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EFFECTIVE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

IN SEARCH OF MEANING IN LEARNING ABOUT TEACHING

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Reflective practice has an allure that is seductive in nature because it rings true for most people as something useful and informing. However, for reflection to genuinely be a lens into the world of practice, it is important that the nature of reflection be identified in such a way as to offer ways of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions and encouraging one to see his or her practice through others' eyes. The relationship between time, experience, and expectations of learning through reflection is an important element of reflection, and to teach about reflection requires contextual anchors to make learning episodes meaningful. This article examines the nature of reflection and suggests how it might become effective reflective practice that can be developed and enhanced through teacher preparation programs.

Reflection has developed a variety of meanings as the bandwagon has traveled through the world of practice. Its allure is caught up in the seductive nature of a notion that rings true for most people as something useful and informing in the development and understanding of, in this case, teaching and learning in teacher education practices.

Reflective practice is a term that carries diverse meaning (Grimmett & Erickson, 1988; Richardson, 1992). For some, it simply means thinking about something, whereas for others, it is a well-defined and crafted practice that carries very specific meaning and associated action. Along this continuum there are many interesting interpretations, but one element of reflection that is common to many is the notion of a *problem* (a puzzling, curious, or perplexing situation). What that problem is, the way it is framed and (hopefully) reframed, is an important aspect of understanding the nature of reflection and the value of reflective practice. It is also a crucial (but sometimes too easily overlooked) aspect of learning about teaching.

One outcome resulting from the appeal of the idea of reflective practice has been the adoption of reflection as a foundation for many teacher education programs (see, e.g., Richert, 1990; Russell, 1997; Tom, 1985; Valli, 1993; Zeichner, 1983). A consequence of this large-scale uptake of reflection as a shaping principle for teacher education program structures is that the cynic may well argue that participants are simply encouraged to reflect. This issue is perhaps at the heart of the nature and value of reflection, as clearly the “way in” to reflection—the need to reflect—the context, the nature of the problem, and the anticipated value of such reflection all impact on what is reflected on and for what purpose. Simply being encouraged to reflect is likely to be as meaningful as a lecture on cooperative group work.

In this article, I shall examine the value of reflection as a meaningful way of approaching learning about teaching so that a better understanding of teaching, and teaching about teaching, might develop. For reflection to lead to valuable learning outcomes for teacher educa-

tors and their students, I believe it must be effective reflective practice.

REFLECTION: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Across many professions (science, nursing, medicine, law, teaching) the need for individuals to develop their understanding about the way they conduct their work, and to be skilled practitioners through their work, has been important in informing the profession about aspects of practice. By so doing, the knowledge base of the profession is developed and refined in ways that help the practitioner to be an effective and informed professional.

The knowledge base for some professions may be found in case books, handbooks of practice, precedents of law, and so on. In recent times, both nursing (see, e.g., Newton, 2000; Rolfe, 1998) and teaching (see, e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992) have sought to better develop and articulate those aspects of practice that might be described as being a part of their knowledge base.

It is not surprising, then, that reflection continually emerges as a suggested way of helping practitioners better understand what they know and do as they develop their knowledge of practice through reconsidering what they learn in practice. Reflection, then, places an emphasis on learning through questioning and investigation to lead to a development of understanding (Smyth, 1992). Furthermore, there has been a recognition that reflection is important in sustaining one's professional health and competence and that the ability to exercise professional judgment is in fact informed through reflection on practice (Day, 1999). Hence, for those who see professional development partly as an emancipation of practice by learning through practice, reflection is indeed at the heart of the matter and equally valuable regardless of the profession.

In the field of teacher education, a wave of reflective practice washed over the profession following Schön's (1983, 1987, 1992) reminders of the importance of the link between reflection and practice. A number of books highlighted the variety of approaches to, and applications

of, reflection such that the idea of reflection for some time was central to views of good practice (e.g., Calderhead & Gates, 1993; Clift, Houston, & Pugach, 1990; Grimmett & Erickson, 1988; LaBoskey, 1994; Loughran, 1996; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993).

