Chapter 15
Promoting Prospective TESOL Educators' Critical Reflection Through the 4D Framework

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ABSTRACT

Within the field of teacher education, the significance of promoting critical reflection is highlighted by scholars because it is generally believed that teachers engaging in critical reflection are more able to examine bias, challenge embedded assumptions, and take actions toward educational justice. In the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), there is a growing interest in the cultivation of educators with critical reflection ability. In this chapter, the authors introduce a set of effective tools by which worldwide pre-service TESOL educators can practice critical reflection. The sets include a 4D framework and a worksheet. By incorporating this tool into learning and future English teaching lives, pre-service TESOL educators can be involved in continuous cycles of high-level critical reflection. Through learning on their own reflections, teachers can gain new insights, improve teaching skills, and ultimately, create a more just society for students.

INTRODUCTION

Critical reflection is a term that has been studied by scholars from a wide range of fields, such as medicine, business, and nursing (Middleton, 2017; Steyn & Le Roux, 2007; Williams, 2001). When it comes to the field of teacher education, ample research has demonstrated that critical reflection enables teach-

ers to examine personal biases (Lin & Lucey, 2010) and positionalities (Acquah & Commins, 2015), examine and critique taken-for-granted assumptions (Brookfield, 1995), develop deeper understandings of the power structures in society (Ross, 2015), challenge injustice with strong commitment (Grant & Sleeter, 2010), and eventually, further support "student learning, better schooling, and a more just society for all children" (Liu, 2015, p. 10-11). Especially for the TESOL field, where teachers' and students' backgrounds are diverse, constantly engaging in critical reflection to provide greater and more equitable support to students becomes more crucial for educators.

Unfortunately, As Farrell (2018) has noted, encouraging and guiding TESOL teacher candidates to learn and practice critical reflection in development programs is rare. What all pre-service TESOL teachers all over the world need is a TESOL-specific, detailed, and reproducible guide to promote their appreciation of critical reflection and support them to carry out the process of it (Zhu, 2014). In an attempt to solve this problem, the authors developed a 4D framework and a worksheet for pre-service TESOL educators to practice critical reflection. The set of the 4D framework and worksheet is an easy-to-follow tool that can be used among prospective teachers themselves without additional facilitators. In this chapter, the introduction, usage and practice advice of the framework and worksheet are presented.

CONCEPT

Critical reflection involves the consideration and examination of sociocultural and political issues that impact teachers' practice (Farrell, 2018). According to Fook (2007), there are two main ways to explain critical reflection. The first one was given by Mezirow (1991) who defined critical reflection as a method to explore, challenge, and replace fundamental assumptions which originate from teachers' lives. Another interpretation of critical reflection focuses more on the role of power (Brookfield, 1995), including reflecting on social and political factors that limit daily thinking or practice (Riley et al., 2003). The commonality of these two definitions is that critical reflection can lead to transformative actions (Fook, 2007). Critical reflection thus is not just thinking on the surface (Farrell, 2018), but thinking in a deeper and more profound way by taking multiple factors into consideration (Brookfield, 2009; Hatton & Smith, 1995). This is true when it comes to language learning, especially in the field of TESOL, where English language teachers and students are coming from diverse linguistic, sociocultural, and political backgrounds.

Besides incorporating the sociocultural and political aspects into critical reflection, the authors also place a high value on the moral and emotional dimensions of such reflection. Teachers who reflect on moral issues of teaching practice and believe their practice has a moral impact on students and schooling are more likely to care about students as human beings and create a just learning environment (Sharil & Majid, 2010; Yang, 2009). Further, Deng and Yuen (2011) have argued that reflecting on the emotional dimension of teaching practices benefits pre-service TESOL teachers, when they become vulnerable facing dilemmas and struggling with insecurities, which is common during their roles and lives transitioning as future English language teachers.

Critical reflection scholars in education generally emphasize the significance of critical reflection that is beneficial for teachers to realize not only the impact of their instruction and attitudes on students and the whole society, but also the impact of the environment and background on their teaching practices (Farrell, 2018). Abednia (2012) noted that it is crucial and necessary for pre-service English language teachers to learn and practice how to reflect critically on their previous ideologies, learning and/or teach-

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