

What is *reflective practice*?

Self-Reflection Continuum

Unaware	Conscious
Action	Refinement

Check for Learning: How are you doing? Match the following classroom practices with the associated self-reflection stage:

U – Unaware C – Conscious A – Action R - Refinement

Stage	Classroom Practice	NOTES
	Assessment drives daily instruction	
	Lessons built on direct instruction and assignments	
	Occasional Differentiation of instruction	
	Regular use of Assessment to monitor student progress	
	Multiple instructional strategies in use	
	Short-term planning evident but inconsistent	
	No differentiation of instruction	
	Students largely responsible for their own learning	
	Consistent application of best-practice instructional strategies	

Read the following blog excerpts and decide for which group are they most appropriate or meaningful:

Unaware, Conscious, Action or Refinement AND WHY you think so.

1. Over the years I have found the most fruitful method of reflecting on my teaching is by asking myself a series of “Did I . . .?” questions at regular intervals. Questions during planning help focus my attention on elements of my teaching which are either helping or hindering student learning. You should not only ask “Did I?” questions there, for it is in the lesson itself when you can reflect on your teaching most powerfully. Whether things are going well or you are standing in the midst of a teaching disaster, there is much to gain from asking yourself, “Did I?” When students are on task some useful questions could be, “Did I set up the activity with clear instructions, instruction checking questions or demonstration?” or “Did I deviate from my plan to exploit an effective activity or abandon an ineffective one?” Asking yourself these questions in the face of success will not only build confidence, but also allow you to repeat effective teaching strategies. When things are going awry in

class, do not panic or blame your students; but instead ask yourself “Did I?” What you learn at these moments will likely stay with you for the rest of your teaching career. I once had a class of students carry out a find-someone-who interview task. Instead of asking each other questions, they simply showed one another their worksheets and copied the answers down. Nobody spoke a single word of French. I asked myself, “Did I set up the activity with clear instructions, instruction checking questions or demonstration?” and realized that no I had not. Thanks to this moment of reflection, subsequent find-someone-who’s have been far more successful. Other questions you might find it useful include: “Did I pre-teach the vocabulary necessary for students to successfully perform this listening or reading task?” “Did I monitor enough during that last activity?” or “Did I practice the vocabulary **after** I had introduced meaning or **before**?” The list of questions is endless. Habitually asking yourself these questions promotes reflection, making you more aware of what works in your classes and what does not.

Most Meaningful for: Why?

2. Reflection is a slippery beast. It happens in the most inconvenient places and at the most inconvenient times. I started to think about how I collect my reflections, and how I could do it more efficiently. My **first tool** is my mini notebook that I carry around with me most of the time. This is where I jot down lesson plans, reminders for exercises and tasks, questions and doubts. This isn't where I reflect as such, but it helps me to reflect. It helps me to look back at the lesson plan and compare the ideas on paper with what actually went on in class. It helps me look at differences between plan and reality and think about how and why things worked out differently and whether that was good or bad or just different. My **second tool** is the lesson summary. Basically we, me and the students, take turns writing summaries of class and share them with the group by email or on a blog. Initially my main aim was to get students to review their classes, to take stock of their learning, to keep personal records of the work they were doing inside and outside class, basically to stop and reflect. Seeing the classes from the students' point of view is really useful. It helps me step back into the class, think about the language and the learning rather than the activities, try to highlight the "teachable/learnable" moments and put those into words. Which brings me to my **third reflection tool: post-its**. For each class I have a folder, and in the folder I have a stack of post-its. They usually serve for on-the-fly micro writing tasks, but they're also there for me to jot down ideas during the lesson for things to come back to at the end, or in the next lesson, or questions to think about as I plan my next lesson. I never know at the time where or how that post-it is going to fit in, but it sits there in the folder to jog my memory when I come to reflecting on one class and preparing the next.

Most Meaningful for: Why?

3. Until not long ago, 'good' teaching was as much about spontaneity as it was about content knowledge and teaching skills. In the view of many, the definition of a 'good' teacher was almost equated with the ability to teach 'off the cuff', teach unseen material impromptu, and be a jack-of-all-trades, adapting to any course in no time. How does this definition of a good teacher align to the thought of teachers as reflective practitioners building expertise over time? Reflective teaching means to *think back on a learning experience in order to understand it better, and to take steps to improve it*. This is done through experience, trial and error, critical analysis, and discussion with peers or master teachers. Reflection is a conscious-raising device used by teachers at any stage in their careers in order to improve. It is a never-ending process or cycle and has no set 'method.' Reflection, contrary to popular belief, is not only a post-lesson activity. In fact, teachers are constantly reflecting on what they do pre-, during, and after-lesson. It is also interesting to know that many teachers use self-talk to analyze their performance and planning. Even in the most impulsive of moments, good teachers act based on unconscious or subconscious input from past experiences and the thought we gave it during the earlier occasion. Though the strategy seemed to be on impulse, there was beneath it years of constant search for alternates to traditional practices. A spontaneous -or impulsive- teacher, therefore, is not one without a plan, rather one who has extensive experience teaching diverse classes using various approaches and techniques. She can make quicker decisions by referring to prior experience and then associating the links. This type of teacher has in fact been so reflective and thoughtful, that she/he is prepared to show flexibility and creativity in any scenario. The long and short of it is that without systematic reflection, most of us will end up being teachers 'with one year's experience repeated twenty times. Something we, even the most spontaneous of us, may not want.

Most Meaningful for: Why?

My Next Steps:

What are your goals for implementing self-reflection to maximize your effectiveness in the classroom?

- Short-Term Goal:
 - Strategies:
- Long-Term Goal:
 - Strategies: