REVISITING REFLECTION

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ABSTRACT *Current teacher education programmes are underpinned by a commitment to the notion of the reflective practitioner and yet, on the whole, pre-service and beginning teachers tend to be resistant to change, tend towards imitation in their classroom practice, and, while on practicum, are committed for a variety of reasons to the continuance of the status quo. In addressing this apparent lack of success in pre-service education to foster reflection in pre-service teachers, this article argues that some components in current paradigms warrant revisiting and changing either in extent or kind. Consideration focuses on the purpose of reflection, the person who reflects, the context for reflection, the process of reflection and finally the role of the framework for reflection. It posits that if reflection is not to become reduced to a competency in teaching technique, it must be addressed in the context of the on campus course as well as in the practicum. The development of an alternative working definition for reflection, which addresses professional self-awareness and the assumptions underpinning professional decision-making, poses challenges for teacher education pedagogy.*

INTRODUCTION

Teacher educators seek to produce well-prepared graduates through quality teacher education programmes, the majority of which include study of the notion of reflection and/or the reflective practitioner. Given this emphasis on reflection, it is crucial that teacher educators ask the question – "Is it making a difference?" Are pre-service teachers carefully considering the consequences of their choices and actions on the students in their care? Are the reasons underpinning their decision-making more available for examination? Do their teaching approaches and management strategies reflect a concern for emancipation from dominant ideologies?

The call for reflective practice is ubiquitous in teacher education literature, as Tabachnick and Zeichner (1991) remind us: "...there is not a single teacher educator who would say that he or she is not concerned about preparing teachers who are reflective" (cited in Fletcher, 1997, p. 239). Research that focuses on the degree to which reflective thinking is present in discussions between student teachers and co-operating or associate teachers indicates that student teachers continue to be resistant to change, tend towards imitation in their classroom practice and, while on practicum, are committed for a variety of reasons to the continuance of the status quo (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Lortie, 1975; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981).

One reason may be a lack of clarity in the conceptualisation of the term reflection. However, such findings also fuel a growing concern about the validity of claims relating to the development of critical reflection within teacher preparation programmes. On the one hand we have claims concerning its necessity and, on the other, there exists literature which questions the extent to which pre-service teachers can be taught to be reflective and if, in fact, being reflective makes any difference to their practice (Calderhead, 1989; Fletcher, 1997; Hawkey, 1995; LaBoskey, 1994; McMahon, 1997; Oser, 1994; Reiman & Theis-Sprinthall, 1998).

In fact, the baggage that comes with the term may be more of a hindrance than a help (Hawkey, 1995; McMahon, 1997). "But too often, the calls to get teachers to engage in reflection and to study their practice are only empty slogans and boil down to nothing more than a plea that they 'think hard' about what they are doing and why they are doing it" (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995, p. 15).

The problem is that, generally, promises of change, emancipation and informed teaching tend not to have materialised. "The common conclusion is that there is little evidence of critical reflection on the part of students . . ." (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 8). Currently we may conclude that the notion of reflection does not appear to be helpful in explaining differences in the development of individual students nor in influencing the apparent minimal engagement student teachers have with key component beliefs about 'good teaching' that underpin teacher education courses.

The recurring claim that teacher education does not make any difference to students on their journey to teaching is unnerving to teacher educators and does nothing to encourage us in the work we undertake. Alternatively, if it does make a difference then such change is unpredictable and indirect (Calderhead, 1989; Fletcher, 1997; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Kagan, 1992; LaBoskey, 1994; McMahon, 1997; McNally, Cope, Inglis & Stonach, 1997; Reiman & Theis-Sprinthall, 1995; Valli, 1992). However, as we move into a new century, teacher educators, cognisant of the importance of their work to the health of a nation through quality learning for its young, are committed to finding ways to be more effective and influential.

