Teorizing Teaching – Teaching as an Emotional Dimension

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Abstract

Teaching as a sociocultural practice has been discussed in many literatures. It can be divided into many aspects, for example, teaching as a knowledgeable dimension, as a social dimension, as a cultural dimension, as an emotional dimension, a caring dimension, and so on. In this assessment, the focus is one of those aspects-teaching as an emotional dimension. It will be analyzed and discussed in details. First of all, the comments are about the notion of teaching as sociocultural practice and relational practice. Some researchers’ viewpoints which involved in this aspect will be introduced. At the same time, the authors’ understanding about the teaching as a sociocultural practice will be added in this section. Secondly, the definitions and description of the teaching as an emotional dimension will be described in terms of some literature and authors’ own experience. Thirdly, the representations of the emotional dimension of an effective faculty member will be revealed. For example, positive attitude, personal touch, sense of humor, willingness to admit mistakes, and so on. The mainly research method is literature review. Numerous literatures and research achievements will be introduced.

Keywords
Teachin; Socio Cultural Practice; Emotional Practice

Teaching as a Social Cultural Practice

As to the question why teaching may be viewed as a sociocultural practice, there are two aspects to explain it. Firstly, with regard to the definition of sociocultural practice, different researchers have different opinions. According to Dixson-Krauss (1996), sociocultural is characterized by human thought emerging in the context of activities that are embedded in specific social and cultural settings. The famous theoretician, Vygotsky, has to be mentioned when the sociocultural practice is explained. Vygotsky is very import theoretician to the development of conceptualizations of sociocultural theory. The main theory of Vygotsky is the understanding of human cognition and learning as social and cultural phenomena rather than individual phenomena. Vygotsky argued that the development of child can not be understood by a study of the individual. The external social world need to be noticed. “Through participation in activities that require cognitive and communicative functions, children are drawn into the use of these functions in ways that nurture and ‘scaffold’ them” (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, pp. 6-7). In terms of these viewpoints provided above, the teaching is the process with human thinking, human cognition and learning which sociocultural practice are involve in, so the teaching is social and cultural practice.

Secondly, the teaching is affected by the sociocultural context. This viewpoint has been support by Tharp and Gallimore (1988), “the sociocultural perspective has profound implications for teaching, schooling and education” (pp.6-7). As to the teaching, it will be influenced by the education policymaker, the social development goals, and so on. Hence, the teaching can not be seen as individual phenomena, it is social and cultural phenomena.

Teaching as a Relational Practice

Teaching is the process of sharing knowledge and experience. Bakhtin (1981) argued that teaching is a relational process where human beings share experiences and meanings. The relationships between faculty members and students are very important to the effective learning. This viewpoint has been supported by Goldstein (1999) who said that authentic relationships between faculty members and students are the essential foundation without which effective learning can not occur. The faculty members need to understand their students in order to create the authentic relationship between them. For example, the faculty members should know the background of the students, the families of the students, the emotion of the students, the personality of the students, and so on. The information from students can help the faculty...
members to build the good relationship with the students as well as create the effective teaching and effective learning. Like Shor and Freire (2000) commented that the faculty members should explore their students in order to understand the background of their lived world, the faculty members must know what the students know and do not know, what their fears and dreams are, what their failures and successes are, with the purpose to help the students construct a view of the world and their role in it.

**Teaching as an Emotional Dimension**

Actually, research on the emotional dimension of classroom teaching is limited before. According to the Sutton and Wheatley (2003), there is “little about how teachers regulate their emotions, the relationship between teachers’ emotions and motivation, and how integral emotional experiences are in teacher development” (p. 328). There are two reasons for this situation. Firstly, until the late 1990s, some researchers just focused directly on the relationship between the teaching and the emotion dimension (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Secondly, the emotion has been seen as a term which is not suitable for research in education field in long period because of the emotion involved in some meaning which is destructive, primitive, out of control and childish. “if researchers who pride themselves on their rationality and logic hold these latter beliefs, it is not surprising that little research has been conducted on the emotions of teachers and other workers” (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995, cited in Sutton & Wheatley, 2003, p. 328).

