



SELF-CRITICAL FRIENDSHIP: A SELF STUDY OF A PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINER IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

This study introduces the idea of self-critical friendship by modelling the personal experience of a teacher trainer. This two-year self-study analyses the dairies and video recordings of a teacher trainer observed by another researcher. The answers of two questions: “Who are you?” and “Do you teach as you preach?” were extracted from the data. The analysis was undertaken twelve months after the teaching was conducted. It was hoped that such a time frame would provide a more detached interpretation of the data. The most important finding of the study is that self critical friendship enhances teacher trainers’ self awareness and, in turn, their professional development. Going through such a process has the added advantage of providing a model for the professional development of trainees in pre-service teacher programs.

Keywords: self-study, self-critical friendship, self-awareness, teacher trainer, pre-service teachers.

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1. Introduction

By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.

Confucius

Everything started when Kaan (a pseudonym), who was undertaking a Ph.D. in the Education Planning and Management department, asked if he could observe and record my classes to collect data for his thesis. While I was unsure about what he was studying, I accepted his request in the spirit of academic collegiality. During more than 25 years as a teacher educator, I have been an observer in countless classes conducted by pre-service teachers. This was the first time that I would be subject to such observation. Kaan asked to observe my first year English Speaking Course whose aim was to help trainees improve their communication skills. He would video record eighteen hours of my classes. I decided to use this as an opportunity to undertake self study of my teaching. My aim was to critically investigate my approach to teaching with the object of enhancing my professional development as a teacher trainer. I believed that Kaan's involvement in my classes provided a unique opportunity to test whether what I was doing matched with what I had been telling my trainees to do in class. In undertaking such an evaluation I decided to immediately record my thoughts and feelings about each class in a diary. I also decided that I would analyse the video recordings of my lessons. Most of us implicitly work out our approach to teaching. My object was to explicitly confront and investigate (Hansen, 2007; Berry, 2009) the values and beliefs (Jopling, 2000) that I bring to teaching and to learn from experience building on my professional knowledge as stated in the above quotation by Confucius. Moreover, such reflection might usefully be employed as a model for future teachers.

Self-awareness is an important component of the teaching process. However, in most teacher training programs, the focus is on cognitive aspects of human development with trainees provided with appropriate and/or necessary knowledge and practical skills about teaching. Deeper objectives such as promoting self-awareness and empathy towards social and emotional aspects of human development are generally down played, if not ignored all together (Malm, 2009). To focus on deeper objectives, teacher educators should, according to the Commission of the European Communities (2007, 15), "possess practical experience of classroom teaching and have attained a very high standard in the skills, attitudes and competences demanded of teachers". The quality of teacher educators affects not only what happens in the classroom, but also the quality of the education provided to society as a whole (ATEE, 2006). Teachers will be more effective and have a greater impact on students when they explicitly explore who they are, their vision and mission. Such exercises will also help them to better understand their students (see Arnold, 1999). Underhill (1999; also see ATEE, 2006; Commission of the European Communities, 2007) maintains that to enhance the learning process, teachers need to continuously consider ways and means to

improve themselves. Loughran, Berry, Clemans, Lancaster and Long (2008) maintain that to be ‘truly expert’ teacher educators should not only possess a deep understanding of different dimensions of teaching, but also, the need to explicitly articulate what it is that they do, with such self understanding becoming the first step in the quest for improvement and best practice. Devoting time to thinking about the way to teach is also emphasized by the Association of Teacher Educators in Europe (ATEE, 2006).

Reflection will be more effective when combined with a critical friend who can provide feedback on one’s performance (Costa & Kallick, 1993). I thought I would undertake an experiment using ‘myself’ as a critical friend. Costa and Kallick (1993) point out that a critical friend needs to understand the dimensions of the teaching project and the context in which it is conducted. Kaan’s video recordings of my teaching provided me with the means to act as my critical friend. I would analyze the video recordings with a critical eye to discern my “habitual practice” (Akinbode, 2013). There was also another dimension in adopting this approach. When pre-service teachers begin their careers they work at schools where they are the only language teacher at the school. This is especially true during their early stages of their careers where they perform their responsibilities with little or no support from fellow language teachers. It is my hope that the experiment I am discussing here will be helpful to pre-service teachers to either adopt or experiment with other models of reflection and self evaluation when they embark on their careers.