In 1995, Jack Whitehead[1] asked the question: "How do I help my teacher education students, and finally their students in schools, to improve the quality of their learning?" At a time when the teacher education scene continues to be fraught with challenge and suspicion, the question posed by Whitehead still needs to be answered.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A large body of literature exists which views regular reflection as a necessary and integral characteristic of the effective professional and, therefore, a critical focus for teacher educators (e.g., Appleton, 1996; Berlak & Berlak, 1981; Boreen, Johnson, Niday & Potts, 2000; Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Calderhead, 1989; Clift, Houston & Pugach, 1991; Day, 1999; Harrington, Quinn-Leering & Hodson, 1996; Kettle & Sellars, 1996; Korthagen, 2001; LaBoskey, 1994, 1997; Reiman, 1999; Schön, 1983; Treagust & Harrison, 1999). For example, LaBoskey (1997) sees preparing students to be reflective about their work as her *primary purpose* as a teacher educator. Similarly, Boreen, Johnson, Niday and Potts claim that "reflection is essential to a fully lived professional life" and "reflection is a critical function of successful teaching and learning, whatever an individual's experience or level of education" (2000, pp. 68, 69). In similar vein, Bullough and Gitlin write: "the 'good teacher', it is said, is a reflective teacher, one who inquires into his or her thinking and practice with an eye toward making improvements" (1995, p. 15). However, even with such an emphasis on reflection in teacher education literature and programmes, there appears to be little clarity about, or agreement

[1] From Russell and Korthagen's *Teachers Who Teach Teachers* (1995, p. 192 cited in Fletcher, 1997, p.238)

on, what is meant by reflection. Would we know a reflective student teacher if we saw one?

Since Dewey's popularisation of the term reflection as a way of counteracting the perceived technicism in teacher training, it has meant 'different things to different people' and according to Edward and Collison "the use of reflection on practice in initial teacher education has suffered from oversimplification" (1996, p. 50). Reflection has been described variously as: thinking, reasoning, inquiry, critical thinking, a problem solving process, a mode of research, central to transformative learning, the heart of teaching, a mental wandering, an ability to stand apart, a critique, and even navel gazing. Teacher education literature has described the focus of reflective practice in a variety of ways, such as reflections on pedagogical relationships (van Manen, 1991), social responsibility (Zeichner & Liston, 1987), the moral and ethical dimensions of teaching (Tom, 1984), and it is even possible to construe that reflective practice is the new master, the "preferred interpretation of teaching" (Carson, 1997).

It is possible to identify in the literature three very broad approaches to reflection, loosely following Mezirow's (1991) three levels of reflection: content, process and premise. The first approach views reflection as a *thinking* or *sense making* process. Typically reflection is viewed as a cognitive process and arises from a felt need and is centred on an open question about pedagogy or student learning. Of key importance is the relationship between practice and the goal or aim. Usually, though not always, the approach is reliant on a traditional and positivist view of knowledge while other groupings tend toward a constructivist view of knowledge. The second approach follows the writings of Schön (1983). Here reflection is viewed as an everyday process and is seen as largely unarticulated and *intuitive*. Teachers who base their approach on Schön's work endeavour to make this intuitive process explicit. Of key importance in this broad grouping is the degree to which there is a match between one's actions and an espoused theory or framing of a situation (Atkinson & Claxton, 2000). The third and final broad approach values the process of reflection for its ability to critically consider practice and its moral dimensions, its ability to critique aspects of the status quo and consequently to facilitate emancipation and change. Due to this emphasis on the process of critique, the term 'critical reflection' is often used. Of utmost importance in this broad grouping is the match between actions and moral and ethical principles. The critical reflective process is viewed as a way to 'unmask domination' (Brookfield, 1995; Cranton, 1996, 1998; Gore, 1987; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Valli, 1992; Zeichner, 1983; Zeichner & Liston, 1987) and is even equated to the nature of 'good teaching' itself (Brookfield, 1995).

THE CHALLENGE

With the ubiquitous claim teacher education providers make about preparing beginning teachers who are 'reflective practitioners' and the perceived thrust toward more standards for beginning teachers, reflection is in dire danger of finding itself becoming a tool to encourage and sustain the very approach to teaching which it was introduced to counteract – technicism. Pre-service teachers may find themselves being encouraged to reflect on how effective they have been in their dispensing of an approved recipe:

> ...reflection may become merely a training tool, when it ought to be a process of linking means and ends that self and context can be

> examined and reconstructed where necessary and public and private theories can be brought together in a dynamic and reflexive relationship. (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995, p. 16)

A WAY FORWARD

The literature on reflection in teacher education suggests that common components can be identified in each approach to reflection. This paper argues that some components in current paradigms warrant reconsideration and change either in extent or kind. Consideration focuses on the purpose of reflection, the person who reflects, the context for reflection, the process of reflection and, finally, the role of a framework for reflection.