Brookfield (1995) reminded us that the reflective practice literature is important for two reasons. First, it offers a variety of approaches to examining practice in order that we might discover and research some of the taken-for-granted assumptions that influence our approach to practice so that

we can learn about, and start experimenting with, different approaches to assumption hunting. Many of these approaches are well suited to unearthing assumptions of power and hegemony . . . [and] they also outline ways in which a program for the encouragement of reflective practice in others can be systematically developed. (pp. 218-219)

Second, it provides opportunities for us to understand the stories of how teachers live through reflective practice, many of which we identify with personally. These stories help us to

realize that what we thought were idiosyncratic features of our own critically reflective efforts are paralleled in the experiences of many of our colleagues. We discover that what we thought was our own idiosyncratic difficulty is actually an example of a wider structural problem or cultural contradiction. (p. 219)

It is therefore important that significance and meaning continually accompany the construction of purpose and application of reflection to the world of practice so that the value of experience can be realized by teachers in ways that minimize the possibility that the problematic nature of practice might simply be routinized. To counter the likelihood that practice may be routinized, teacher educators and their student teachers need to pay particular attention to the nature of the problems they are confronted by in their teaching about teaching and their learning about teaching.

PROBLEM: A PUZZLING/ CURIOUS SITUATION

For teacher educators, ways of acting and the reasons that direct that action are made explicit

when attempting to help others see what it is that matters in one's own practice. An element of "making the tacit explicit" is the need and ability to recognize what draws one's attention to a situation that might be viewed as problematic.

A Problem Is Unlikely to Be Acted On if It Is Not Viewed as a Problem

In the practice setting, developing a range of ways of seeing a problem is important. If a teacher educator simply states the problem for others (student teachers), it will not necessarily then make it visible to them, as the differences in experience influence not only what the problem is but also how it might be seen. There needs to be a reason to be able to see the problem in different ways. This ability to frame and reframe (Schön, 1983, 1987) is a most important aspect of developing reflective practice as it influences the subsequent actions in practice.

Rationalization May Masquerade as Reflection

Rationalization of practice is most apparent when a problem is not (cannot) be viewed in other ways such that the existing perspective dominates the practice setting and the problem continues in its present form. In a similar vein, it is also important to distinguish between rationalization and justification of practice. One might justify practice in terms of a particular way of approaching a situation because of specific knowledge or thoughts about that setting; however, rationalization is the dogged adherence to an approach almost despite the nature of the practice setting because alternative ways of seeing are not (cannot) be apprehended.

Consider, for example, a student teacher (or, for that matter, a teacher or teacher educator) who has a class that is perceived as being disinterested in learning. The impact of this perception (the students' attitude) on the teacher could easily lead to a situation in which failure to engage the class in learning, or to feel satisfied by or interested in learning, is attributed to the

students' attitude. Hence, the teacher's approach to the class, the manner of the teaching, the impact (or lack thereof) on learning could be explained away as resulting from the students' attitude. If this were the case, it could lead to a view wherein the problem could be seen as residing within the students rather than in the practice setting itself. Therefore, if the problem is considered to be outside the practitioner's control, there is little incentive for the practitioner to attempt to address the situation; hence, the nature of the practice would be perceived as having little impact on the problem.

EXPERIENCE ALONE DOES NOT LEAD TO LEARNING; REFLECTION ON EXPERIENCE IS ESSENTIAL

Experience can offer the student teacher opportunities to live through alternative ways of approaching the practice setting, but there is little doubt that the initial framing inevitably impacts on what is seen, the nature of the risks taken, and the diversity in learning through action. Hence, it seems reasonable to assert that how a student teacher engages with his or her actions within the practice setting, through reflection on those actions, must shape the possibilities for seeing as a result of experience. Reflection on experience enhances learning through experience such that divergent rather than convergent learning outcomes are encouraged.

This important interplay between experience and reflection is also influenced by the time of reflection, which has a dramatic impact on what can be seen and acted on. Anticipatory, retrospective, and contemporaneous reflection demand different skills and framing abilities (Loughran, 1996) and interact with experience in a variety of ways. Suffice to say, the different demands associated with the time of reflection can influence student teachers' learning through experience.

Consider the following example of a teacher as she explains her approach to a particular situation:

I assumed as a consequence of my own lack of enthusiasm that the students had a negative relation-

ship with the subject. I sought to identify the factors contributing to their experience and experiment with alternative ways of teaching based on the feedback I received. . . . It was in their [students'] responses that I realized that my perceptions were not entirely accurate. . . . I was surprised to find that the students generally felt positive towards the subject, but identified key elements that took away from their learning experience. . . . This made me feel confident that choosing to pursue ways of responding to some of these "highlighted issues" in my teaching practice could make the environment more stimulating for my students. (Student's personal diary account as shared with a teacher education class, May 2000).

In this case, the teacher has demonstrated the value in questioning her taken-for-granted assumptions of practice. Her reframing (and subsequent actions) have helped her to learn more about the practice setting in a way that has been helpful for all involved (teacher and students). Clearly, then, her reflection has had an effect on her practice—it could be regarded as effective reflective practice.

I contrast this notion of effective reflective practice with rationalizing one's practice, which I believe is commonly misconstrued as reflection. Reflection is effective when it leads the teacher to make meaning from the situation in ways that enhance understanding so that she or he comes to see and understand the practice setting from a variety of viewpoints. Such learning can then impact on the development of one's attitudes for reflection (Dewey's [1933] open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness) and, in so doing, it is possible to highlight the link between reflection and the development of a genuine wisdom-in-practice as the knowledge gained through reflection is recognizable and articulative. One helpful approach for facilitating this is drawn from research on anecdotes (van Manen 1995, 1999).

OTHER WAYS OF SEEING

In writing an anecdote, the author constructs a personal account of a situation from his or her perspective as a central figure in a way that creates a sense of understanding of the given situation. I have found anecdotes to

be very powerful for student teachers as they quickly identify with the author's situation (who, in van Manen's [1995, 1999] case, are usually high school students), and their reactions consistently illustrate how being reminded about a student's perspective on the classroom helps to reshape student teachers' views about their own approach to teaching.

Student teachers are also very capable of constructing their own anecdotes about their experiences as learners, and, although I have not formally pursued it, I do see many possibilities in this approach for helping teacher educators to see their practice differently. For example, the following anecdote illustrates how a professor's approach to teaching about an issue completely contradicted the very message he was attempting to deliver.

A Lesson on Policy

The tutorial room was quiet. Only the professor's voice broke the silence. I had to say something. I disagreed with what he was saying. I spoke up. That's what I thought we were supposed to be learning to do. To be actively engaged in our learning. To question our understanding. We're certainly expected to be doing that with our students in school.

"I don't think that policy has to be about change!" I said, and I gave some examples to support my point of view. With that, others in the class also started to contribute.

"This is what the definition is! Reputed researchers agree!" was his rather forceful response.

Faced with that, what else could I say? He was the expert. He would take it as a personal insult if I again raised issues, so I kept my mouth shut. As the rest of the monologue surged forth, the class returned to its earlier silence. I opened my notebook and wrote furiously, "I disagree, I disagree."

We had just been talking about including people in discussions, accepting others' point of view, inclusion, understanding. I don't think that classrooms should be lecture theatres. Teaching is not a one-way process. (Loughran, 1997, pp. 5-6)

The professor in this anecdote did not see what his response actually created in the mind of this particular student teacher. If he were to be confronted by an anecdote of this kind, one wonders whether he would link this type of scenario with his own actions. As a teacher educator,

how do you react to this anecdote? What does this anecdote make you think about in terms of your own teaching practice?

As briefly noted at the outset of this article, helping student teachers come to see differently and thereby gain insights into how they might come to better understand and consequently value wisdom-in-practice is not as simple as just highlighting the problem and telling them what it is they should know. In teacher education programs, student teachers are often encouraged to try out different teaching procedures and feel what it is like to teach in a particular way. For example, student teachers often find it difficult to conduct an interpretive discussion (Baird & Northfield, 1992; Barnes, 1975) because they struggle with their use of "wait time."

When the student-teachers with whom I work depart for their school teaching experiences (practicum), I encourage them to practice their use of wait time and feel what it is like to give their students a chance to think before they (as teachers) rush to fill that ever-so-brief moment of silence. As a result of taking the risk, one of my student teachers wrote the following anecdote.

