

Beginning teachers and reflective practice - setting the scene

**The use of my journal for reflection was encouraging and inspiring, giving me opportunities to look back over at times throughout the practicum, which proved to be quite challenging.
2nd year student teacher Flinders University 2005**

Beginning to reflect

Since the 1980s, considerable importance has been placed on the process of critical professional reflection in teacher education programs in Australia and around the world.

According to Moran and Dallat (1995), 'Learning to teach involves learning to reflect on teaching in a characteristically systematic way' (p.20). They also claim that the 'emerging picture of the teacher as a reflective professional is a developmental one' (p.25) which commences at university and is built on continuously throughout our careers.

Although recent research is united in proclaiming the benefits of reflective practice for the professional development of beginning teachers, it is clear that teacher education programs vary in the way they develop reflective abilities in their students.

Maloney and Campbell-Evans (2002) highlight the value of reflective practice in the professional development of beginning teachers. They recommend reflective journals as a key tool for developing reflective skills and have found in their research with student teachers at Edith Cowan University in Perth that reflective journals help students to 'report, review, refocus, analyse and reconceptualise' (p.41) on their learning both at university and during their practicum experience.

The interactive process

Maloney and Campbell-Evans (2002) promote the interactive journal process as a tool to encourage students to continue writing and also to deepen their reflections. Their research suggests that this interactive style of journal allows students and their lecturers to engage in a joint journey where the teacher/mentor facilitates enquiry by 'asking questions, giving feedback, and providing alternatives' (p44). The student teachers also report that receiving feedback from classroom teachers during their school visits helps them to acquire the skills of reflection and also to maintain their commitment to the task.

Rigney, Rigney and Tur (2003 in their Reconciliation Education topic for teacher education students at Flinders University also mention the value of interactive journals. According to their research, interactive journals foster an important and intimate relationship between the tutor and lecturer and promote 'reconciled space' (p143) in relation to the set themes for the topic. The interactive journal in their topic is a key tool for the translation and application of concepts and values underpinning Indigenous Education.

Walkington (2005 suggests that the formation of teacher identity is assisted by the process of 'reflection on action' (p59).

In her work with beginning teachers at the University of Canberra (2005 she has found that a supportive mentoring process during the practicum creates important opportunities for both the pre-service and in-service teachers to 'think out loud' (p61) and therefore discover, challenge and celebrate their developing teacher identity.

Hine (2000) also links self-reflection and meta-cognition with mentoring. Her research at the University of Western Sydney, shows that student teachers who are in a mentoring relationship that fosters professional reflection develop other important professional skills such as collaboration, goal setting and self-worth.

Self assessment

Bain, Ballantyne, Packer and Mills (1997) found that student teachers appreciated the opportunity to dialogue during their field placement but differ from the previous researchers in that they suggest that the benefits of reflection can also be experienced when they are shared verbally with a partner and also when the students themselves take charge of their journal revision and self-analysis.

The analysis framework developed by Campbell-Evans and Maloney (1998 takes professional reflection into this realm of 'meta-analysis' (p31) and can be used for independent self-analysis or with a teaching peer or lecturer, depending on the way the journal is used.

Whilst shared discussion, mentoring partnerships, silent written dialogue and critical self-assessment are all regarded as useful ways of developing reflection in beginning teachers, perhaps even more important is the consensus within the literature that reflective practice is a life long requirement for all educators, whether pre-service, in-service or tertiary educators.

References

- Bain, J., Ballantyne, R., Packer, J., & Mills, C. (1999). Using journal writing to enhance student teachers' reflectivity during field experience placements. *Teachers and Teaching*, 5 (1), 51-73.
- Campbell-Evans, G., & Maloney, C. (1998). An analysis framework for reflective writing. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 23 (1), 29-38.
- Hine, A. (2000). Mirroring effective education through mentoring, metacognition and self reflection. *Conference Paper, Australian Association for Research in Education, Sydney, 2000*. Retrieved December 3, 2004, from <http://www.aare.edu.au/00pap/hin00017.htm>.
- Maloney, C., & Campbell-Evans, G. (2002). Using interactive journal writing as a strategy for professional growth. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 30 (1). 39-50.
- Moran, A., & Dallat, J. (1995). Promoting reflective practice in initial teacher training. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 9 (5), 20-26.

Rigney, D., Rigney, L-I., & Tur, S, U. (2003). Training teachers for reconciliation: A work in progress. *Conference Paper No.089, Australian Curriculum Studies Association Conference*, Adelaide, South Australia. Retrieved November 29, 2005 from http://www.acsainc.com.au/content/ulalka_tur_-_training_teachers_for_reconciliation.pdf

Walkington, J. (2005). Becoming a teacher: Encouraging development of teacher identity through reflective practice. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 33 (1) 53-64.