Often pre-service teachers seek certainty rather than consistency and are looking to find out 'what works'. Consequently teacher educators, working from a technical-rational paradigm may view reflection as a tool to discover such information. However, as Bullough and Gitlin point out, "many things work, but not everything that 'works' is morally, socially or educationally defensible" (1995, p. 17). If reflective practice is to "enlighten, develop and improve professional practice" (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993, p. 185) the focus cannot be restricted to pragmatic procedures.

While recognizing that inexperienced student teachers need a certain amount of technical know-how in lesson planning, teaching strategies, and classroom control, the discourse of reflection shifts the orientation of teacher education programmes from an emphasis on imparting teaching techniques toward encouraging student teachers to reflect on the effects of their own admittedly limited teaching practices. This view sees reflection as an interpretive or sense making process. For many student teachers reflection is seen as an activity that enables them to "come to terms with their own experiences by articulating them and sharing them with others" (Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting & Whittty, 2000, p. 138). Boreen et al. observe that systematic reflection can enrich novice teachers' understandings by helping them organise their thoughts, make sense of classroom events and promote a model of learning that views teaching as an ongoing process of knowledge building, while also promoting conversation and collaboration with mentors (2000, p. 68). Thus, the process of reflection can itself help prepare pre-service teachers for the ambiguities of the teaching task (Wasserman, 1999).

For teacher educators it would seem most appropriate that the process of reflection is viewed as an integral component of professional development, the result of which will be improved teaching – this surely is the task – to prepare beginning teachers who are effective teachers. Consequently the first component of my definition for reflection is that *reflection is a process for improved practice.*

THE PERSON WHO REFLECTS

Critical to the process of reflection is a consideration of the person in the process of becoming a teacher (Cranton, 1996, 1998; Hamachek, 1999; Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999; McGee & Fraser, 2001; McLean, 1999; Palmer, 1998; Selby & Ryba, 1999).

Typically, the process of reflection focuses on the practice of teaching. It is viewed as a cognitive activity. Currently, with an emphasis on quality management and efficiency, pre-service teachers can be viewed as clients, potential instruments of curricular and school reform, to be educated, developed

and 'in serviced' accordingly. But pre-service teachers are also people and we need to remember that good teaching comes directly from the minds, hearts, and spirits of developing human beings. "When reflection focuses on notions of efficiency or effectiveness alone, the process denies the very nature of the teaching process which is intensely personal, and in fact, moral because teaching is directed to 'the pursuit of desirable ends'" (Tom, 1984, p. 80).

Increasing attention is being given to the importance of the inner life of the teacher and the role this has in the teaching dynamic (Hamacheck, 1999; McGee & Fraser, 2001; Palmer, 1998). "The teacher's understanding and acceptance of [him or her] self is the most important requirement in any effort [he or she] makes to help students to know themselves and to gain healthy attitudes of self-acceptance" (Jersild, cited in Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999, p. 1).

Student teachers bring to initial teacher education beliefs about "teaching images of good teachers, images of self as teacher, and memories of themselves as pupils in classrooms" (Kagan, 1992, p. 142). These beliefs, developed over students' own schooling experiences, are resistant to change (Fischler, 1999; Furlong et al., 2000; Hattie, 1999; Mayer, 1999; Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1981). It is very clear that unless such private theories held by pre-service teachers are acknowledged and engaged in the process of growing and developing as a teacher, the teacher is most likely to teach as taught. Thus, the importance, as outlined previously, of recognising the 'self' who is the teacher and supporting the teacher in the process of 'self awareness' or 'self knowledge' (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995).

Consequently the second part of my definition for reflection posits that reflection needs to be a process which targets improved practice, through developing self-awareness. ...."the most practical thing we can achieve in any kind of work is insight into what is happening inside us as we do it. The more familiar we are with our terrain, the more surefooted our teaching – and living – becomes" (Palmer, 1998, pp. 2, 5).