2. Significance of the Study

As a teacher trainer I believed that focusing on the teaching process would contribute to the professional development in the ELT literature. The literature on professional development mainly focuses on novice teachers; especially what they know and believe about the teaching process (Golombek, 1998; Kelly, 2010; Nespoli, 2001; Zeng, 2012). Other research identifies how novice teachers are different from expert teachers and how research can help novices to benefit from experts (Livingston & Borko, 1989; Meyer, 2004, Moran & Hoy, 2007; Oras, 2005; Tsui, 2003). The literature also pays attention to the importance of reflection during professional development (Brooke, 2012; Thorsen & DeVore, 2013; Ward & McCotter, 2004). There are some studies about the challenges new teacher educators face in establishing their professional identities (Murray & Male, 2005; Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008). However, the professional development of experienced teacher educators or how teacher educators approach their work has rarely been examined (Groep, Admiraal, Koster & Simons, 2005; Lunenberg, Korthagen & Swennen, 2007). As Russell and Berry (2014) argue, while studying our own current practices causes self-understanding, little is known about whether or not teacher educators do this for their students.

The literature does not provide any explicit guidance in how to conduct self study through a self-critical friendship process. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a model for teacher trainers by focusing on their roles as teachers and

ascertaining whether they can obtain the self awareness to determine whether what they are doing matches what they are saying in theory. Identifying and overcoming mismatches between practice and theory is an essential component of professional development.

3. Methodology

This study is based on qualitative research which analyses the personal diaries and video recordings of a teacher trainer at a 4-year English Language Teacher Training Program for pre-service language teachers in Turkey. The diaries were compiled after each lesson. They lasted one hour in duration; with eighteen classes in all. In the diaries I recorded my personal opinions, feelings and perceptions on teaching and learning processes. As indicated above all of the lessons were video recorded by Kaan.

In an attempt to overcome the problem of personal subjectivity I decided to set aside examination of this material for twelve months. The passage of time would hopefully enhance my ability to analyse the material with a more detached and critical eye. It is difficult to know what length of time to adopt in an exercise of this type; twelve months, however, given other demands that one encounters, would seem to provide an appropriate length of time. To be frank, there were times I did not like what I saw in the videos or what I read in the diaries. Similarly, there were times when I wasn't embarrassed with my performance, and other occasions when I re-watched the same part or reread the same diary extract, that my perspective changed.

It took almost another 12 months reading and rereading the diaries and watching and re-watching the videos several times to be able to reach useful conclusions about my performance, or performances, as a teacher. The material was analysed in order to find answers to the following questions:

1. Who are you?
2. Do you teach as you preach?

The analysis consisted of 'revealing' the basis of my role and responsibilities as a teacher, my beliefs, assumptions, personal theories of learning and the teaching process and identifying my teaching practices. I wanted to test if I was following the principals I had been advocating for trainees to do in their own classes.

4. Findings and Discussion

The results of the content analysis of the diaries and video-recordings were provided below with samples and excerpts taken from the data to display what has been gathered for the research questions. A range of realities were faithfully provided in order to reflect multiple ways of truth and to ensure trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003; Johnson, 1997). These were also supported by what the literature suggests. While no statistical analysis was conducted the main themes gathered from the data were:

1. The role of a teacher trainer
 - a. A planner

- i. The positive impact of lesson planning on teaching
 - ii. The importance of lesson planning on my professional development
 - iii. The negative impact of lesson planning on teaching
 - b. A questioner
 - i. Questioning my decisions
 - ii. Questioning my teaching strategies
 - iii. Questioning the dilemma between my practices and theory
- 2. What a teacher trainer preaches and teaches
 - a. The importance of dealing with students' emotions
 - b. The importance of rapport between teacher and students
 - c. The importance of group dynamics in the classroom
 - d. The importance of involving learners
 - e. The importance of enjoyment while teaching
 - f. The importance of creating curiosity

4.1. Who are you? The roles of a teacher trainer

At least when you're acting you can be someone. In front of the camera you have to be yourself. And who am I?

