Reflections on learning and teaching:
A professional journal

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EDUC2402/EDUC2403 Lecture
29th March 2006
Aims

- to place journal reflection in a professional context
- to demonstrate professional reflective writing
- to encourage enjoyable journal writing for DLiT
DLiT readings

Chapter 23
‘Reflection and reflective writing’
*Learning for teaching: teaching for learning*
(Whitton et al 2004)
Reflections on learning and teaching: A professional journal

EDUC 2402
EDUC 2403
Development, Learning and Inclusive Teaching
Semester 1 entries
2006
Web CT
EDUC0010 Reflective Practice
Question 1
What comes to your mind when I say ‘journal’?
travel log
diary
chore!
dreams
nature
observations
blog

tool for reflective practice!
Question 2
How do you feel about keeping a journal?
‘When I heard I had to keep a learning journal I cringed with pain.’

‘Not sure. I’ve never kept one.’

‘Looking forward to it!’
‘I really do not know why I hate writing journals, but I do. I’m not the type of person to express myself emotionally, no matter what the problem. I guess that journal writing makes that trait vulnerable. I have to adjust to this as well. Oh, well. Life goes on.’
‘I have kept a journal before so the expectations of journal writing are clear to me. I feel pressured having to write but understand that it needs to be a regular occurrence’.
Question 3
What would help you develop or refine the skills of journal reflection?
- strategies
- reassurance
- time
- freedom
- good reasons!
Reflective practice and the School of Education
- Vision Statement
- Curriculum documents
- School Experience and Practicum guidelines
- Constructivist theory
Theoretical and contextual background of reflective practice
‘.....thinking ......enables us to know what we are about when we act’.
(John Dewey 1933)
‘When people think and figure things out, they do so in symbol systems commonly called languages, most often verbal, but also mathematical, musical, visual and so on’.
(L.S. Vygotsky 1962)

‘When people articulate connections between new information and what they already know, they learn and understand that new information better’.
(Jerome Bruner 1966)
‘We write about, read and re-read our impressions of the world of practice and, thus, come to better understand how our intentions and actions and their outcomes can be integrated into a coherent practice’.

(Lyn Mc Alpine 1992)
What is the Professional Journal for DLiT?
❖ ‘decompression chamber’
❖ exploration of ideas and beliefs
❖ professional conversation
❖ safe place
❖ developmental process
Types of reflective writing
### Analysis Framework for Reflective Writing
(Campbell-Evans and Maloney 1998)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Describing; giving a factual recount (not reflective)</td>
<td>Some children are already writing while others don’t know how to hold their pencil yet.</td>
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Report

- writer’s block
- resistance
- brevity
- descriptive context

‘I had a Year 8 maths class (14 girls and 13 boys) of students all very willing to cooperate with me and they taught me a great deal’.
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<td>Review and Refocus</td>
<td>Considering; making simple suggestions for alternatives; making plans for action; explaining, as in cause and effect; low-level questioning; reworking intentions and outcomes</td>
<td>I was thinking about what we are really doing for the under-achievers and the over-achievers in the class. I worry about what George is learning. Most of the things we do fail to keep his attention. I believe there are times when he needs to just play because in a sense he is just a “baby” still. But we do need to meet him where he is at. Perhaps a ‘George” box is a good idea, a box full of simple language activities and reading books that he can do when he starts to look overwhelmed by what the others are doing.</td>
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</table>
Review and refocus

- personal
- explanations
- resolutions
- openness

“This practicum I tried dance which I had previously steered clear of. It was a great set of lessons which I planned well, and all the students were engaged. The dance turned out well too!

I gave the students a self-assessment sheet to do at the end of the last session and what they wrote was quite surprising. I sometimes forget how blunt students can be so I’m glad I have a thick skin. I think you need one if you want to be a teacher.”
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<td>Analyse</td>
<td>Interpreting events; making sense of a situation or event; figuring it out; diagnosing; comparing and evaluating; higher level questioning</td>
<td>During today’s activity lesson I didn’t feel like I had enough control. It wasn’t really control as much as organisation smoothness. It’s the first time I’ve had 3 different activities and it doesn’t always work out according to plan. I thought a lot of things to be a disaster. The kids couldn’t move from one activity to the next. I tried to do it very slowly but obviously it will take a lot of practice. It’s just another thing they don’t understand unless they have been taught. Sometimes you forget that they can’t do things. You assume a lot and realise later with a shock.</td>
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Analyse

- sustained dialogue
- higher order thinking
- lengthier focus on one issue
- rehearse events

‘Am I a mean red dragon? I must get over feeling mean when I discipline students. It is important that they all know the rules and follow these rules as they ensure their safety. If the rules are broken there are consequences.