Given the importance of relationships and the need for modelling, teacher educators need to consider how the learning context we develop shapes relationships and directs meaning making for our students.

Of the teaching/learning process Palmer (1998) notes that we most often ask, 'What shall we teach?'; we sometimes consider the methods and ask, 'How shall we teach'?; occasionally we ask, 'Why shall we teach?', but very seldom do we ask, 'Who is the self that teaches?' For this reason the second component of my definition sees reflection as a process of becoming *professionally self-aware*. What is desired is not so much a beginning teacher who can flick a switch and become a reflective practitioner, or reflective, but rather one who has cultivated a reflective disposition to guide the entirety of the complex relationships we call teaching. Given the belief that teachers teach out of who they are (Palmer, 1998) this disposition will also be evident in other areas of the teacher's life.

This leads us to consider the practice of reflection – what does one do when one reflects?

THE PRACTICE OF REFLECTION

The reflective process can support the pre-service teacher in his or her learning and development, but cannot cause it to occur. Several factors need to be in place and one of these is intentionality about learning. Herein lies a very important

consideration. "If you are going to be open to new insights, you must be willing to suppose that there is something yet for you to learn" (Pyle & Seals, 1995, p. 115).

Rather than isolating the context of teaching for critique, the assumptions behind actions should be the targets of examination. Such a focus provides scope for all actions to be scrutinised:

> Critical reflection is the process of examining one's actions in order to identify the assumptions which are behind the actions, scrutinizing the accuracy and validity of the assumptions, and reconstituting these assumptions to include new insights, in order to make the assumptions more integrative of the experiences of reality. (Pyle & Seals, 1995, p. 110)

Or as Cranton writes, "development requires a moving beyond the acquisition of new knowledge and understanding into questioning of existing assumptions, values and perspectives" (1996, p. 76). What beliefs about learning do pre-service teachers bring with them when they enrol in a programme of preparation for teaching? My observation suggests that learning is seen as a series of tasks or assignments to complete. How this develops through our current education system and the types of assessment tasks we set is an important factor, but not the topic of this paper. Lecture material written on a white board gains attention and is written down to be regurgitated at some later time. It is not so much that this is the case which is problematic, but rather that pre-service teachers are unaware that this is the case. "It is a matter of being unaware that we have made an assumption and being unaware that that assumption could be questioned that constrains our vision" (Cranton, 1996, p. 103). It is these very basic assumptions about learning that the process of reflection must be used to identify, to seek and critique. This approach presupposes a seeking rather than a knowing attitude to learning and practice (Fish, 1995).

Consequently, in this paper and in my definition of reflection, I posit that a key to the success of the reflection process lies in identifying and critiquing assumptions[2] underpinning decision-making and its consequential practice (Pyle & Seal, 1995). Brookfield (1995) supports this position when he argues that assumption analysis is one of the elements central to the process of critical reflection. Pyle and Seal (1995) also view the process of critical reflection to be for the purpose of examining actions in order to identify and clarify one's assumptions. I argue that this definition does not go far enough as it does not do anything with the action or assumptions after they are identified and clarified. I propose that not only do we need to analyse our assumptions, but we need to judge them for the degree to which they encompass the fullness of associated criteria.

There is a freedom that comes with awareness – freedom to change or not change. However pre-service teachers tend not to be aware either of the existence of these assumptions or that such assumptions may be critiqued. A starting point for this process of developing an increased self awareness is to acknowledge that our observations and descriptions are themselves 'interpretive' (van Manen, 1999). These assumptions sit below the surface in the metaphoric iceberg used to help understand the nature of professional practice (Fish, 1998; Malderez &

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[2] Brookfield (1995) defines assumptions as those 'taken-for-granted for ideas, common sense beliefs and self evident rules of thumb that inform our thoughts and actions'

Bodóczky, 1999). For this reason, it would appear that reflection is not an activity to be undertaken by a student teacher in an unsupported manner. In fact, Cranton suggests that "it is probably not possible to articulate assumptions without the help of others" (1996, p. 83). This seems a task that needs the advantage of the 'privileged outsider' (Bakhtin, 1986) making reflection for the student teacher a collaborative rather than individual task. Pre-service teachers need help and support in 'unpacking' the way different types of knowledge held by a professional make a whole (Pearson & Selinger, 1999). If, as teacher educators, we are going to support pre-service teachers as they examine the interpretive filters through which their own experience as pupils is viewed, it is critical that we provide a range of lenses to reflect something of who they are and what it is they do. Without such help and support the reflective experience can be likened to an attempt to "view the back of one's head while looking in the bathroom mirror" (Brookfield, 1995, p. 28).

REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER? REFLECTIVE LEARNER?

Literature about reflection tends to relate exclusively to practical components of pre-service teacher education programmes. "It is during the practicum period that student teachers need to establish a reflective habit" (Malderez & Bodóczky, 1999, p. 16). Currently teacher education courses invest much money, time, and resources into organising and implementing placements for pre-service teachers in schools based on the belief, as illustrated by the following description, that such placement provides the opportunity for reflection and the integration of theory to practice. "The goal of the fieldwork experience component is to cultivate in prospective teachers the capacity to analyse, reflect, and engage in both explicit and implicit curricula linking theory with practice" (Hatton & Smith, 1995). It is generally accepted that the practicum is a time when the pre-service teacher is in a most vulnerable situation (new context, new people, new and different tasks) when survival is one of the key goals. It is the assumption that reflection is linked to practice which itself needs critiquing. Why in teacher education programmes is the process of reflection something one does during practicum? Why is it something that is raised about practice?

The definition being offered places the process of reflection inside the learning/teaching relationship. In other words it is not just about teaching which the pre-service teacher needs to reflect but also, and perhaps initially more importantly, about learning. At the beginning of this paper, I argued that to be more effective, some components in current paradigms require revisiting and changing either in extent or kind. This is a place where the change needs to be fundamental, in kind. It is argued that as pre-service teachers come to understand their own learning, they will better understand the relationship between teaching and learning. The process of reflection is ideal for this purpose. In fact, I would argue that unless pre-service teachers have learned systematically to reflect before practicum experience, it is unreasonable to expect them to do so during the practicum experience.

Learning to teach is not simply a clinical, technical event but rather a complex experience of personal, professional development with multiple viewpoints and accumulating influences. In such a course, the process of reflection needs to occur in all the programme components, both course work and practicum. Given the level of commitment to reflective practice registered by teacher educators one might think this to be stating the obvious. However, one

impediment to this being a reality is the tendency for such to be assumed. For the most part lecturers pose questions and thus set agendas, inadvertently denying opportunities for student teachers to initiate engaging issues of importance to them. But this, too, assumes too much. Often and certainly initially, student teachers tend not to approach lecturers with the seeking attitude previously referred to by Pyle and Seals (1995), but rather to find 'best practice' answers, or to compile notes they can refer to later.

If reflection remains limited to particular practical experience, then its implications for the notion of teachers as professionals are significantly different from when pre-service teachers are systematically provided with opportunities to engage with other forms of professional knowledge (Boreen et al., 2000; Hill, 1999). Teacher educators need to model this process; "the work in the university classes also needs to be guided by the same set of ideals" (Richert, 1997, in Loughran et al., 1997, p. 83). Teacher educators need to be reflective themselves and the work they require of students needs to consistently convey a reflective stance – both to teaching and learning. To do this puts teacher educators in the same vulnerable position as student teachers. In the words of a student teacher from one of my curriculum papers, in which I endeavour to model this approach, "Thank you for this opportunity to reflect. I have always said that it takes a brave person and a secure one to allow those that they teach to have this type of direct feedback" (Personal communication, 2001). Brave indeed. But what are the ramifications of not doing so? If critical reflection is a necessary part of being a professional teacher, and if we are committed to the education and development of potential teachers, then to do anything less than make our practice of critical reflection open to our students is to pretend that teaching is simple, uncomplicated and that we have all the answers which we are happy to 'download' to them. "It is essential that those of us who see ourselves as teacher developers speak publicly about our own struggles and that we model the quest for insight, critical clarity, and openness to alternatives that we seek to encourage in others" (Brookfield, 1995, p. 46).