Wait Time

My first class. Palms sweating, breathing shallow, tie too tight, pulse too fast. I guess I was kind of nervous. I had fully prepared the whole lesson in intricate detail, and even rehearsed certain key sections. I shuffled my books, watching them enter the room noisily, with attitude to burn. They sat down. Eventually, I swallowed.

"Good morning 10B! My name is Mr. Burns, I'm a teacher from Monash University. Today we are . . ." and into the lesson I launched. Cool as a cucumber and smooth as a strawberry smoothie. I wrote on the board in big letters. "What Makes A Film?"

Having bonded with the students on an incredibly deep and substantial level in the first three minutes of the class, I swiftly and confidently turned to face the class. With a big smile and the most open of expressions I could muster, I threw out my first question.

"Can anyone tell me some elements of film making?"

I paused for the expected barrage of excited responses. I waited and waited. Anyone? Longer and longer. Help? It felt like an hour. A week. A year.

Would the wait be worth it? A . . . yes? Finally from the back of the class! "Um . . . scripts, sir?"

"Thank you!" I said, hopefully without too much desperation. The trickle of answers gradually became a waterfall. I was finally safe, splashing gleefully in the puddles of their intuitive responses, the dam of silence broken. (Student teacher's anecdote, June 2000)

By purposefully holding back rather than maintaining the flow of talk, new ways of seeing through experience emerged. The above anecdote illustrates the qualitative difference in understanding for the student teacher in practicing rather than being told about the value of wait time. By experiencing the situation in the way he describes, a genuine learning experience has been created, one that is an episode (White, 1988) that carries personal meaning. As this student teacher demonstrated, by withholding judgment about what might happen and choosing to find out about such action for himself, new ways of seeing emerged as he came to learn through the experience.

Furthermore, encouraging the episode to be reconsidered, developed, and articulated through writing an anecdote enhances the meaning-making from the action in the practice setting and can unsettle some of the taken-for-granted assumptions about teaching that student teachers have developed (are developing) and increase the likelihood that new ways of seeing might emerge.

LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Effective reflective practice involves careful consideration of both "seeing" and "action" to enhance the possibilities of learning through experience. In the practice setting, it is not always easy to isolate these two components—and in some ways perhaps it is an arbitrary distinction itself—as the flow of experiences, the constant demands of decision making, and the conscious and subconscious filtering of actions and responses influence that which is apprehended. These demands of practice can be viewed as overcrowding and inhibiting factors or as possibilities for learning that may be grasped in different ways.

A common postpracticum teaching approach is for teacher educators to “extract” the learning from student teachers’ experiences so that it can be presented back to them in ways that might be helpful and offer insights that they had not previously recognized. However, if the focus is genuinely on the student teacher as learner, then it is their ability to analyze and make meaning from experience that matters most—as opposed to when the teacher educator filters, develops, and shares the knowledge with the student teachers.

I have only recently come to recognize and better understand this subtle distinction, and it is not necessarily easy to grasp; and simply stating it here does not guarantee that it now also has meaning for the reader. The difficulty is in the fact that the knowledge developed may well be the same, but the process in developing the knowledge is very different. Who is doing the learning really matters and is directly related to where the effective reflective practice occurs.

So, consider again the traditional teaching round debriefing. Student teachers are often asked to share their practicum experiences in small groups, and it is not unusual that they find this to be an interesting and engaging experience. It seems reasonable to question what comes from such tasks beyond some form of support for knowing that others face the same challenges and dilemmas, or that acknowledgment that the transition from student to teacher is difficult, or that some common issues can be tackled, and so on. However, if these small groups are asked to develop assertions about their practice as a result of this sharing, the outcomes can be qualitatively different from that of the support and acknowledgment outcomes noted above. This difference is extended even more when student teachers document and share these assertions with their peers.

For example, the assertions in Table 1 were developed by student teachers in a session through which their practicum experiences became more meaningful because they developed ways of reconsidering their (and their peers’) experiences and attempted to make sense of these—not just as isolated events but as

events from which common understandings might be reached.