Stephen Rea (2012)

Rea (2012) argues that the best way of knowing who you are is recording yourself in front of the camera. While having someone in the class observing and recording what you are doing might be frightening or challenging, I found it useful in that it provided me with feedback which, in turn, encouraged me to think about what I was doing and how my teaching could be improved. As for the question "Who am I?" the roles I adopt while teaching provide the answer. In methodology classes I talk about various roles of a teacher as a planner, facilitator, observer, manager, resource, tutor, assessor and so on which I illustrate with various examples. The analyses of my diary entries and video recordings revealed that while these roles overlap most of the times, two are dominant. They are those of a planner and questioner. I realized that while planning the lesson and applying it in the classroom I have to adopt various roles simultaneously; I have to be a researcher, a resource, a manager, a facilitator and think of strategies I can employ to encourage students to become involved in the lesson.

a. A planner

i. The positive impact of lesson planning on teaching

Analysis of my diaries emphasised the importance I attach to lesson planning. For me, this is crucial to the success of a lesson as well as the enjoyment for both myself and the students. The following diary entry demonstrates this;

-Although I have to spend a lot of time for preparation before teaching, I enjoy class time and I believe my students enjoy being in the class too, because we all have fun together. They say it is the most enjoyable class they have.

The following extract reveals that such planning is necessary even if you are using a course book;

- Following the book step by step in order to cover the topic is a bad idea. When I try to follow the book, it controls me, it becomes the boss. I also feel that the book limits me and kills my creativity, the lesson conducted is not mine; it is what the writer tells me to do so. That is why, I never follow the book step by step I always have MY OWN plans.

I strongly believe that the planning determines how the lesson will proceed; if you plan well there is a little chance that your lesson will fail. For me, planning is like writing the script of a film; you just think about various details carefully; the plot, the roles of actors, the dialogue, the setting and most importantly the message the movie is trying to provide. I always tell my students that being a good planner is a key to being a successful teacher.

ii. The importance of lesson planning on my professional development

My diary entries revealed the positive impact of lesson planning on my professional development. I always believe that a good lesson depends on trust in yourself, your skills in teaching, which in turn depends on being aware of what you are doing. Thus, being a good planner helps you to think critically about what you are doing, what weaknesses one has and what needs to be done, whether it be consulting the literature and/or seeking the help of colleagues. The following diary entry provides an illustration of the importance of lesson planning:

- I do forget about being recorded although the video camera stands just in front of me. I have always been telling my 4th year students that planning is the most important part of a lesson; if you plan well, you know what you are doing and you just focus on what you are doing in the lesson and you forget about the rest – even very serious ones like a video recorder. When you focus on the process the other factors seem details for you.

The more you are aware of what you are doing, the more focused you can be while teaching; which is dependent on having a good lesson. This reinforces my advice to senior teacher trainees, when they say they feel anxious and unable to perform to the best of their ability when being observed: “If you plan carefully and know what you are doing and sure about yourself, you will forget about the anxiety of being observed and concentrate on your job”.

