CHAPTER 2

How do you become a reflective professional?

Lorraine Thomas and Gerald Griggs

Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb.

Winston Churchill

Introduction

You will already be aware, from Chapter 1, of the journey you are undertaking both as a beginning teacher and a beginning **reflective practitioner**, and you have been introduced to what it means to 'reflect', what to reflect on, and how to do it. This chapter begins with a brief overview of the reflective practice movement against the background of accountability in education. In order to see your role as a beginning teacher in the wider context of your teaching career, you need to have some understanding of the socio-political landscape into which you are entering. This is because there may be tensions between what you would *like* to do in the classroom and what you are *required* to do. You will also gain insight into some of the issues being faced by the colleagues in school who will support, coach and mentor you through your professional development. It then introduces the **professional standards** that will lie at the heart of your training and career development. With a specific focus on the **core strands** of learning to teach, this chapter will guide you through ways of using reflection strategies so that you do not fall into the trap of seeing reflection merely as a

coping tool (What can I do to survive in this situation? How do I get them through this test?). Important as these questions might seem, reflection must also be a tool for developing your teaching to ensure that your pupils learn and thrive under your guidance, developing a passion for learning and the capacity to become independent learners. This chapter will draw on the narratives of some trainee teachers going through the process of developing more creative, pupil-centred approaches to their teaching. It will also focus on assessment for learning, providing you with examples of critical reflection that enhance classroom practice and, ultimately, your career development. You will be offered opportunities to reflect on these in different ways depending on your current stage of development. This first extract, from Sara, indicates *how* she wishes to teach, but cannot.

> " I so wanted to get them excited by the language, by the rich vocabulary they could be using. 'Clothes' is just not the most exciting topic for 16-year-olds, is it? So I thought, if I took pages from the La Redoute catalogue, and got them to find the French for 'strappy top' and 'knee-high boots', etc. They could learn a lot that was really relevant and we could have some fun. My learning objective was that pupils would be able to talk about what they would wear to a party, or to a pop festival. But my mentor just said: 'No, none of that is in the GCSE defined content. All they need to do is describe what they are wearing – skirt, trousers, shoes and so on. They need to practise that a lot to get the best marks they can in the oral.' I knew the lesson would be really boring and it was.
>
> *(Sara, PGCE MFL trainee, in her final teaching practice, with a Year 11 class)* "

Reflective task 2.1   What drives our curriculum?

1 Can you relate to Sara's situation? Can you describe a similar experience?
2 What prompted the response from Sara's mentor?
3 How do you think Sara felt?
4 How do you think the pupils felt in being prepared to describe what they were wearing in French?
5 How do you think they would have responded?
6 What might have been their response to the lesson that Sara had planned?

It will be very surprising indeed if you get through the first two or three years of teaching without feeling the tension between the need to ensure that your pupils achieve well in national tests and public examinations and the desire to provide creative and exciting learning experiences You will need to find a balance between that aspect of teaching that you associate with managing an externally imposed curriculum, national assessment regimes and learners' behaviour, often referred to as **technical rationality**, and that aspect of your teaching that you associate with managing your learners' ideas and imagination, and the infinite and unpredictable complexities of social interaction, often referred to as professional artistry. We begin with a brief outline of the origin of these tensions, and go on to explore how reflective practice can help you balance them as you develop your own teacher identity. Later chapters (notably 3, 5 and 7) develop this theme further.

Accountability, responsibility and professionalism: the growth of reflective practice

It is not an accident of fate that teaching professionals in places as far afield as Australia and New Zealand, North America and Europe have embraced the philosophy of reflective practice. In the latter part of the twentieth century, there was a marked shift in the balance of power in education. Until then, governments had on the whole left the decision making about education in the hands of the professionals. In the 1980 s the old economic order changed; there was a sudden rise in oil prices, and the collapse of the traditional manufacturing base of many countries. The development of new technologies made it possible to relocate manufacturing to countries where labour costs were cheaper. These factors, plus the increasing deregulation of economies and financial markets, all contributed to undermining "the power of Western governments to deliver prosperity, security and opportunity to their citizens within "walled" economies" (Mahony and Hextall 2000). As a result, governments and the public have become increasingly aware of the high cost of public sector services such as health and education, and there has been a universal demand for 'value for money' from these services, leading to the introduction of a range of strategies to measure the

accountability of professionals. In education, including teacher education, these have variously included:

- the introduction of a national curriculum with programmes of study and expected attainment levels at key stages spelled out;
- measures of school effectiveness, such as national test results, public examination grades and truancy rates, published so that government, local authorities, school governors and parents can make judgements about the quality of education;
- more rigorous external inspections;
- a requirement for regular and frequent self-evaluation of educational institutions;
- performance management and performance-related pay for teachers;
- individual and organizational self-evaluation, target-setting and monitoring;
- national standards for initial teacher training (the Q standards);
- the promotion of teaching as a career, beginning with NQT induction and continuing with a requirement to meet lifelong professional standards and to undertake CPD;
- the promotion of the school, as opposed to the university, as the significant training environment for new teachers.