However, as a part of sociocultural practice, emotional dimension has been discussed in more and more literature recently. Firstly, the definitions of “emotion” need to be explained. De vierville (2002) argued that “emotions are not only feelings, but also other elements, such as expressions in the face or the voice, physiological changes, and changes in action tendencies or action readiness” (p. 3). The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia (2003) defined the emotion as a term commonly and loosely used to denote individual, subjective feelings which dictate moods.

Secondly, according to some researchers, the emotion should be seen as sociocultural practice. Cornelius (1996) argued that “the experience and expression of emotions is dependent on learned convictions or rules and, to the extent that cultures differ in the way they talk about and conceptualize emotions, how they are experienced and expressed will differ in different cultures as well” (p. 188). Averill (1980) also commented that the emotions are social constructions. Harré (1986) pointed out that emotion reflects the culture trait of a person.

Thirdly, the emotional dimension in teaching has to be revealed. More and more researchers have noticed the role of emotion dimension in teaching. Nias (1996) argued that teaching is an action which involves people interaction and therefore having an emotional dimension. According to Hargreaves (1998), the relationship between emotion and teaching is complex, how emotion is inextricably linked with teaching becomes the focus of research. According to Nias (1989); Nias (1993); Nias (1996); Nias (1999a) and Nias (1999b), the research of faculty members’ emotion is necessary, and the teaching is inevitable linked with the personal lives of faculty members, not just a technical work. In teaching, the faculty members combine the personal emotion and professional identity in the classroom, the effect of personal emotion is very strong to the development of effective teaching. Like Hargreaves (2000), “as emotional practitioners, teachers can make classrooms exciting or dull” (p. 812). The faculty members who value the emotional dimension can make the good student-faculty interaction, and it is very important for the outcome of students learning. According to Komarraju, Musulkin and Bhattacharya, “student-faculty interactions can be crucial in developing students’ academic self-concept and enhancing their motivation and achievement” (p. 332). Rosenthal et al (2000) also suggested that “there is evidence that students successful in knowing even one faculty member closely are likely to feel more satisfied with their college life and aspire to go further in their careers” (cited in Komarraju, Musulkin and Bhattacharya, 2010, p. 332).

**The Representation of the Emotional Dimension of an Effective Faculty Member**

Based on the viewpoints above-sociocultural theory and emotional dimension, some representations of the emotional dimension in the general education need to be discussed, and illustrated in the following themes: positive attitude, personal touch, the sense of humor, willingness to admit mistakes, forgiving, respect and sense of belonging.

**Positive Attitude**

The characteristic that repeatedly appeared on the list of characteristics of effective faculty members was the positive attitude. Borich (2000) suggested that effective
faculty members are those who use “meaningful verbal praise to keep students actively participating in the learning process” (p. 15). Cruickshank, Jenkins & Metcalf (2003) argued that “effective teachers are generally positive minded individuals who believe in the success of their students as well as their own ability to help students achieve.” (38-39). The students often recall praise and recognition faculty members give them when they are young students (Van scottter, Hass, Kraft & Schott, 1985). According to authors’ experience, the confidence of learning of students always comes from the positive attitude of faculty members.

**Personal Touch**

The students mention the fact that their favorite faculty members always connected themselves with classroom in a personal way. There are some strategies for improving this aspect. Firstly, the faculty members who convey a personal touch with their students, for example, call each other by name, smile often, ask about students’ feelings and opinions, and so on. According to MCDowell and Westman (2005), the faculty members allowing students to use their first names are perceived as higher in warmth, approachability, and respect in comparison to faculty members who are addressed by formal titles. Secondly, faculty members bring their life and stories into the classroom for building trust with students. Thirdly, faculty members who tell stories of events in their own life related to subject matter currently being taught, captivate student interest and promote bonding with the students (Van scottter, Hass, Kraft & Schott, 1985).