Of key importance, and the target of my current research, is supporting pre-service teachers in the process of reflection on and about the assumptions that underpin their learning. It is the intention to alert them – as indicated in the quote above – to the factors with which learners contend and, therefore, with which teachers must wrestle. As a result of this, it may be that pre-service teachers are more cognisant of problematic factors within the status quo and take more control over their own learning, and therefore enrich their understanding of the learning/teaching relationship.

The emphasis here is not to preclude reflection during practicum, but rather to remember that the concept of reflection itself does not sit in a vacuum. If we accept that pre-service teachers need to become reflective, then we need to find ways to model and initiate this development. How we as teacher educators implement reflection demonstrates our own beliefs about what good teaching is. Arguing for reflection to be targeted during on-campus learning is not so that, by understanding their own way of learning, pre-service teachers will project their way of learning on to their students, but rather, as already stated, that through the process of understanding their own learning, they will be more cognisant of the influences involved and more committed to interacting where appropriate with these influences. Consequently my definition sees reflection developing and occurring within the *learning/teaching relationship* rather than only the practicum, or teaching, components.

CRITICAL REFLECTION

Rather than engaging with the sociological components of the practicum, student teachers tend to emphasise the pragmatic aspects of teaching. Consequently, reflection is aimed at the pragmatic procedures in the classroom at the expense of the more 'critical' focus for which it is valued (Gilbert, 1994). If student teachers are to ask questions of their observations and teaching, then questions other than the 'what?' and the 'how?' need to be addressed. However, studies show that this is not common (Huang, 2001; Sanders, 1999). Sanders (1999) analysed 356 interactions between pre-service teachers and their associate teachers in terms of Balch and Balch's (1987) eight[3] different types of interactions. Findings showed that the main role (40%) the associate teacher adopted was that of *planner*; the second most common role (27%) was the *model teacher* role, the third most common role (13%) was the one which Balch and Balch refer to as *evaluator*. These three roles relate to questions such as 'What shall we do?', 'How shall we do it?' and then feedback on these two components of the pre-service teachers' work. Sanders' (1999) study found minimal attention (1%) was paid to the role of *conferencer*, where dialogue about reasons underpinning decisions, or the 'Why?' question, were more likely to be addressed.

According to LaBoskey (1994, 1997), reflective teachers tend to ask 'Why?' questions such as; "Why am I teaching what I am teaching in the way that I am teaching it?" (1997, p. 161). LaBoskey (1994) found that asking the question 'Why?' along with a clearly defined Passionate Creed or Philosophy of Education was characteristic of effective, critical, reflective teachers. Similarly, longitudinal[4] research conducted by Korthagen and Wubbels (1991) indicates that the characteristics of those identified as more reflective are listed as follows: "think it is important to structure situations, ask questions about what is happening and why, find it easy to identify what they want to learn, have sound interpersonal relationships, exhibit personal security and self-efficacy and demonstrated concern for their impact on student learning" (cited in Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 8). Such questions require of the student both ideological and theoretical justification and this is the reason why the Educational Vision component is included in the Reflective Framework

There is an intricate web of relationship[5] between one's epistemology, beliefs about the role of education, and consequential view of good teaching, paradigm for teacher education, and view of research. Mezirow (1991) presented three kinds of reflection – content (i.e., what happened?), process (how did it come to be this way?) and premise (why is this important?). The third of these is given very little attention and yet I would argue that it is key to understanding 'good teaching' and a necessary component for a framework that enables reflection. The need to ask questions about why it is important to include a topic, foster learning, have goals, or plan a lesson is critical.

It is this 'critical' component of reflection which is both the most problematic and the most powerful. It is problematic because, for pre-service teachers who

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[3] Balch and Balch (1987, p. 30, 31) list the following as roles within the function of the associate teacher: model teacher, observer, planner, evaluator, conferencer, professional peer, counsellor, friend

[4] the longitudinal study was over 10 years

[5] see Fish (1998, p. 128) for comparisons

critique the status quo and uncover the dilemmas, the paradox, the ideological malaise, it can lead to self-doubt and wariness about the system in which they work. On the other hand, it is the most powerful because it is the framework that brings and provides the ideals within which are found hope of change – the very necessary ingredient for effective teaching and living.

