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reflective teaching fourth edition

reflective teaching in schools

Andrew Pollard with Kristine Black-Hawkins, Gabrielle Cliff Hodges, Pete Dudley, Mary James, Holly Linklater, Sue Swaffield, Mandy Swann, Fay Turner, Paul Warwick, Mark Winterbottom and Mary Anne Wolpert

Series Editors ANDREW POLLARD and AMY POLLARD

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reflective teaching

in schools

4th edition

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This book is dedicated to Anne and Michael Pollard,
and to the generation who lived and worked in the 20th century to create
more productive, inclusive and balanced societies in the UK.

Beyond its prime audience of teachers and trainee teachers, it is also respectfully offered
to all politicians and others who need to understand why they must support and trust
education professionals if they really want to promote learning for the 21st century.

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Supplementary chapters at **reflectiveteaching.co.uk**

- **Starting out** Learning as a newly qualified teacher
- **Improvement** Continuing professional development

Introduction

This book offers *two* levels of support for initial teacher education and continuing professional development.

- Comprehensive guidance is offered on key issues in classroom practice – including relationships, behaviour, curriculum planning, learning and teaching strategies, assessment processes and evaluation.
- Uniquely, the book also introduces evidence-informed 'principles' and 'concepts' to support a deeper understanding of teacher expertise.

Reflective Teaching thus supports both initial school-based training and extended career-long professionalism for both primary *and* secondary school teachers.

Developed over three decades, the book, companion reader and website represent the accumulated understanding of generations of teachers and educationalists.

Readings for Reflective Teaching in Schools provides a compact library which complements and extends the chapters in this book. It has been designed to provide convenient access to key texts and will be of particular help when library access may be difficult.

The associated website, **reflectiveteaching.co.uk**, offers an enormous range of supplementary resources including reflective activities, research briefings, advice on further reading and additional chapters. It also features a compendium of educational terms, a conceptual framework showcasing some of the UK's best educational research and extensive links to useful websites.

Underlying these materials, there are three key messages. The first is that it *is* now possible to identify teaching strategies which are more effective than others in most circumstances. Teachers therefore now have to be able to develop, improve, promote and defend their expertise by marshalling such evidence and by embedding enquiry and evaluation within routine practices. Second, all evidence has to be interpreted – and we do this by 'making sense'. In other words, as well as information about effective strategies we need to be able to discern the underlying principles of learning and teaching to which specific findings relate – we need to *understand* what is going on in this complex area of professional activity. Finally, we need to remember that education has moral purposes and social consequences. The provision we make is connected to our future as societies and to the life-chances of the children and young people with whom we work. The issues require very careful consideration.

Reflective activity is thus of vital importance to the teaching profession:

- it underpins professional judgement and its use for worthwhile educational purposes;
- it provides a vehicle for learning and professional renewal – and thus for promoting the independence and integrity of teachers;
- above all, it is a means to the improvement of teaching, the enhancement of learning and the steady growth in standards of performance for both schools and national education systems.

We hope that you will find these materials helpful in your professional work and as you seek personal fulfilment as a teacher.

A summary of the book follows.

Andrew Pollard
Bristol, Cambridge, London, June 2013

PART 1: BECOMING A REFLECTIVE PROFESSIONAL introduces and structures the activity of becoming a teacher. We start in Chapter 1 with a focus on the decision to teach and on the significance of the contribution we can make as professionals. Then comes an introduction to ways of understanding 'learning' (Chapter 2) – which is the foundation of expert teacher judgement. Despite much complexity, *learning* is what it is all about! The chapter on reflective practice (Chapter 3) discusses how such processes can improve the quality of our teaching. And then it gets really interesting, with a review of ten principles of effective teaching and learning (Chapter 4). These come from a major UK research and development programme and also draw on accumulated evidence from around the world. Measured effects of particular strategies are related to underlying principles.

Two supplementary chapters are available on **reflectiveteaching.co.uk** – on school-experience and mentoring for initial training ('Mentoring') and on how to conduct small-scale enquiries to achieve an 'evidence-informed classroom' ('Enquiry').