Students choose how they are going to behave - they make a choice and as such are responsible for making that choice. If a bad choice is made, I must discipline the student accordingly’.
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<td>Reconceptualise</td>
<td>Reworking views and ideas; stating a philosophy or vision of teaching;</td>
<td>I’ve started using the learning centres regularly with different activities that the kids rotate through and encourage more independent learning, discovery learning and learning from each other. As I’m not with them all the time I’m able to become more of a facilitator of learning, which I didn’t think I could become with Year 1. It frees me up to do more individual work, and I can work with small groups which means I can pick up on individual needs and problems rather than dominate the scene. A facilitator can provide more opportunities for children to learn.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>image of teaching and teachers; insights into how students think about</td>
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<td>themselves as a teachers; stating a purpose of education</td>
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Reconceptualise

- critique beliefs
- synthesise common themes
- deconstruct or re-interpret readings
- meta-cognitive about own reflections
- draw on the past to anticipate future
‘Beare and Slaughter (1994 p50) use the metaphor of a sweeping view from a high mountain to represent education. They refer to education as a holistic experience in which:

The details which had absorbed us stand revealed in breathtaking panorama. The daily routine, all routines, all patterns, fit seamlessly into a vaster landscape. The micro blends into the macro…… scales merge into each other. Nothing is separate.

I really like this approach as it values all aspects of education. At ‘Z’, I felt that their view of education was limited by tradition and religion. It is easy to be caught in routines and lose sight of the reason why you implemented those routines in the first place.

I can see now that reflective practice is really important to being a successful teacher’.
DLiT Professional Journal
Week 5
Journal reflections
Jot down a list of activities or behaviours which you see as being important for the role of a teacher.

Consider your list in relation to your view about the purpose of education.
- listening
- organising
- crowd control
- yard duty
- report writing
- team person
- curriculum development
- instruction
- critical reflection!
Which of these behaviours are the most important for teachers? Why?

Which behaviours do I already have or need to develop further?
I found it difficult to decide at this stage of my studies which activities are the most important – they all are! My list is pretty much about the professional qualities I expect to learn here at uni.

I realise looking back on my list that I should have written ‘like students’ which I do! Perhaps I should also add ‘being a clown’ i.e. having a sense of humour! I realise too that I believe that teachers need to model respect and that the ability to develop and model trust is important as well.
Why have I listed these particular behaviours and not others?
I think my list clearly reflects my concerns as well as my existing strengths as a beginning teacher. I guess I would single out ‘crowd control’ as it’s a major learning need I have. One of my worst fears is that no-one will listen to me and I won’t know what to do.

I have scanned the readings for ‘Managing the classroom environment’ by Brady and Scully (p107) and whilst I am daunted by the list of factors that help to ‘nurture an effective learning environment’, I feel more positive that there are preventative measures and strategies I will learn about this semester before I go out on my Practicum.
What steps can I take to develop these qualities further?

In what ways can I take responsibility for developing my role/beliefs about learning and teaching?
Reflective practice –
professional context and benefits
- makes professional knowledge explicit
  - new perspectives
  - expert learners
- professional identity and confidence
  - develops critical thinking skills
  - values clarification
  - action
How do I begin?
set aside time
- relax
- trigger questions
- question yourself and the set readings
  - be honest
  - be regular!
- use first person
- date your entries
- remember confidentiality
- check out the Reflective Practice Web CT resources!
‘I know that without these journal entries, I probably would never have seen my transition as a teacher so clearly. I can’t believe this is my last entry!’
Good journalling!
Useful references


My thanks to past students for their permission to quote from their journals and to Port Julia for the images of reflection in nature.