iii. The negative impact of lesson planning on teaching

As I watched my video recordings, I realized that I was very confident and relaxed in the lesson mainly due to the preparations I made before teaching. However, during the analysis I identified some cases in which I missed conversation opportunities for the sake of following my lesson plan. As I watched the videos of a lesson whose topic was “telling lies”, I realized that I was too much involved in doing the listening and vocabulary activities in the course book because, it was the plan I had developed. I later criticized myself for not providing enough time for students to talk about themselves. I could have elaborated the question “Do you ever tell lies?” and created an enhanced environment for communication. The

added advantage of creating such an environment is that in the classroom students can be unpredictable and spontaneous and better prepare themselves for real life situations (see Thornbury, 2005). While I was generally glad to see myself applying what I had been preaching for years about using the course book as a tool and not letting it dominate teaching, I recognized that I should be more careful in finding the ‘best’ decision in any real life classroom situation. What Woodward (2001) states below can be used as a useful summary in making such a decision:

“If you have a garden, the lawn mower may be a wonderful machine to have, but you only use it when you want the grass to look nicer. You don’t use it every day just because you have it or because it cost a lot of money” (p. 160).

b. A questioner

i. Questioning my decisions

This self-study provided me with the means to question what I was doing. While reading my diaries, I found out myself asking many questions about my practices, decisions and the teaching process more generally. As I watched the video recordings, I realized that I was not only teaching students a foreign language, but also trying to help them to have a broader vision of the world in which they will apply the skills they acquire. However, I sometimes doubted whether I was doing the right thing or forcing students to do too much, as illustrated in the following extract:

-At the beginning of the class when students talked about their feelings, they said they felt burned out because of the amount of homework and presentations they had to do. I also wanted them to make a presentation on a special place they wanted to visit in the world. The only aim I had was helping them to “have a vision of the world”, because when I asked them which three places they would like to visit, many couldn’t even name three places at the beginning of term. Some couldn’t even name one. Although presentations would take only five to seven minutes, I wondered if I was forcing them too much.

ii. Questioning my teaching strategies

My diary analysis revealed times when I questioned the strategies I employed in motivating the students, as illustrated in the following extract:

-I did not have all the students in the class because it was the week just after the exams. So I had half of the class, but their minds were elsewhere. I had problems motivating them. Actually their lack of motivation was obvious even during the warm up activity. They just could not make two circles –our usual warm up activity. I could not manage to increase their motivation as much as I wanted. So, I decided to skip some activities I planned to do. As a result, I did not have a very good feeling as I left the class. I don’t know if I could have done anything else to motivate them more.

The feelings I had while writing this diary extract were similar as I watched the recordings of that lesson. I was dissatisfied with what I observed. With the unfortunate realisation that most students use the right to be absent after a national holiday, I should have planned accordingly. I could have conducted a different

lesson to surprise the students. As I watched the video I was deeply influenced by their lack of motivation, which, in turn, resulted in me unfortunately losing my motivation.

iii. Questioning the dilemma between my practices and the theory

Another theme was the dilemma I had between what I was doing and what the research was saying on foreign language classroom anxiety. As a person who has conducted several studies on language anxiety with Turkish students learning English, I was well aware of anxiety in learning language. I knew that when learners feel anxious, rather than concentrating on the task at hand, they try to overcome feelings that they will be unsuccessful in acquiring necessary skills (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). I was also aware of the reasons why students become anxious; their beliefs about the language learning process (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; MacIntyre, Noels & Clement, 1997; Young, 1991); their comparison of performance with other learners' (Bailey, 1983); their teachers' attitudes towards them (Williams & Burden, 1997; Tsui, 1996) or classroom procedures (Crookall & Oxford, 1991; Koch & Terrell, 1991). In my own study I had found that presentations in front of others made Turkish students anxious; this was a feeling exacerbated when they were not provided with clear guidelines, or were unsure of what was expected of them (Author, 2001). I wondered if I was creating a similar situation when I required students to make presentations, as demonstrated in the extract below:

- They never complained about making a presentation for this class. But whenever I ask them to make a presentation I question myself because while I was collecting data for my PhD thesis 10 years ago, it was one of the main sources of anxiety students expressed. I hope this will not cause them so much trouble. I also keep reminding myself that they learn a lot from each other during presentations.