PART 2: CREATING CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING concerns the creation of classroom environments to support high quality teaching and learning. We begin by considering the circumstances which impinge on families and schools (Chapter 5) – and we note the ways in which people contribute to and challenge such circumstances through their actions. We then move to the heart of classroom life with a focus on teacher–pupil relationships and inclusion (Chapter 6). Because such relationships are so crucial for classroom success, this is an extremely important chapter. Chapter 7 builds further and illustrates how positive cycles of behaviour can be created through firmness, fairness and engaging pupils in the curriculum. Finally, we consider a range of learning spaces in school and beyond (Chapter 8) and the affordances they offer for formal and informal learning. As well as the basic dimensions of classroom organisation, this chapter also addresses the use of technology, pupil organisation and teamworking with teacher assistants.

PART 3: TEACHING FOR LEARNING supports the development of practice across the three classic dimensions of teaching – curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Chapter 9 starts us off with a review of curricular aims and design principles, before progressing to a review of national curricula in the UK and the role of subject knowledge. 'Planning' (Chapter 10) puts these ideas into action and supports the development and evaluation of programmes of study, schemes of work and lesson plans. Chapter 11 offers ways of understanding the art, craft and science of pedagogy – and the development of a pedagogic repertoire. 'Communication' (Chapter 12) extends this with an introduction to the vital role of talking, listening, reading and writing across the curriculum. Perhaps the core instructional expertise of the teacher lies in the skill of dialogic teaching? Finally, this part concludes by demonstrating how assessment can be tied into teaching and learning processes in very constructive ways (Chapter 13). In short, through principled strategies for sharing goals, pupil engagement, authentic feedback, self-assessment and responsive teaching, excellent progress in learning can be made.

PART 4: REFLECTING ON CONSEQUENCES draws attention to what is achieved, and by whom, in our classrooms – what are the consequences of what we do? Chapter 14 reviews big issues in assessment, with particular attention on how schools measure pupil achievement and manage accountability. Whilst some problems are raised, positive uses of summative assessment data are also promoted. 'Inclusion' (Chapter 15) asks us to consider various dimensions of difference and also the ways in which routine processes differentiate between people. However, the emphasis is on accepting difference as part of the human condition and on how to build more inclusive classroom communities.

PART 5: DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING, is the final, synoptic part of the book. It integrates major themes through discussion of teacher expertise and professionalism. 'Expertise' (Chapter 16) harvests and integrates powerful ideas from previous chapters into a holistic conceptual framework of enduring issues in teaching and learning. The chapter constructs a framework describing dimensions of expert thinking. In Chapter 17, 'Professionalism', we consider the role of the teaching profession in our societies and suggest how reflective teachers can contribute to democratic processes.

Supplementary chapters are available on the website, **reflectiveteaching.co.uk**, on succeeding as a newly qualified teacher ('Starting out') and on career and school development ('Improvement').

part one

Becoming a reflective professional

1. **Identity** Who are we, and what do we stand for?
2. **Learning** How can we understand learner development?
3. **Reflection** How can we develop the quality of our teaching?
4. **Principles** What are the foundations of effective teaching and learning?

Supplementary chapters at reflectiveteaching.co.uk are:

- **Mentoring** Learning through mentoring in initial teacher education
- **Enquiry** Developing evidence-informed practice

This part introduces and structures the activity of becoming a teacher.

We start with a chapter focused on ourselves and on the significance of the contribution we can make as professional teachers. Then comes an introduction to ways of understanding 'learning' (Chapter 2) – which is the foundation of teacher judgement. After all, despite much complexity, learning is what it is all about! The chapter on reflective practice (Chapter 3) discusses how such processes can improve the quality of our teaching. And then it gets really interesting, with a review of ten 'principles of effective teaching and learning (Chapter 4). These come from a major UK research and development programme and also draw on accumulated evidence from around the world.

Identity

Who are we, and what do we stand for?

1

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the teachers, children and young people in classroom life, and with the feelings and perceptions we hold in relation to ourselves and others.

A key issue is that of our 'identities' as unique individuals and how these identities relate to the cultures and opportunities within classrooms and schools. However, to understand the identities of each other and ourselves we must recognise both social influences beyond the school and also development throughout each stage of life.

The first section of the chapter focuses on the professional vocation and work of teachers. We consider why people choose to become teachers and the values that might inform and sustain our practice. We introduce what is known about teachers' work, including how teachers respond to complexity and uncertainty. This section also reflects the belief that there are always things that we can do to improve the quality of educational provision for all learners. To this end, whilst celebrating vocational commitment, the chapter also acknowledges the professional resilience that is increasingly necessary.