When reflection and the reflective process flow out from teaching experiences, theory tends to be limited to personal or espoused theories within that practice. Such an activity may be termed as 'navel gazing' and is likely to lead to a valuing of 'what works'. The irony once again is that the very process launched to counteract technicist approaches to teacher education becomes technicist and pragmatic. It is argued that reflection by its very nature and definition requires something outside the experience against which to reflect and critique the experience. The necessity of such a component can be further understood by considering the experience of reflection in a mirror. The experience is meaningless – without a mirror. So, in the reflective process, what might the mirror be?

Furlong et al. (2000) suggest a range of forms of professional knowledge that may be used to critique personal experience with teaching and learning. They include: principles derived from practice, findings of research, and theoretical insights derived from a 'foundation' discipline. One thing is clear – it needs to be something different to that being reflected – that is, personal perceptions. It could be one's educational vision. But this includes a view of 'What is worthwhile?', 'What is good practice?', 'What is better . . .?' On what basis can one make these judgements? Surely we need to equip our students with the particular type of knowledge that equips them to think critically about those institutional or environmental forces which limit our options but have been taken for granted and in their very 'normalness' appear not to be available for critique.

The postmodern suspicion of grand theories does not need to cripple students in the process of their learning and development. One mainstay of reflective practice is that theory is brought to illuminate practice, and practice to challenge and extend theory (Richert, 1997). Changes in the composition of teacher education courses may not equip students to undertake 'critical' reflection. Teacher education courses which ignore the heritage from philosophical or sociological thinking, short change pre-service teachers and reduce the complexity of the teaching situation to a certain, one best answer situation.

LaBoskey (1994) reports that pre-service teachers who are more reflective than others have two distinctive characteristics. One is that they are guided by what she calls, *Passionate Creeds*, and the tendency to ask 'Why?' questions, to which I have already referred. As a result of her findings, LaBoskey designs her teacher education program and her practice to be "relentless in the modelling of, and requirement for, **purpose and passion** in teaching" (1997, p. 151). Note that her expectations are not only for her students, but also for herself. Such an approach goes part way to overcoming the criticism that there are no models for students to learn from. How can one have 'critical reflection' without equipping the student with a framework of thinking from which to critique or, on the other hand, supporting the student in what is a very vulnerable situation? For this reason my definition includes the notion of a developing and critiqued educational vision to work in part as an interpreter of meaning for answering the question, 'Why?'

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, "the reflective teacher is one who questions and examines, as much and as often as possible, the reasons behind and the implications of her knowledge, beliefs and practices" (LaBoskey, 1997, p. 150). And so through this paper I have posited that for reflection:

- The purpose is to improve practice
- The focus is on becoming increasingly professionally self-aware
- The context is the teaching/learning relationship
- The process involves identifying and judging assumptions for their appropriateness
- And all of this within a framework that supports pre-service teachers in the development and critique of their own developing educational vision.

This then is the heart of my definition, where I define reflection as:

> A process for *improving practice* by becoming professionally *self aware* through identifying *assumptions* in decisions and responses *within the learning/teaching relationship*, and judging those assumptions for their *appropriateness* in the light of a developing and critiqued *educational vision*.

Another definition for reflection to add to the many already recorded? The intention is not just to offer a definition – this is stage one. The reason for presenting this definition is an attempt to arrive at not just a cognitive-psychological perspective where there is already a degree of common understanding but, more importantly, to initiate discussion centred on the implications for a more effective teacher education pedagogy that encompasses targeted reflective development in both campus and school experiences. "The theoretical framework for reflection adopted by a particular program will depend upon its purposes and focus, and therefore in turn upon the assumptions about teaching and teacher education upon which these are based" (Hatton & Smith, 1995, pp. 35 - 36).

Ongoing reflection by teacher educators about assumptions underpinning practice necessitates, as previously identified by Pyle and Seals (1995), openness and humility to suppose there is something yet to learn about our pedagogy. In the light of a desire to prepare teachers who will teach with passion, purpose, and intentional pedagogy, a commitment to reflective practice that pays attention to developing self-awareness, assumptions underpinning practice and educational vision is necessary.

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