While watching recordings of the lessons, I did not observe any signs of anxiety in the students. They were anxious at the beginning, as for almost all of them it would be the first presentation of their lives. I was also happy to see that the atmosphere in the classroom was friendly and relaxing which made it easier for both the presenter and the listeners to focus on the task rather than on the person making the presentation.

My role as a questioner was a challenging one; although I had self awareness of my approach, I could not stop questioning my teaching practices. Grene (1973) believes that questioning yourself is not something to be avoided because the questions a teacher asks themselves is designed to help the questioner to think more clearly about what they are doing. If teachers do not question themselves, they cannot expect students to and acquire skills of self-reflection and self-evaluation. For teacher educators this is more challenging, as Beeman-Cadwallader (2014) reported on concerning her role in being an expert or facilitator. I reported similar

doubtful feelings I have been experiencing in my personal life as a mother and in my professional life as a teacher. These feelings were even stated explicitly in one of my diaries:

- As I said yesterday in my MA class “teaching a class and raising a child are very similar processes; you try to do your best but you always keep asking to yourself whether you are doing the right thing or not”.

My diary and video recordings provide a snapshot of “who I am”. These roles, however, are not fixed, they overlap and will change throughout my teaching life. However, as Ericson, Young and Pinnegar (2011) point out, by focusing on our identities and the challenges in developing these identities we can develop a better understanding of teacher education process.

4.2. Do you teach as you preach? Emotions, involvement and students’ enjoyment of the lesson

In answering the question “Do you teach as you preach?” I benefited from various sources; my own experiences, the literature, my own teachers and background education, my colleagues, students, mentor teachers I have been working with and everybody in my life, even my 14-year old son. Bolton (2010, 133) maintains “we are what we do, rather than what we say we are”.

a. The importance of dealing with students’ emotions

I believe that the affective domain of teaching is as important as the cognitive domain, and should be addressed in teacher education programs. We need to guide our pre-service teachers in creating a teaching atmosphere in which their students will perceive learning as worthwhile and pleasurable. Hargreaves (1998) maintains that teaching is an emotional practice and cannot be reduced to technical competence. He further argues that the emotional dimensions of teaching and learning must be incorporated into professional standards or competencies for teachers.

When I analysed my diary, I was happy with what I found in regard to the affective domain; the video recordings also revealed the care I gave to my students’ emotions, sometimes by explicitly talking about what they are feeling, but always trying to create a relaxed atmosphere. This is illustrated in the following diary extract:

-At the beginning of the class when we talked about the students’ feelings; they said they were feeling burnt out because of the amount of homework and presentations they had to do in the classes.

As I watched the video I realized that even if I just listened to them and did not find any specific solutions to their problems, that talking about their feelings made

them relaxed. It was clear from their faces; they looked happier after this warm up session and they participated in the rest of the class more willingly.

My major source of learning on the significance of the affective domain of language teaching was the graduate course “Individual Differences in Language Teaching” I had been providing for several years. Reading about the factors effecting students’ learning, like language anxiety, motivation, self-esteem, autonomy and attitudes helped me to examine what I was doing from the students’ perspective as well as my own. An efficient teaching environment cannot be created without dealing with the emotions and feelings of the participants involved. This perspective is illustrated in the following diary entry;

- I think I have a role in creating a relaxed environment because the MA course I have in which we talk about the affective side of the language learning process helps me a lot. I can say I really learnt many things in that course and I am trying to apply them in my own classes, too.

b. The importance of the rapport between the teacher and the students

I believe that the rapport we have with our students is vitally important for an efficient learning / teaching environment. The relationship I believed I had with my students was reinforced by a comment provided to me by Kaan:

-Today Kaan told me that he was impressed with the relationship I had with my students. I think reading a lot about the affective side helped me to be more conscious of the importance of feelings. So, I do not think any of my students are afraid of asking me any questions or making any comments during my classes. The more experience I gained in teaching, the more relaxed I feel in my relations with the students. I do not try to protect any personal identity issues against students and it helps me to be freer.