Although the knowledge developed through this process may not necessarily be new or different for many teacher educators, it was new and meaningful for the student teachers who developed the table because of the ownership derived from the direct link to their experiences. In so doing, their effective reflective practice is evident in the manner in which their possibilities for future action are enhanced because of the new perspectives they now conceive—their taken-for-granted assumptions about particular situations were challenged, and so their “normal” and/or “developing” practice could not so easily be rationalized. They may have been able to justify their practice at that time, but they were not able to rationalize it as the familiar was made unfamiliar through the reframing associated with creating assertions, thus encouraging and acting on the attitude of open-mindedness.

Table 1 represents an important transition in thinking by student teachers as their effective reflective practice is embedded in what might be described as a beginning point in the development of professional knowledge about the practice setting. This ability to recognize, develop, and articulate a knowledge about practice is crucial as it gives a real purpose for, and value in, effective reflective practice; it is a powerful way of informing practice as it makes the tacit explicit, meaningful, and useful.

This point is perhaps best demonstrated through considering the effective reflective practice of an experienced practitioner, Jeff Northfield, who as a teacher educator chose to return to teach in a local high school to learn more about his teaching and its influence on his students’ learning. In so doing, he came to articulate understandings of practice that may well be congruent with the notion of professional knowledge.

Developing Professional Knowledge

Much has been written about the need to value teachers’ professional knowledge, and different interpretations of what that knowledge is about (Carter & Doyle, 1987; Cochran-Smith &

TABLE 1 Student Teachers' Assertions About Practice

The medium of instruction influences the success (or failure) of the lesson.
The students have a management script; you have to deprogram before you reprogram.
Sometimes you teach in ways you don't like because it helps you cope.
Teaching in a way that works isn't always a way that you'd like to be teaching.
Too much enthusiasm (student and teacher) may lead to other problems.
Students and teachers can have different ideas of what is fun and exciting.
Students have more control over what works in the classroom than the teacher.
Students have to make connections between their school work and their existing knowledge for the tasks to be meaningful.
Clear expectations and guidelines are important for students to know how to act/learn.
The success of teaching strategies is dependent on students' skills—they may or may not have these skills.

Lytle, 1990, 1999; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Fenstermacher, 1997). However, it is difficult to find examples of what that knowledge actually is. Through the notion of effective reflective practice, it is possible to consider teacher knowledge through particular concrete examples. Just as the student teachers above were beginning to articulate their learning, effective reflective practice can be viewed as that which encapsulates a knowledge of the practice setting gained through reflection on practice, such that the way it is documented carries meaning and offers insights into wisdom-in-practice.

As a teacher educator returning to teach seventh grade in a local high school in Melbourne, Australia, Jeff Northfield maintained a journal of his teaching and learning in concert with that of his students' learning. In the collaborative venture derived from the analysis of this work (Loughran & Northfield, 1996), Jeff reconsidered the year's experiences in ways similar (although perhaps more informed and sophisticated) to that described above by the student teachers.

As is consistent with the arguments in this article, as an experienced practitioner, it is reasonable to assert that he is likely to have many ways of seeing; question taken-for-granted assumptions; learn through experience; and distinguish between rationalization, justification, and reflection on practice. Hence, careful examination of his approach is a window into effective reflective practice.

Purpose, Framing, and Articulation

At the outset, Jeff decided that his return to a high school classroom needed to involve more

than just the experience of being a schoolteacher again. He had a purpose that drove not only what he did but why he did it.

In his teacher education classes at university he commonly used PEEL-type activities to encourage his students to take more responsibility for their own learning . . . returning to secondary school to teach . . . offer[ed] Jeff an opportunity to pursue teaching for understanding with younger students in the very way he advocated at the tertiary level. (Loughran & Northfield, 1996, p. 5)

To gain alternative perspectives on situations (to frame and reframe episodes), he invited another teacher into his classroom so that shared common experiences could be viewed through another set of eyes. He also maintained a journal, had regular discussions about his teaching and his students' learning with colleagues at the school and the university, and sought a variety of forms of student feedback. All of these situations led to different forms of field notes that were able to be considered and reconsidered in developing his understanding of what was happening in his classroom.

