

Book Reviews

Promoting Teacher Reflection in Second Language Education: A Framework for TESOL Professionals, by Thomas S. C. Farrell. New York: Routledge ESL & Applied Linguistics Professional Series, 2015, 138 pp., ISBN 978-1-138-02504-2. (reviewed by Vesna Dimitrieska).

Promoting Teacher Reflection in Second Language Education: A Framework for TESOL Professionals is a book that provides a framework for using reflective practice among TESOL professionals at different stages of their educational and professional careers. Reflective practice, both as a concept and as an activity, has had its share in influence on lives and practices of teachers. The author of the book befittingly pinpoints that both novice and experienced teachers have been engaging in some form of reflective practice through their teacher education programs and their professional development programs, respectively. Farrell's extensive, three-decade work on reflective practice and teacher reflection has resulted in the development of his framework for TESOL professionals that he proposes and explains in this book. His book fills the gap in the existing literature on reflective practice in that it proposes a framework that can be used not only for novice teachers, but also for teachers of varying years of experience. Even though there is a plethora of definitions and research on reflective practice in the field of education, in his book, Farrell chose to focus only on the authors that he himself found beneficial and that have influenced the development of his framework on reflective practice in second language education.

Farrell's book content is organized in nine chapters. The first chapter, *Getting into Reflective Practice*, provides background information on the development of the framework and explanation on how it is different from other similar frameworks. First, he describes the experiences from his own professional life that have led him to reflect more on his teaching. Second, the author provides rationale for having Schön and Dewey as primary figures who have influenced his work and delineates the importance of his framework as a single framework for teachers with a range of teaching experiences. The second chapter, *Contemplation and Reflection*, elaborates on the differences between contemplation, reflection, and reflective practice, and clarifies the main concepts of teacher reflection inside and outside of the field of TESOL. More specifically, unlike in contemplation, in reflection there is a distinction between the thinker and the subject and both contemplation and reflection can result in self-awareness. Furthermore, a succinct overview of levels, approaches, purposes, and models of reflection is provided.

The third chapter, *Framework for Reflecting on Practice*, introduces the five stages of the framework (i.e. Philosophy; Principles; Theory; Practice; and Beyond Practice) and it more thoroughly explains how each of those levels can be accessed and how the framework can be used. The fourth chapter, *Philosophy*, describes the first level of the framework and addresses the central role of a teacher's philosophy on their professional development from the beginning of their career and beyond.

Teacher-as-person stance is central in this chapter and possessing self-knowledge and awareness about the inner self are seen as crucial for shaping the philosophy of every individual teacher. In addition, teacher narratives are suggested as tools to access the philosophy level of Farrell's framework. The fifth chapter, *Principles*, is the second level of the framework and it examines the assumptions, beliefs, and conceptions that shape the principles that guide teachers' practice. The author provides clear definitions of the three concepts and proposes tools how to examine them as separate 'points on the same continuum of meaning related to gaining more self-awareness' (Farrell, 2015, p.64)

The sixth chapter, *Theory*, is the third level of the framework and it investigates ways in which teachers can access and think more closely about their theory. By answering the "why?" question, according to Farrell, the knowledge of teachers' practice is increased. In order to reflect on theory, the author proposes the use of reflection on teacher planning, critical incidents, and cases. The seventh chapter, *Practice*, is the fourth level of the framework. It deals with reflecting on teachers' practice and its importance in the entire framework suggested in the book. Classroom observations and action research are the means to systematic reflection as an end that Farrell emphasizes in this chapter.

The eighth chapter, *Beyond Practice*, is the fifth level of the framework and it addresses ways teachers can examine the effects of sociocultural, moral, and emotional aspects of reflection on their practice. Unlike the first four levels of the framework that deal with the technical aspects of practice, the fifth level, *Beyond Practice*, in line with its name, entails critical reflection (i.e., 'an understanding of personal experiences within social, cultural, and structural contexts', Fook & Askeland, 2007, p.3) that goes beyond one's own practice. Dialogue is foregrounded as a tool for engaging in critical reflection. The ninth chapter, *Navigating the Framework*, further elaborates how teachers with no, some or extensive experience can use the framework in a way that suits their developmental needs the most. Namely, as a holistic reflective practice tool, the teachers or administrators themselves can opt to use Farrell's framework in three ways: theory-into- (beyond) practice, (beyond) practice-into-theory or a single stage application.

By its nature, reflective practice is inherently complex and, according to Farrell, no agreement exists among the academic community on how to define it. More specifically, the mainstream teacher educators' perspective recognizes the importance of reflective practice. In addition to the plethora of definitions of the concept, there has also been a multitude of approaches and strategies associated with it in the fields of general education and second language education. However, the lack of a unifying definition and a proven effective and consistent strategy on how to engage in reflective practice further emphasizes the need for a general framework that can be implemented by teachers at different stages in their teaching careers. By developing his framework, Farrell has advanced the field of second language education further.

The development of the current framework on teacher reflection has been an extensive and elaborate process that has spanned over 3.5 decades. In his work,

Farrell has been influenced by the work of both John Dewey and Donald Schön due to their pragmatic stance to 'help practicing teachers on the frontlines rather than impress academics' (p.3). Farrell adopted the notion of reflective practice as 'a form of systematic inquiry or evidence-based reflective practice' from Dewey, and he found Schön's concept of reflection-in-action of utmost importance to his framework. Moreover, his own teaching experiences in various parts of the world have helped him stay connected to the language classroom realities, and thus develop a framework that will be beneficial first to the teachers, and then to everyone else. Farrell's work reflects his own conviction as well as Dewey's and Schön's legacies that, in order to provide suitable solutions, reflective practice has to entail more structured and 'more rigorous form of reflective thinking' (p.3).