The above were encapsulated in the term 'new professionalism', which first appeared in policy documentation in the Green Paper *Teachers: Meeting the Challenge of Change*. The objective was to create a modernized teaching profession in which learners would be able to access a 'world-class education service' (DfEE 1998: 12).

Much controversy has surrounded these developments. Put simply, they have been seen by proponents of the school improvement movement (Fullan 1993; Hargreaves 1994) as a much-needed reform of a system not delivering 'value for money' and by others as interference from external agencies imposing a 'top-down' model of school improvement (Zeichner 1994). The pros and cons of school-based training have been well researched since the 1990 s and much has been written to support teachers in their role as mentors to trainee teachers. In a review of the international literature on mentoring beginning teachers, Hobson et al. (2009a) have identified some of the benefits of mentoring for trainee teachers as:

- reduced feelings of isolation;
- increased confidence and self-esteem;
- professional growth;
- improved self-reflection and problem-solving capacities.

However, the fact remains that for some beginning teachers these advantages are not fully realized. Examples of this include: insufficient challenge to trainee teachers (Hobson et al. 2009a), with encouragement to engage in 'low risk' activities (Malderez and Wedell 2007); 'trial and error' approaches (Edwards 1997) with insufficient emphasis on **pedagogy** (Lee Chi-ken and Feng 2007); and lack of social and psychological support that can contribute to withdrawal (Hobson et al. 2009b). Hobson et al. (2009a: 214) report that increased and unmanageable workloads make it difficult for mentors to accommodate their trainees' needs. Reflective practice can help the beginning teacher overcome some of these difficulties (see in particular Chapter 5).

In more general terms, the reflective practice movement can be viewed as being favoured by those who do not wish to see the 'professional artistry' of teaching consumed by more instrumentalist interpretations of education: "on the surface this international movement . . . that has developed under the banner of reflection can be seen as a reaction against a view of teachers as technicians who merely carry out what others, removed from the classroom, want them to do" (Zeichner 1994: 10). Sara's reflections on her mentor's rejection of her lesson plan illustrate the tensions that can exist in such a climate; the mentor feels accountable to her learners, their parents, the school and possibly even the government, and sees her responsibility as getting the best examination results possible. Sara sees her responsibility in terms of providing a lively, relevant and engaging learning experience for her pupils. Hers is not an isolated problem. Brindley and Riga (2009) found that when trainees came to apply the 'theory' learned in university to practice in school, they came up against a number of tensions, one of which is like Sara's: "the dilemmas trainees face is in seeking to unite two quite different and sometimes apparently opposing declared purposes for assessment – support for effective learning and judgement of student standards" (Brindley and Riga 2009: 73). Initiatives to move away from what Hall and Thomson (2005: 8) have called the "sterility and joylessness of the standards curriculum" provide the possibility for more **creative approaches** to learning and teaching

(see Chapter 8), although Hall and Thomson (2005: 18) fear that "while the cultural turn nods in the direction of these improvements, of personalised learning and broader curricula, the vision . . . . is still likely to be focused on teachers' and pupils' conformity to a centrally determined agenda".

Reflective task 2.2   Balancing accountability with creativity

1 Do you think that the positions of Sara and her mentor are irreconcilable?
2 To what extent do you think it is possible to deliver accountability (good test and examination outcomes for learners) and creative, engaging lessons that engender a passion for learning?

Effective teacher behaviours embodied in standards

A contributory factor to teachers having to face public scrutiny is the fact that, apart from the obvious need for subject knowledge and some basics in school procedures, what teachers know and what they do remains a mystery to the untrained eye. Zeichner (1994: 10) refers to what he calls the 'invisibility' of teacher knowledge, suggesting that because little account is taken of the expertise that exists within the teaching profession, it becomes easy to impose professional development externally. Despite, or perhaps because of, having been to school, the public has little conception of the skills and knowledge of the teacher. For one thing, the relative shortness of the school day, and even the school year, belies the long working hours that are invested in planning, assessment and evaluation that lie beneath the surface of an effective lesson. For another, good teaching looks easy! Only the tip of the iceberg is visible to the pupils engaged in the lesson. Perhaps this is how it should be; the point is for learners to enjoy their classroom experiences and not feel burdened by how many hours their teacher spent preparing their lessons. However, as the current model of teacher development relies heavily on mentoring and coaching by

> As the current model of teacher development relies heavily on mentoring and coaching by fellow practitioners, it is vital that teachers can articulate the myriad skills they have, communicating them to others, and not simply taking them for granted.

fellow practitioners, it is vital that teachers can articulate the myriad skills they have, communicating them to others, and not simply taking them for granted. One way of doing this is through reflective practice, as it recognizes "the wealth of expertise that resides in the practices of good teachers" (Zeichner 1994: 10). Ironically, increased accountability has also led to greater visibility in the form of the professional standards (TDA 2007). These put in the public domain a description of the characteristics and behaviours of effective teachers at key stages (described in Figure 2.1) of their career development, and teachers must provide evidence of having met them. At present in England there are five progressive levels of standards.