**Sense of Humor**

According to authors’ experience, the students like the faculty members full of the sense of humor. The humor ability is an extremely valuable virtue that can help the faculty members break the difficult situations and foster the good emotion between them and students. According to McDermott & Rothenberg (2000), students found that the humorous faculty members can make the learning fun. Good faculty members who occasionally enjoy a laugh with the class can create the humorous environment in the classroom; and students will feel pleasure in the learning process. Sometimes, the effective faculty members can deal with an embarrassing situation effectively in humor emotion when the students feel embarrassed (Van scottter, Hass, Kraft & Schott, 1985).

**Willingness to Admit Mistakes**

As faculty members, willingness to admit mistakes is very important to create good emotion between faculty members and students. The students appreciate the courage of admitting mistakes. Unfortunately, some faculty members thought that their authority in the classroom can be undermined by these mistakes, and try to conceal the mistake they did without amendment. However, the students quite obviously have a different opinion. The students are very sensitive for the mistakes faculty members made in the classroom, and consider that the faculty members are not honest when they make mistakes without amendment, which will destroy the trust between faculty members and students. The faculty members should have the courage to admit mistakes and give apologize to the students when they make mistakes (Van scottter, Hass, Kraft & Schott, 1985).

**Forgiving**

Most of us have a bad habit which is always remember the error of the person and do not want to forgive them. In education process, the conflict between faculty members and students always happen because of the different personality. These conflicts will bring bad influence on the live and learning of the students, even make them failure. In this situation, the faculty members should have courage to forgive students (Van scottter, Hass, Kraft & Schott, 1985). According to authors’ experience, the students will feel good in their life and learning if the faculty members show them the forgiving emotion.

**Respect**

Students universally wish the faculty members to provide the feeling of respect. It is very important for the development of students. In terms of the study of Komarraj, Musulkin and Bhattacharya, it is worth noting that students’ perceptions of faculty members as being genuinely respectful toward them are associated with stronger student self-confidence and motivation. According to authors’ experience, effective faculty members need to avoid rebuke in public place. They will keep rage and speak to students privately. Favorite faculty members will avoid the unnecessarily situations that embarrass students. Such behavior is obviously appreciated by students who will repay these respect emotion from faculty members with respect and love (Van scottter, Hass, Kraft & Schott, 1985).

**Sense of Belonging**

It is important to acknowledge that a need for belonging is one of the fundamental human needs
(Baumeister & Leary, 1995). One thing repeatedly mentioned by students is the fact that they feel that they belong to the classrooms. They recalled that the effective faculty members develop a sense of family in their classroom. Many strategies have been used in the classroom; for example, classroom pets, random act of kindness awards, class picture albums, and cooperative class goals, and so on. These actions are very useful to build a sense of unity and companionship. In addition, the effective faculty members will prevent harmful behavior like teasing and bullying and try to build an emotionally safe classroom (Van scottter, Hass, Kraft & Schott, 1985).

Conclusion
Teaching as sociocultural practice is very complex issue in the research of education involving many teaching theories and teaching practice. It is not easy to explain all the aspects of the teaching as sociocultural practice. In the assessment, some aspects of the teaching have been discussed as sociocultural practice and teaching was tried to theorize. Firstly, the notion of teaching as a sociocultural practice and a relational practice has been mentioned. Some researchers’ viewpoints which involved in this aspect have been introduced. Secondly, the teaching as an emotional dimension has been explained. The definition and description of the teaching as an emotional dimension in terms of some literature and authors’ experience have been revealed. Thirdly, the representation of the emotional dimension of effective faculty members has been introduced. These representations of emotional dimension are following themes: having a positive outlook, using a personal touch, possessing a sense of humor, admitting mistakes, being forgiving, respecting students, and developing a sense of belonging for students. Faculty members’ emotion can improve students’ learning and even their life. The faculty members should manage emotional dimension to build students’ value and help them to be a successful one.

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