The target audience for the book, as identified by Farrell, involves novice teachers who are either taking University of Cambridge's CELTA and DELTA teaching qualifications or students enrolled in MA programs in TESOL, experienced teachers who are engaged in some form of professional development and program administrators and supervisors. The author's framework and explanation do an excellent job in serving as a springboard for the novice teachers to start making the necessary connections between what they learn and what they do in the classroom on the one hand and how they can incorporate reflective practice in their everyday teaching on the other hand. The reflective tools that he provides can be also used for experienced teachers who can choose to either use individual stages or the framework as a whole. The common aspect for both novice and experienced teachers is the outcome of using the framework, i.e. the idea of change in the awareness of their practice. However, Farrell fails to elaborate how program administrators and supervisors can use his framework in their respective contexts. Apart from listing them as the readership of his book, there are no suggested guidelines on how they can benefit from this framework. As a result, one might infer that the novice or experienced teachers are the only ones who can plant the seeds of reflective practice after they themselves have chosen to do so.

Also, Farrell is modest in recognizing the importance of his book for teacher researchers and teacher educators in the field of second language education. Even though he incorporates action research as a component of reflective practice, Farrell does not see how beneficial his book and his framework is for other teacher researchers. Due to its purpose to serve both novice and experienced teachers, teacher researchers might find his framework useful when, for example, comparing the reflective practices of the two groups of teachers. Furthermore, teacher educators in the field of second language education might use the framework themselves while engaging in teacher training or teacher preparation programs and thus, see how the framework operates while they are preparing future language teachers. In addition, even though the title suggests that the framework is for TESOL professionals, one cannot help but see the benefit of Farrell's framework for other foreign and second languages, as well as less commonly- taught languages.

The strengths of the book are associated with its several features that make it unique and different from other books that have been written on the same topic.

First, as Farrell himself claims, the book is written in a very accessible style and no prior knowledge of language teacher education or reflection is necessary. As a result, both native and non-native speaker teachers can find his precise writing with no redundant metalanguage easy to read and thus, much more readily accept the guidelines associated with the separate stages of the framework. Second, the book consists of numerous Reflective Moments that encourage the reader/teacher to answer reflective questions that are related to the content that has been presented. Thus, the author does not only talk about reflective practice but rather expects the reader/teacher to engage in it while reading the book. This expectation is in line with Kumaravadivelu's (2012) view of teaching as a reflective activity that simultaneously 'shapes and is shaped by the doing of theorizing which in turn is bolstered by the collaborative process of dialogic inquiry.' (p.95). Third, Chapter Reflections provide a succinct summary on the content of the entire chapter and suggest other ideas the reader/teacher may reflect on. Fourth, the book abounds with reflective tools that are aimed to facilitate the reflective practice process. Thus, Farrell makes use of questionnaires, inventories and other tools that have been used by other researchers who have carried out research on the separate areas of his framework. Some of those tools are: teaching maxims (Richards, 1996; Wilkins, 2009); Teacher's Beliefs Inventory (Johnson, 1991); critical incident questionnaire (Brookfield, 1995); interactional styles (Richards & Lockhart, 1994) etc. Fifth, the personal examples from Farrell's own engagement in reflective practice add even more clarity in the framework and show how it has been used in his own teaching.

Farrell's book fails in two respects. The first one is associated with the lack of detailed rationale for the benefits of reflective practice. Namely, Farrell assumes that the readership would know all the benefits of engaging in reflective practice. However, the reader will find it even more useful if the benefits of reflective practice with regard to language learning, students themselves, and advances in the field of reflective practice in general are more clearly outlined and elaborated on. As it is, the teachers who engage in reflective practice seem to be the biggest beneficiaries of the reflective process. The second one is related to the insufficient attention to the social aspects that influence teacher's reflective practice in all stages of the framework. Farrell does address the importance of examining the social and cultural aspects of reflective practice in the *Beyond Practice* stage of his framework and he even encourages a teacher to engage in numerous reflective practices with peers. However, the social and cultural aspects should be examined and acknowledged within all the stages of the framework.

Every language teacher should consider owning Farrell's book. Regardless of one's previous experiences with reflective practice, the framework and the book with its ease of reference can prepare and follow every language teacher's activities and steps as he/she moves from one stage of the framework to the next. Also, depending on the prior teaching experience and the stage of professional development, every individual language teacher can choose whether to use Farrell's framework deductively or inductively. The former is associated with going from theory-into-(beyond) practice stages, whereas the latter follows the (beyond) practice-into-theory pattern. In addition to these two ways, a language teacher can

choose to focus only on a single stage of Farrell's framework. Also, even though reflective practice is inherently cognitive and associated with the individual, individual teachers, pairs of teachers or groups of teachers may choose to use Farrell's framework on reflective practice. This descriptive framework that is holistic by nature due to the stages that it consists of is an invaluable reflective tool for novice teachers, experienced teachers, teacher researchers and teacher educators in second language education programs.

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