

to learn?" are emphasising practical decision making. Programmes that emphasise the moral, ethical and social aspects of teaching in a non-reflective manner ("it is morally wrong to do that, but do not ask why") are labelled by Valli as indoctrination. Programmes that encourage students to reflect on the moral, ethical and social aspects of teaching (asking questions such as "why are we imposing these values on students?") are said to be emphasising moral reflection.

Valli (1993:36) suggests that moral reflection "is the most justifiable and holds the greatest promise as a viable image of teaching". This view is echoed by Zeichner and Gore (1995:16) when they describe a social reconstructionist approach to action research in teacher education that "brings the social and political context into focus and considers whether our work in teacher education is contributing towards the elimination of inequalities and injustices in schooling and society". I prefer to think that teachers need to take a balanced approach to reflection and question both the technical and moral aspects of their practices. This view is implicit in the Quality Teaching model described in Chapter 1.

If teaching is taken for granted, it becomes mechanical and ineffective. However, as teachers engage in thinking about their past actions, their current situation, and their future intentions, their teaching ceases to be routine and becomes reflective. In definition, reflective teachers think critically about all their teaching practices and accept that what happens in their classrooms should be questioned and, if necessary, changed.

Various views on teacher reflection can be explored in the educational literature (for example, Brookfield, 1995; Cruickshank, 1987; Marsh, 2000; Martinez, 1990; Onosko, 1992; Ross, 1989; Schön, 1983, 1987; Smyth, 1986; Van Manen, 1991; Zeichner, 1987). These authors emphasise different aspects of reflection, but they all focus on the general idea that teachers should think carefully about what they do and why they do it.

Whatever approach is taken to reflection, the ultimate aim of helping teachers to reflect is to produce what Schön (1983, 1987) refers to as the "reflective practitioner" – one who can think about teaching while teaching and respond appropriately to the unique situations that arise. While the approaches to achieving this aim may vary, the basic ideas are similar: if teachers adopt a reflective approach to their teaching, they not only question their own practices but also render problematic many of the aspects of teaching that are generally taken for granted. To "render problematic" simply means that these issues are opened to question and investigation, rather than being accepted without thought. As Smyth (1984:32) suggests:

Put simply, to act reflectively about teaching is to pursue actively the possibility that existing practices may effectively be challenged and, in the light of evidence about their efficacy, replaced by alternatives.

This reflection must be open to the possibility that existing practices are not only inappropriate but that they are being driven by inappropriate sets of beliefs and values. Indeed, as Noffke and Brennan (1988) suggest, the real choice for teachers is not so much whether or not to be reflective but, rather, what to reflect upon.

No approach to reflection is without its critics, and the most common criticism of any approach is that it denies the existence of other views. Such a criticism is sometimes

levelled at even the critical/moral reflection approach, which should be the most open (see Valli, 1993). Any approach to teaching or reflection that does not acknowledge that other approaches have some merit is dangerous.

In the remainder of this chapter, a broad view of reflective teaching is taken. This approach will emphasise that *reflection is a form of inquiry through which teachers can question their actions, the contexts in which they teach, and all the influences on those actions and contexts*. It is based on the premises that teachers have valuable knowledge about teaching, that they are capable of making that knowledge explicit and that they can learn from their own experiences. However, it is only when teachers become conscious of the theories implicit in their practices that they can reflect critically on them and make fundamental changes to their classroom practices.

Why should teachers be reflective?

The benefits of reflection are considerable and tangible. For example, Korthagen and Wubbels (1991) provide evidence that reflective teachers have better interpersonal relationships with students than non-reflective teachers, and that reflective teachers experience a higher level of job satisfaction. They also suggest that reflective teachers have strong feelings of security and self-efficacy, can talk and write readily about their experiences, and are more likely than non-reflective teachers to allow their students to learn by investigating and structuring things for themselves. You will come to appreciate the importance of this approach to teaching as you explore the teaching strategies described in Chapters 5 to 13 of this book.

The literature suggests several other reasons why teachers should be encouraged to be reflective. Some of these reasons have a sociological basis (Zeichner, 1992a), while others clearly attempt to link reflection with teacher effectiveness in a technical or behaviourist way, that is, they suggest that through reflection teachers can improve their teaching and their students' learning (Cruickshank, 1987; Troyer, 1988; Killen, 1991). Others relate teacher reflection to changes in measurable learner factors, such as thoughtfulness (Onosko, 1992).

Butler (1996) suggests that reflection is an important tool for helping teachers to move through a learning process that has seven goals: (1) to review a process, such as a teaching episode, to see whether it achieved its intended outcomes; (2) to make one's learning explicit; (3) to complete the learning cycle for each incident in our lives; (4) to give a more considered response to an event; (5) to achieve meaning and understanding; (6) to add value to self and to performance; and (7) to help move us from novice to expert. Similar ideas are expressed in the "life cycle of a teacher" model described by Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch and Enz (2000).

Dobbins (1996:270) highlights several reasons why teachers should be reflective and why the practicum in teacher education programmes should have a focus on reflection. Firstly, she suggests that through reflection student teachers can "maximise their learning from the practicum and accept responsibility for their own professional development" and that this can empower student teachers to "think and learn for themselves". Quite clearly, a similar argument could be made for encouraging experienced teachers to be reflective. Dobbins' second reason for encouraging reflection is that "teaching and the climate within which teaching takes place are different now from what they were".

The Focus box:

Teacher efficacy examines the factors that contribute to the confidence teachers have to successfully achieve their goals related to classroom instruction, reflective teaching, classroom management, engaging students, motivating students and other stakeholders in the educational process, as well as other related areas that contribute to the growing understanding of what makes teachers efficacious.

Why study efficacy?

As stated earlier, Ashton (1984) reviewed research that shows there are two components to teacher expectations:

- the teacher believes that, in general, students can learn the material;
- the teacher believes that these particular students can learn under his or her direction.

Ashton (1984) also states that there are eight dimensions to the development of teacher efficacy.

DIMENSIONS OF TEACHER EFFICACY	
1. A sense of personal accomplishment	The teacher must view the work as meaningful and important.
2. Positive expectations for student behavior and achievement	The teacher must expect students to progress.
3. Personal responsibility for student learning	Accepts accountability and shows a willingness to examine performance.
4. Strategies for achieving objectives	Must plan for student learning, set goals for themselves, and identify strategies to achieve them.
5. Positive affect	Feels good about teaching, about self, and about students.
6. Sense of control	Believes (s)he can influence student learning.
7. Sense of common teacher/student goals	Develops a joint venture with students to accomplish goals.
8. Democratic decision making	Involves students in making decisions regarding goals and strategies.