In essence, he was finding ways to capture his classroom experiences so that he could learn from them. This meant that as he framed his learning through these experiences, he could see things that were hitherto tacit, or implicit, in his practice and begin to articulate them in ways that carried meaning not only for himself but also for others. For example, the Project for the Enhancement of Effective Learning (PEEL) approach that he was using to guide his teaching is based on the adoption of teaching procedures that enhance students' metacognition (see Baird & Mitchell, 1986; Baird & Northfield, 1992; Loughran, 1999). As Jeff persisted with

teaching in this way, both he and his students struggled with the demands that such changes carried in terms of the expectations of classroom teaching and learning.

Through these classes [Jeff] is now able to see an important difference between his hopes for students' learning, and their individual views. . . . He seeks to change the students' attitude towards learning . . . which does not reinforce the notion of learning for understanding . . . it may be that it is in fact easier for them to accommodate this persistence rather than to meet the real expectations. (Loughran & Northfield, 1996, p. 34)

At the time, Jeff described this situation as "breaking set," yet he did not really know what it meant. It was a situation in which his expectations for his students' learning were noticeably different than the normal routine of school. In retrospect, he came to see breaking set as a direct challenge to the normal routine of school, a challenge that caused discomfort and unease. When understood in that way, students' responses, attitudes, and behaviors made sense to him, as what they were expected to do (question, think, learn for understanding, accept responsibility for their own learning) clashed with their well-developed passive approaches to learning that had been fostered through their previous years of schooling. At the time, breaking set was not so clearly framed, so many episodes led to conflicting cues and sometimes out-of-character student responses and behaviors.

Quite clearly most students have a view of themselves as individuals and as a class which they wish to maintain . . . they did not want to be seen as "squares" or "goody goodies" and this led to major changes in their behaviour and approach to learning. (Loughran & Northfield, 1996, p. 75)

This understanding, like many others from the year's teaching, became clearer through reflection both during the year and at the end of the year, when Jeff reconsidered the wealth of experiences in his journal and other data sources. The most striking example of learning through this effective reflective practice is demonstrated in the comprehensive list of assertions about practice he developed as he reviewed his experiences (as documented in his journal, etc.).

Tables 2 and 3 illustrate how he was able to frame (and reframe through grouping) some of these assertions in ways that helped him to reconceptualize important aspects of the practice setting. This knowledge from practice offers powerful ways of understanding a school teaching and learning environment and illustrates a wisdom-in-practice that, it can be argued, could only be developed through a serious reconsideration of concrete examples—a reconsideration that helped to build this teacher's professional knowledge.

Clearly, the ability to be an effective reflective practitioner is crucial in the development of knowledge of this kind, and it is this knowledge that is documented that helps to highlight the distinction between reflection and rationalization of practice. By being able to see the practice setting in the way that it is framed in Tables 2 and 3, Jeff's ability to approach problems in the practice setting is undoubtedly enhanced.

The professional knowledge developed through effective reflective practice offers a window into the practice setting whereby the contradictory nature of the two views (students' and teacher's) creates a diversity of ways of seeing actions in the classroom teaching and learning environment. Moreover, it offers a way of interpreting problematic situations that dramatically diminishes the need to rationalize one's behavior. Through this framing, attempts to address problems need not be assigned as mere failure (Dewey, 1933) but as possibilities for enhanced meaning making, thus further informing one's wisdom-in-practice.

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to show how an appropriate focus on experience in teacher education can be influential in the development of effective reflective practice (as illustrated by the student teacher examples of anecdotes, assertions, etc.) and how effective reflective practice might be important in the development of one's professional knowledge (as illustrated through the Northfield examples). In particular, Tables 1, 2, and 3 highlight how the development of

TABLE 2 Students' View of Teaching and Learning

Learning is associated with gaining right answers, and thinking and personal understanding are just different and often frustrating ways of achieving the required outcomes.
The learning process and thinking are difficult to associate with school work, and texts and notes are important indicators that school learning is occurring.
Linking experiences is very demanding and unreasonable when added to the classroom demands for students.
The final grade is the critical outcome and the basis by which progress is judged.
Enjoyment is not always associated with school learning—real learning is hard and not usually enjoyed.
Learning is done to students, and teachers have a major responsibility for achieving learning.