Section 2 focuses on thinking about children and young people. We consider what we know about the particular identities and cultures of the young people with whom we work – in, and beyond, our schools. We challenge ourselves to consider how our values and pre-existing understandings may influence how we think about pupils and their learning.

Section 3 considers the ways in which children and young people develop and learn through their schooling. Social, physical and psychological factors are addressed. The agency of children and young people is then celebrated by tracing trajectories through primary and secondary education and into adulthood. Finally, our own biographies, and our commitment to teaching, are acknowledged. We again affirm the need to balance our personal and professional lives to achieve success.

TLRP principles

Two principles are of particular relevance to this chapter on identity and values in education:

Effective teaching and learning equips learners for life in its broadest sense. Learning should aim to help people to develop the intellectual, personal and social resources that will enable them to participate as active citizens, contribute to economic development and flourish as individuals in a diverse and changing society. This implies adopting a broad view of learning outcomes and ensuring that equity and social justice are taken seriously. (Principle 1)

Effective teaching and learning depends on teacher learning. The need for teachers to learn continuously in order to develop their knowledge and skills, and adapt and develop their roles, especially through classroom inquiry, should be recognised and supported. (Principle 9)

See Chapter 4

1 Understanding ourselves as teachers

1.1 Becoming a teacher

There are lots of reasons why people choose to enter the profession of teaching. Many are attracted because of a principled commitment to the education of children and young people – whether this is anticipated to be for a short period or, potentially, for a career. Teaching can certainly be a source of great fulfilment, and thus contribute to personal wellbeing. Teaching also, of course, offers secure and respected employment.

Commitment to 'working with children' is often particularly strong for those who choose to become primary or early years teachers. This was sensitively described by Nias whose classic study *Primary Teachers Talking* (1989) showed how identification with the role eventually became so strong for some that they saw themselves as 'persons-in-teaching' rather than just as people who happened to be employed as teachers. It has been argued that the commitment of primary teachers 'affirms feminine virtues such as caring and nurturance' (Burgess and Carter, 1992), but significant contributions are made by teachers of both sexes. Whilst the contemporary role is as challenging as in any other profession, there is no doubt that the opportunity to support the development of young children over time has considerable fascination and importance.

Studies of secondary school trainee teachers often find that a significant intrinsic factor is the opportunity to work within their subject specialism. This is either because of the perceived value of the subject itself or because of a desire to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with others (see, for example Younger, Brindley, Pedder and Hagger, 2004). For many too, there is a strong commitment to providing opportunities so that young people can fulfil their potential – as expressed in some of Richardson's books such as *Changing Life Chances* (2011). Secondary trainees may be very idealistic:

> I feel powerfully that everybody is deserving of equal chances to make their way in the world.
>
> You are influencing a whole generation, generations of people – and that's exciting.
> (Quoted in Younger et al., 2004, p. 249)

There is thus a well-established theme of idealism in the commitment of many aspiring teachers. The profession attracts those with a sense of moral purpose who decide that they want, through their work with children, students and young people, to make a contribution to the future of our societies. The 'passion for teaching' of many primary and secondary teachers as has been recorded many times in the past, and remains evident today (see Day, 2004; Gu, 2007, **Reading 1.1**).

Importantly however, the vocational commitment of trainees is not associated with complacency about the challenges of becoming a 'good teacher'. Most people, when beginning to learn how to become a teacher, are extremely aware of the challenges. Fortunately, with appropriate support, commitment can be nurtured until professional capabilities and self-confidence are secure. However, a slightly uneven journey,

characterised by ups and downs and a lot of hard work, is not unusual – though guides, such as Turnbull's 'practical guide to empowerment' (2007) help considerably

The early years of classroom life for newly qualified teachers is crucial for career decisions. In a recent study of such experiences, McNally and Blake (2010) found that establishing good relationships with pupils and with teacher colleagues often assumes huge importance – and feelings about teaching and personal self-confidence ebb and flow (see also the **Research Briefing** on p. 11). The struggle to establish competence and acceptance could be overwhelming and feelings sometimes veered 'from anxiety and despair to fulfillment and delight'.