The standards comprise three common core strands at each of these five levels: professional attributes, professional knowledge and understanding and professional skills (see Table 2.1). A deep understanding of these core strands, and the specific standards that relate to your stage of career progression, is essential as you progress in your career. While the model ties **performance management** in with pay, and is therefore linked to accountability, the standards clearly relate to principled, committed and effective teaching practice.

Reflective task 2.3   Using Schulman's model with the teaching standards

1 Look again at McGregor's adaptation (2007) of Shulman's model (1992) of teacher development (Chapter 1, Figure 1.1 page). Study the **Q** or **C standards** towards which you are currently working. Can you 'drop' the standards into one or more of the headings: subject knowledge; personal development; pedagogic knowledge; curriculum knowledge; acknowledgement of educational values?
2 Which fit easily? Where is there overlap? Why do you think this is?
3 Are there any standards that are not easy to place in Schulman's model? Why is this?
4 Which standards lend themselves to 'professional artistry' and which are more **technicist** in nature?
5 Do you see the model as relevant to a teacher's initial training, early career, or whole professional life? Explain your reasons.

	Primary and secondary
	• Professional attributes • Professional knowledge and understanding • Professional skills
Trainees/pre-service teachers	**Qualified Teacher Status (Q) Standards** Standards to be met by the end of the initial training period.
Induction year and beyond	**Core (C) Standards** Teachers should meet the core standards (C) at the end of the induction period and continue to meet them throughout their teaching career. They include consolidation in new contexts and supporting the professional development of others, for example through collaboration, mentoring and coaching.
Teachers on the upper pay scale	**Post-Threshold (P) Standards** Teachers should continue to meet the C standards and in addition meet the P standards, making a distinctive contribution to raising standards by acting as an effective role model for teaching and learning.
Excellent teachers	**Excellent (E) Standards** Teachers should continue to meet the C and P standards and in addition meet the E standards by taking a leading role in raising standards through support for the professional development of others. This means having extensive and deep knowledge and understanding of subject knowledge and pedagogy, drawn from classroom-based research, reading and reflection.
Advanced Skills teachers	**Advanced (A) Standards** Teachers should continue to meet the C, P and E standards and in addition meet the A standards by demonstrating models of excellent, innovative teaching and engaging in professional development activities across a range of workplaces, drawing on the experience gained elsewhere to improve their own practice and that of others in school.

Figure 2.1   Professional standards for teachers

Table 2.1   The core strands of the professional standards

Core strand	Key features
Professional attributes	High expectations of self, colleagues and learners; commitment to the development and well-being of all learners; positive attitudes, values and behaviour; commitment to improving practice through reflection, evaluation, innovation and collaboration with others; being open to the value of coaching and mentoring.
Professional knowledge and understanding	Continuing development of subject and pedagogic knowledge in order to be an effective classroom practitioner meeting the requirements of teachers' statutory frameworks.
Professional skills	Collaborative working practices; clear frameworks for classroom discipline; safe and purposeful learning environments; clear frameworks for teaching, learning and assessment through planning; engagement of learners of all abilities so that they make appropriate progress; innovative practices in teaching and assessment, including appropriate use of ICT and e-learning and out of school contexts;

It is worth pointing out here, if indeed you need to reminded, that the current model is not always a comfortable one. As one of our mentors commented recently: 'there is nowhere to hide in this profession!' Dymoke and Harrison (2008: 221) have pointed out that performance management "will mean that teachers are subject to ongoing scrutiny throughout much of their professional lives".

Reflective task 2.4   How do you feel about being a 'new professional'?

Reflect on the questions in Table 2.2, selecting those appropriate to your current stage of development.

If you are beginning your teacher training	*If you are at least half way through your teacher training*	*If you are a newly or recently qualified teacher*
How do you feel about being subject to 'ongoing scrutiny' during your career? What form do you think this will take during your initial training? What do you need to know and do in order to prepare yourself for providing evidence of meeting the standards?	What does it feel like to be monitored, assessed and scrutinized? To what extent do you feel in control of the evidence that is supporting your progression towards the Q standards and what contributes to this? Which standards seem hardest to evidence? Why?	In what ways has the 'scrutiny' of your practice changed since you were awarded QTS? How do you feel about this? What are the key differences between the way you evidence the C standards and how you evidenced the Q standards? Which standards are currently the most challenging, and why?