TABLE 3 Teacher's View of Teaching and Learning

Where possible, students should have opportunities to be active and think about their learning experiences.
Students should experience success in learning and gain the confidence and skills to become better learners.
Linking experiences from both within and outside school greatly assists learning.
Effort and involvement are important outcomes of school activities, and students need to gain credit and encouragement for their efforts.
Enjoyment and satisfaction with learning are important outcomes.
Learning involving the above features requires learner consent.

knowledge through experience (from student teacher to experienced teacher), as a result of effective reflective practice, can lead to a recognition and articulation of professional knowledge indicative of the intertwining of theory and practice in ways that finally begin to challenge the normal view of these as dichotomous (Korthagen, 2001), a view that has produced the notion of a theory-practice gap consistently noted in the research literature.

Challenging this distinction between theory and practice is important, and a conceptualization of effective reflective practice is one way of beginning to help teacher preparation programs integrate the two in meaningful ways. Some of the most recent studies (e.g., Korthagen, 2001; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999) note that teacher education in many countries continually struggles with whether to start with theory or practice and that, in the "traditional" approaches to teacher preparation, the notion of integration of the two is largely ignored, which impacts programs' effectiveness. Korthagen and Kessels (1999) compared the Realistic Teacher Education Program with the traditional teacher education program and stated that

In Freudenthal's terms one could say that in this traditional approach, knowledge about teaching is considered as a created subject and not as a subject to be

created by the learner, that is, the student teacher. An approach more in line with Freudenthal's ideas about learning would take its starting point in real problems encountered by student teachers during field experiences. The student teacher would then develop his or her own knowledge in a process of reflection on the practical situations in which a personal need for learning was created . . . the emphasis shifts towards inquiry-oriented activities, interaction amongst learners, and the development of reflective skills. . . . During the learning processes involved, the teacher educator has an important role, although completely different from the traditional role of the lecturer. The kind of support that he or she should offer (including theory!) has to be very much adjusted to the specific problems the student teachers are having. (p. 7)

Therefore, an important issue raised through this view is the positioning of the student teacher as a learner in a curriculum constructed as a result of real experiences and reconstructed through interaction between learners. This is not, however, a "reinventing of the wheel" but a way to make learning more meaningful and fruitful for student teachers.

The difficulty for many teacher preparation programs is in ensuring that student teachers' real situations encompass more than "just" their school teaching experience (practicum). In terms of effective reflective practice, then, working with real situations is crucial if creating

learning through experience is genuinely to lead to an understanding and development of professional knowledge. And, for professional knowledge to be valuable to teachers, it clearly needs to be meaningful. Therefore, teacher preparation offers one way of sensitizing beginning teachers to such a process of knowing and, in so doing, empowering them as professionals.

Reflection is one key practice that has long been recognized as an important and valuable cognitive process, and it continually resurfaces in conceptualizing the practice setting (Bode, 1940; Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Dewey, 1933; Hullfish & Smith, 1961; Russell & Munby, 1992). Many teacher education programs have incorporated views of reflection into their course structures, but the effectiveness and forms of adoption may well be limited by the largely traditional nature of the programs to begin with. Hence, reflection may too often be a subject that has been created rather than a subject to be created by the learners.

Because reflection is eminently sensible and reasonable in developing one's understanding of the practice setting, it is inevitably bandied about, misunderstood, and reinterpreted as it is used by different people in different ways to highlight particular aspects of practice. In part, it was this diversity of views and understandings that led me to preface reflective practice with a qualifier of practice—*effective*—in order to begin to focus attention on the action as well as the outcome of reflection.

Effective reflective practice is drawn from the ability to frame and reframe the practice setting, to develop and respond to this framing through action so that the practitioner's wisdom-in-action is enhanced and, as a particular outcome, articulation of professional knowledge is encouraged. What is learned as a result of reflection is, to me, at least equally as valuable as reflection itself. It is through the development of knowledge and understanding of the practice setting and the ability to recognize and respond to such knowledge that the reflective practitioner becomes truly responsive to the needs, issues, and concerns that are so important in shaping practice.

Søren Kierkegaard was noted as saying, "The irony of life is that it is lived forward but understood backward." The danger for reflection is that if practice is limited to understanding it backwards, then forward practice may remain uninformed. If learning through practice matters, then reflection on practice is crucial, and teacher preparation is the obvious place for it to be initiated and nurtured.

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