The significance of this research is that it highlights aspects of the journey that we all share as teachers. The feelings associated with our first few weeks in the profession may stay with us in some form – a keen sense of moral purpose; excitement because of the responsibility and opportunities; and awe, wonder and uncertainty about how to fulfill our ambitions for both ourselves as teachers and for the children and young people with whom we work. Gradually though, these commitments are tempered by experience, but it is to be hoped that they never fade completely.

Like the trainees in the research projects, much of our motivation and resilience will be associated with our personal qualities. Moreover, these qualities will develop and sustain us throughout our careers – and contribute to 'reflective practice'. The process of reflection acknowledges dilemmas and the need for expert judgement in teaching. It is entirely understandable to feel such challenges – see Richardson's classic 'Daring to be a Teacher' (1990). *Reflective Teaching in Schools* offers constructive ways of managing challenges in the short term whilst also building principled, career-long expertise.

Reflective activity 1.1

Aim: To reflect on your own decision to become a teacher.

Evidence and reflection: In Section 1.1 we explored the importance of early feelings in relation to motivation, aspiration and determination. Write for yourself a short piece, recollecting why you decided to train to become a teacher. If appropriate, also record your feelings at the point of qualifying.

Extension: Read what you have written and highlight where you have made reference to specific value commitments. List these, and try to identify personal experiences that informed why they were so important. (For example: to inspire people to want to discover the joy of literature – because of what my Year 7 English teacher did for me; to encourage every child to be confident enough to 'have a go' and persevere – because of the PE teacher who told me I'd never get picked for the football team.)

Share your thinking with colleagues and discuss the range of motivations which inform 'becoming a teacher'.

1.2 Values informing practice

As suggested above, the values we hold about the importance of education are critical to the decision to become teachers in the first place, and to sustaining our motivation and resilience through our career.

The values that inform our practice are not necessarily explicit but it is important to try to identify them for at least three reasons. First, being clear about values can help

Figure 1.1 Professional values as articulated by the General Teaching Councils of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and The Teaching Council, Ireland; for updates, see links on **reflectiveteaching.co.uk**.

GTC SCOTLAND	**Professional Values and Personal Commitment** ● Registered teachers show in their day-to-day practice a commitment to social justice, inclusion and caring for and protecting children. ● Registered teachers take responsibility for their professional learning and development. ● Registered teachers value, respect and are active partners in the communities in which they work.
GTC WALES	**Code of Professional Conduct and Practice** Key Principles – professionalism and maintaining trust in the profession. Registered teachers: base their relationship with pupils on trust and respect; have regard to the safety and wellbeing of pupils in their care; work in a collaborative manner with teachers and other professionals, and develop and maintain good relationships with parents, guardians and carers; act with honesty and integrity; are sensitive to the need, where appropriate, for confidentiality; take responsibility for maintaining the quality of their professional practice; uphold public trust and confidence in the teaching profession.
GTC NORTHERN IRELAND	**Code of Values and Professional Practice – Core Values** The core values of the profession are: trust; respect; integrity; honesty; fairness; tolerance; commitment; equality and service. A commitment to serve lies at the heart of professional behaviour. In addition, members of the profession will exemplify the values listed above in their working and in their relationships with others; recognising in particular the unique and privileged relationship that exists between teachers and their pupils. In keeping with the spirit of professional service and commitment, teachers will at all times be conscious of their responsibilities to others: learners, colleagues and indeed the profession itself.
TEACHING COUNCIL IRELAND	**The Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers** The Code begins by setting out the ethical foundation for the teaching profession – respect, care, integrity and trust. *Respect*: Teachers uphold human dignity and promote equality and emotional and cognitive development. *Care*: Teachers' practice is motivated by the best interests of the pupils/students entrusted to them. *Integrity*: Honesty, reliability and moral action are exercised through professional commitments, responsibilities and actions. *Trust*: Teachers' relationships with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and the public are based on trust. Trust embodies fairness, openness and honesty.

us to assess whether we are consistent, both in what we as individuals believe, and in reconciling differences which may exist in a school between colleagues working together. Second, it can help us to evaluate and respond to external pressures and requirements – as 'creative mediators' of policy (see Chapter 3, Section 2.7). Third, it can help us to assess whether what we believe is consistent with what we actually do: that is, whether our value system or philosophy is compatible with our actual classroom practice.