As previously mentioned the role of experience in creating positive relations with students is crucial. I personally believe that experience is a factor helping one to focus on the affective domain more; while you are more concerned with the cognitive domain as a novice teacher, as you gain more experience you become more confident about what you are doing, which in turn helps you to be able to attend to students’ needs.

c. The importance of group dynamism in the classroom

Group dynamism is an important factor in teaching, as it affects the productivity, quality and impact of learning (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1999). If students are enthusiastic and interested, they will not cause problems in class (Harmer, 2009) and will produce better academic results as well (Williams & Burden, 1997). How one feels after a class will be mainly determined by the success or otherwise of group dynamics, as is illustrated below:

- I believe that I have very good students in the class. They are all very motivated and willing. Only a few of them, who came at the beginning of the second term, are still a little bit shy, but a great majority are very relaxed and there is a very nice group dynamic. All of these of course help me to have a very positive feeling as I leave the class.

As mentioned above, I am most conscious of the effect anxiety has on students, and tried to overcome or reduce such feelings, as illustrated here:

- I know there are always some students who can talk without stopping, but then, I lose the silent students. And I know the silent ones feel more anxious when they do not speak. I always tell my students that it is a cycle; when you talk you feel more comfortable and become more fluent and want to talk more. And when you don't, you feel more anxious and talk less and each time it becomes more difficult to say something.

Arnold and Brown (1999) maintain that developing strategies which combine cognitive and affective needs of students will help them have more satisfying lives and be responsible members of society.

d. The importance of involvement

Woolfolk (2005) maintains that involving students and creating motivating them to learn is the most important function of teachers. The following diary extracts demonstrate my approach to involving students:

-We definitely had a more enjoyable lesson this week. The main reason was the topic we discussed. We talked about women and men; the topic of every age, every generation...I divided girls and boys into two different groups and they listed the adjectives they could associate with the opposite sex. Then, they checked each other's lists and decided whether they agreed or disagreed. It was a very enjoyable discussion. What I liked most was the fact that everybody participated in the discussion, because I told each member of the group to explain their ideas about one of the adjectives, otherwise, I am sure some students would be reluctant to speak while others dominated the discussion. I feel successful when I can manage to involve all of them to the lesson.

- I once more understood that learning can take place only if all the students are involved; if they do not take place or if only a few students are active, we cannot talk about an efficient lesson.

Emphasizing the importance of involvement, Hedge (2000) has observed that while we might focus on a lesson we may not actually teach students. Also, time must be used effectively. Woolfolk (2005) distinguishes “academic learning time” from the total time students spend in class. For him, we can only talk about learning if students are actively engaged in worthwhile, appropriate activities. He argues that

only one third of the time spent at school is actually devoted to “academic learning”. As I watched the videos I could see the involvement of all students, which provided me with a sense of achievement.

e. The importance of enjoyment while teaching

Involving all students in classroom activities is a challenging aspect of a successful lesson. Making the learning experience enjoyable for students is an important means to obtain the involvement of students and finding ways which will create enjoyment will help a teacher to better involve students. Woolfolk (2005) maintains that personal factors such as needs, interests, curiosity and enjoyment will play a part in determining such motivation. What I realized while analysing my diary and my videos was the enjoyment we had in the lessons as illustrated in the following example:

-If you find enjoyable ways of doing something, you do not realize how the time files. My students give me the same feedback, too. They even explicitly say that “teacher we like your classes a lot, we enjoy them and we learn”. Isn’t it our ultimate aim? Learning in an enjoyable way.

