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go beyond mere statement of fact and contain an individual's reflections on various academic, and at times non-academic, issues.

The journals of participants are shared with the teacher trainers who read the journal entries and write their own comments. In this way journal writing becomes a useful professional dialogue between participants and those training them.

In their seminal work on reflective practice, *Reflective Teaching in the Second Language Classroom* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), Richards and Lockhart say that a reflective journal should have the following content:

- Events and ideas are recorded for the purpose of later reflection.
- Personal reactions to things that happen in the classroom
- Questions and observations about problems that occur in teaching.
- Ideas for future analysis or reminders of things on which to take action.

Potential problems

There could be a number of potential problems in using reflective journals. Some of them are given below:

* Participants may have trouble understanding and conceptualizing the notion of reflection and of keeping a reflective journal. There is a possibility that in the beginning some participants turn their journals into a kind of a logbook or a diary, just stating events in chronological fashion.

* Another issue that may emerge in the initial phase of reflective journals is that only socially desirable things are recorded. Participants might be mentioning only the good things happening around them. This tendency could be a reaction of a teacher's own behaviour. Some teachers would expect all the participants to like what they like, be it a book, a web site, an author or an educational notion.

* Another challenge in the initial phase could be that participants might resist sharing their journals with tutors and peers.

* Some students may experience language difficulty in writing journals.

* There could be a tendency to write reflective journals based purely on academic issues leaving out personal matters. The latter are an important part of a reflective journal.

Recommendations

The notion of a reflective journal is not very easy. It is recommended that the participants be given sufficient input on the rationale and dynamics of writing a reflective journal. It should be demonstrated to them with examples how a reflective journal is different from a diary or a logbook.

The participants should be encouraged by the overall environment of the class. They should get the feeling that disagreement is always welcome and that the spirit behind it is that it will help in everyone's learning process. Such an envi-

ronment is crucial because only then will we expect participants to experience reflections critical and useful for their professional development.

Participants should be made to understand that their sharing of their journals with teacher trainers and peers is proof that a bond of trust exists between everyone. This can be done only by creating a congenial and non-threatening environment in the training class.

They should be encouraged to bring in their personal views and opinions on various issues in the journals. They should be encouraged to go beyond writing about what they like and what they don't like without assigning any reason. For example, if a participant writes that he does not like the style of a teacher he should also write down the reasons for that.

Participants should be asked to suggest alternatives for improvement. For instance, if a participant is not satisfied with a particular teaching method used in the classroom then he or she should suggest alternatives.

Another important point is that participants should be made to see the relationship between reflection and professional and personal improvement. The training course should include activities that make them realize how crucial it is to think about alternative ways of solving a problem. This leads to development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

In the initial phase if some participants experience language constraints and cannot write their journal in English they should be allowed to write in Urdu, till the time they feel more confident in using English.

Conclusion

This article advocates that teachers use reflection in their professional practice. One way to do this is to use 'reflective' journals while enrolled in teacher training programmes.

These journals can benefit those who maintain them in many ways. They can help participants process their learning experiences and develop an understanding of teaching; develop their beliefs and values vis-a-vis education and teaching; help record their personal and professional growth; encourage ideas and confidence; develop language and thinking skills and encourage self-evaluation. ■

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