vocabulary and it is videotaped from the initial introduction to the topic until the end, summarizing the lesson. After the microteaching a student gets feedback from his or her classmates as well as from the teacher. The video recording itself is intended only for the student to reflect on his or her performance at home in safe and quiet environment. The opportunity to watch themselves and to focus on details, displays a lot of issues which a presenter does not normally realise during their performance. While teaching, especially microteaching which is part of educational process, a student concentrates mainly on all the parts of his or her lesson plan to be kept, or pronunciation, or eye contact, or vocabulary; however, they are not aware of other unintentional gestures (e.g. playing with hair, touching the face, clicking with a pen, etc.), frequent mistakes or excessively used words. All those acting may have disruptive character and it is beneficial to become conscious

of them before come to contact with real students. Those gestures or mistakes are often results of stress or undue concentration on other aspects and a person does them unwittingly. Even though someone else points out to those details, it is more effective when the presenter can see them with their own eyes.

According to the survey carried out among students, their reactions on being recorded were rather positive. Twenty-nine students of the first year of Master’s level of study of teaching training programmes, who had experienced the microteaching within the methodology course, were asked to answer the questions of the short questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two open questions where participants were expected to express their point of view on being recorded. They were asked whether they consider recording positive or negative, moreover, they were supposed to answer how it helped or did not help them in their preparation for teaching. Majority of students (83%), as visible in the graph, reacted on video recording of their teaching positively. Comparing their answers, they appraised the chance to watch their own performance, own mistakes, which enables them to see the details they would not normally realise. It is evident from the responses that that experience is beneficial especially because of the self-reflective element, they can see those unwanted details, so that they can work on them: “I can notice imperfections of my teaching better”, “I can see myself while teaching and reflect on it to improve”, “I have an opportunity to see and realise my minor mistakes in teaching”, “This is the way I can see myself while ‘real’ teaching (not only in front of mirror where I am alone)”, “In my opinion, I have a chance to see what I can improve like gestures, facial expressions or speech”. The sample of some of the answers shows that students agreed on the fact that looking at their own performance from the perspective of their potential students gives them the chance to improve and to work on their own way of teaching.

On the other hand, camera in the classroom may cause stress and tension during microteaching. It is the factor which also induced negative reactions of students: “I was more nervous than usually”, “I felt more nervous and stressed when the teacher was recording me during my teaching”, “It is very stressful factor”.



When consider both types of responses, they result to the fact that video recording is advantageous and practical tool in education of future teacher’s despite for some students it may be stressful. Even that stressing element may have a positive impact because it prepares learners for possible stressful situation.

Concerning the helpfulness of video recording from students’ point of view, the results show that most of the participants consider videotaping helpful. Only three of the asked students answered that being recorded did not find helpful because they had not noticed anything new or they had not had an idea what to observe. The students who said videotape helped them stated that it is the way how to point out to the details and they also offered some examples: “I can see my reactions when changing activities”, “I could see my mistakes and overused gestures”, “I could see my gestures when I am nervous”, “I could see that when I am nervous, I am doing

something with my hands all the time”, “I could see how students perceive me”, “I saw things to improve”, “I saw my shortcomings, I hope that in the future it will be better”, “I became aware of all my shortcomings which should be changed until I appear in real class environment”, “I realized that I used too many OKs”. There exist a lot of gestures or facial expressions people do unconsciously when they are nervous. Usually people have no chance to be aware of that issues until they see themselves. If the function of video recording was only to draw students’ attention to them, it becomes very useful tool for improvement.

Moreover, the experience with microteaching and subsequent self-reflection can influence pre-service teachers’ future career. Even Richard R. Day claims that “what students do in their practicum may have long-term implications for their professional growth and development” as he discovered in his research.

Conclusion

Reflection in the meaning of gaining the image back does not have to be necessarily used in science and disciplines like physics and psychology, yet it has important place in education. Especially when speaking about education of future teachers. Each teacher should be able to be critical to themselves and to reflect on their own performance. One of the ways which offers pre-service teachers’ knowing their own acting and behaving in the classroom is to record them on the video. The chance to reflect on own performance is simultaneously the chance for improvement. Video recording may reveal the shortcomings which are normally not noticed. Moreover, regarding to the fact that camera can be stressful element, it prepares students to practice and also to potential stress situations, as well as it can unveil other imperfections performers tend to do when under pressure.

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