Learning in an enjoyable way should be the fundamental aim of teaching, because if students are bored, or lose their concentration, they will start focusing on other things rather than learning. Therefore, we need to find ways to keep our students’ attention as the first step for effective teaching. Hargreaves (1998) claims that good teaching does not only consist of using the correct strategies or having the necessary competencies; it requires teachers with emotions and passions and the ones who create lessons which enhance creativity, challenge and joy. The joy both the students and I had in the classroom was most obvious from the smiling faces as I watched the video recordings.

f. The importance of creating curiosity

Creating curiosity and including students’ decisions in lessons are very important in teaching. It also provides a means to win over students who feel disinclined to participate in class.

- In the lesson, I started with the question “What would you like to talk about today?” They were all surprised because they were not expecting such a question. They knew that I always had a plan. I, of course, had planned the lesson, but I wanted to make them curious and give them the feeling that they had a right to choose what to cover (I actually wonder why I never asked this question before. I might have included their choices in the lessons. Anyway, I will ask this question more frequently next year and really include their opinions in my planning). When some people said they wanted to talk about movies I said, “all right, let’s do what you wish today and talk about movies” (this was actually my plan for the lesson). Their faces were worth seeing. They were very happy

and surprised. Especially Efe, who is not a very active participant of the lessons, was the one who participated most today. So what Chomsky argued by saying “99% of teaching is making students feel interested” is proven once more in today’s lesson.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This paper cannot pretend to be objective. Nonetheless, the process of being observed, conducting a self evaluation of written and recorded data helped enhance my awareness and improve my performance in class as a trainer of language teachers. Throughout this journey, by rethinking my practices, underlying perceptions and values I realized that;

1. The roles of a teacher overlap; you do not have a single role while teaching, you simultaneously adapt various roles even in the same context. The roles you have as a professional will overlap with other roles in your personal life. Therefore, we should not teach roles separate from each other if we do not want pre-service teachers to feel confused when they enter into their own classrooms. We also need to emphasize that questions in our mind are fruitful for development even, if not especially, they challenge the ways in which we teach. While the aim of this exercise was to find answers to questions, the answers provoked more questions, which will continue throughout my professional life. The famous Turkish philosopher Mevlana has told us that “The question arises from the knowledge, so does the answer”.
2. While lesson planning is important not only as a prerequisite of teaching steps, it also enhances self awareness. This study revealed that following a plan may reduce chances for discussion in class. Thus, teachers should remind students that while a lesson plan is a necessary part of teaching, it is only a part and should not be used to cut out discussions and involvement by students. Video recordings can be a useful tool in a teaching situation so that students can learn how to balance planning with flexibility. What I realized from this experiment is that no matter how much experience a teacher has, they can never be 100 % sure if what they are doing is “working” in the class room. Questioning yourself and what you are doing is a never ending process. We shouldn’t be afraid of being open and questioning ourselves and what we are doing, our values, thought processes and uncertainties (Greene, 1973: Lyons, 2010). Taking a step back, witnessing and explicitly reflecting on what is happening in class provides a means to improve one’s skills as a teacher. This was the major benefit I derived from the opportunity provided by Kaan’s request to video my classes. In addition, experience provides a teacher with the flexibility to focus more on the affective side of learning, and as one becomes more confident of one’s abilities more time can be devoted to the emotions, feelings and needs of students.
3. Including instruction on what self-study is and how it can be conducted should be included in teacher training programs. Making the other side of

teaching explicit for students by involving them in self reflection can be critical for self development and working with future colleagues.

4. Critical self evaluation is an invaluable tool in the professional development of teacher trainers. What I have presented here provides an example of how such a process can be conducted. Others will find alternative methods more suitable to their needs or circumstances. However, I maintain that we cannot help the development of others if we do not start with ourselves.

6. Limitations

This study documents a personal experience of a teacher trainer around the notion the of self-critical friendship. The results are based on my personal experiences as a researcher. While specific examples were provided it lacks the objectivity of independent analysis. One referee suggested that it might be useful to analyse the data obtained after obtaining it and repeating the exercise twelve months later and comparing the two sets of conclusions. This may be preferable to my decision to only undertake the latter.

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