As well an awareness of the values we held when we entered the profession (see Reflective activity 1.1), we are also required to work by values shared within our profession. In the British Isles, the three General Teaching Councils (GTC) (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), Teaching Council (Ireland) and the Department for Education (England) articulate clear expectations regarding the values that should underpin teachers' work. These professional expectations are reflected in 'codes of conduct and practice for registered teachers', see Figure 1.1. In England, a similar statement is made in the documentation of Teachers' Standards.

Reflective activity 1.2

Aim: To compare your personal values (see Reflective activity 1.1) with the statements developed by the Teaching Councils.

Evidence and reflection: Were there values in your initial reflection that are not included in any of the national codes or standards? If so, why do you think this might be?

Are there ways in which the official codes and standards extend your value expectations? How? Which aspects of your practice do they relate to? For example, in your initial reflections, did you, like GTC Northern Ireland, highlight the value of 'service'?

Extension: Isolate and compare each element of the four statements of professional values. How would you explain the similarities and differences?

For a supplementary approach to articulating values, aims and commitments see **reflectiveteaching.co.uk**

One of the arguments for developing codes or standards for professional practice is that they frame our practice and development in purposive ways. They are intended to encourage us to be reflective and responsible, to remind us of professional values, aims and commitments *and* to consider indicators of their implementation and effect. Only then will we be able to judge whether what we *really* do matches what we say we value. Gaps between aspirations, values and outcomes are common in many walks of life but for teachers it is particularly important to examine why this may occur. After all, failure to adapt and change may have significant effects on the lives of others.

Of course, self-improvement is often based, one way or another, on the collection and analysis of evidence. So the contemporary professional has to be willing to test his or her value positions and beliefs. Indeed, the reflective practitioner, as we will later see, is able to justify his or her practices and provide an explanation or 'warrant' for them.

An important step in developing as reflective practitioners is to understand how our own personal values, beliefs and practices are influenced by our previous experiences,

circumstances and understanding. We need to become 'reflexive' and thus able to question ourselves. Such reflexivity is an important aspect of reflective practice. Whilst the latter addresses a wide range of social, organisational, pedagogic and other factors, reflexivity focuses directly on our self-awareness and ability to reflect on ourselves (Moore, 2004).

Beliefs, of course, can be particularly difficult to change since they may rest on significant cultural and material foundations. Indeed, we may even feel that our beliefs are representations of 'objective truths' and so that nothing more needs to be considered. Reflective practice requires an interesting combination of moral commitment and open-mindedness. Whilst being fully value committed, we must still aspire to learn and improve. We will explore this more fully in Chapter 3.

1.3 Teacher identities

What sort of a person do we think we are, and what sort of a teacher do we wish to become? In primary education, teachers often associate themselves with a pupil year or Key Stage, whilst in secondary identification with a subject or cluster of subjects is pretty much taken for granted.

The concept of 'identity' summarises the ways in which we think about ourselves. Our sense of personal identity forms through life and is particularly influenced by identification with 'significant others' such as parents, friends and, in due course, colleagues. But we often separate our thinking in terms of our 'personal' and 'professional' self and, in this section, we focus on the formation and development of professional identities as teachers.

As we have seen, most people enter the profession of teaching with a strong sense of personal commitment and such values are affirmed and expected as professional characteristics.

However, the progression from early idealism to long term professionalism is often not straightforward. At each stage, we must wrestle with the tension between vocational commitment and practical challenges.

Initial teacher education brings the first round of such challenges. Maynard and Furlong (1993) identified five typical stages of initial school experience – 'early idealism', 'personal survival', 'recognising difficulties', 'hitting the plateau' and, finally, 'moving on'. For example, it may well be rather dispiriting if you come into school to help children with their learning only to find that you cannot get them to pay attention and take you seriously! But it is also reassuring to know that most people do, with the support of others, work their way through these initial challenges – and as they do so, a more professional teacher identity begins to form.

For a full account of this and of helpful support, see the supplementary **Mentoring** chapter on **reflectiveteaching.co.uk**

In their few first years of teaching, teachers may experience a similar cycle. For example, Ewing and Manuel (2005) identified five stages from initial experiences to a more confident professionalism:

- early expectations and a sense of vocation;
- early days of the first teaching appointment;
- finding a place: the establishment phase;