Table 2.2   Being a 'new professional'

So what should you reflect about?

Although not explicit in the wording of the standards, reflective practice is central to many of them. We recommend that, as you reflect, you keep in mind the professional standards to which you are working in order to give meaning and focus to your thoughts. Over 20 years ago Valli (in Calderhead and Gates 1993: 9) warned of the dangers of reflection for its own sake, commenting that "racial tension as a school issue can become no more or less worthy of reflection than field trips or homework assignments". Moon (1999: 57) laments the fact that insufficient attention is paid to the relationship between reflective practice and classroom learning. Bleach, writing directly to NQTs, (2000: 138–9) makes the important observation that:

> 66 The Standards should not be regarded as embodying benchmarks that you pass or fail like an MOT car test, they should lead you to look

> *beyond* 'competence,' in a technical sense, to aim for gradations of
> performance that recognise the development of more sophisticated
> patterns of, and perspectives on, professional behaviour. "

In order to 'look *beyond* "competence"' you will need to analyse and inter-
pret the standards to discover what really lies at the heart of each one. As
you begin this process, it is worth noting that since the mid-1990s there
have been significant shifts away from the technical rational approaches
engendered by accountability regimes. The press for an evidence-based
profession has led to many government-sponsored research and classroom-
based inquiry initiatives (Foreman-Peck and Murray 2008), and the moves
to a Masters level profession will require a deeper approach to understand-
ing learning and teaching. The Q standards themselves, more than their
precursors, embody key aspects of professional artistry across all the core
strands. It is to the development of professional artistry that we now turn,
using the core dimension of professional skills to examine ways in which
beginning teachers have addressed their own dilemmas similar to that of
Sara and used reflection to develop their skills 'beyond competence' in or-
der to tackle key aspects of teaching and learning. (See also Chapter 8, and
the concept of 'beyond realism'.)

From professional skills to professional artistry

Make no mistake; professional artistry, like the artistry required to play
Mozart's violin concerto or paint the Mona Lisa, is not acquired overnight.
Creative thinking and an open mind, not to mention risk taking, are re-
quired (see Chapter 7). Case Studies 2.1 and 2.2 draw from beginning teach-
ers' reflections as they strive to apply what they have learned in theory to
classroom practice. In applying these case studies to your own professional
learning, you will need first to reflect on your current stage of development
and ensure that you take a progressive approach to your own development.
That is not to say that there is one smooth, linear path that we all follow in
a uniform way, but there are widely accepted steps in the learning process
that you should find helpful to consider.

Case Study 2.1   Learning and assessment: the dilemma of 'teaching to the test'.

Robert was a PGCE trainee in MFL on a final teaching practice that began in January and ended in May. During the final few weeks of the placement he was required to undertake a classroom-based enquiry with one focus class, on whether pupil-centred approaches to developing listening skills could improve the listening outcomes for pupils. Thus his work involved the application of his subject, curriculum and pedagogic knowledge to the planning and teaching of a sequence of lessons, and a critically reflective evaluation:

> " From my own informal observations I noticed that the pupils were much more confident about tackling the end-of-unit listening test than they were in January; in short, they appeared to have a higher sense of "self-efficacy" (Graham 2003) or a belief in their abilities to succeed. This might be because the pupils all experienced a degree of success in the listening activities prior to the assessment, which gave them more confidence to tackle the listening assessment in a positive manner; however, it may also be due to the fact that I was successful in creating a more relaxed classroom environment and in equipping my pupils with cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies to become more effective listeners. Over the course of the sequence of lessons, I also witnessed not only an improvement in learner self-efficacy but also a remarkable improvement in behaviour. The improvements that I saw in behaviour and attitude were perhaps due to improved planning and attention to detail on my part. However, my better planning was informed by what I learnt from Chambers (2007), who points out the importance of contextualizing listening activities and giving pupils a reason to listen. In the first lesson, for example, I discovered that the pupils actually enjoyed predicting content and that it made them eager to listen during the subsequent listening task. I also found out that many of the pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in the group benefited from

the extra pre-listening and post-listening work as this provided extra scaffolding and structure, which, as Wire (2005) points out, are particularly important for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ADS) pupils. "

Although Robert was very pleased with the way his lessons had gone, there was a mismatch between the skills and competence that pupils had developed during the sequence of lessons and the outcomes of the formal end-of-unit assessment. He reflects that:

" This discrepancy illustrates the fact that **summative assessment** is of limited use as it gives a picture of a pupil's capabilities at only one specific point in time. It also highlights how important it is not to focus too much on the grading aspect of assessment at the expense of its learning function and the giving of useful advice (Black and Wiliam 2001); many of my pupils were disappointed by their end-of-unit assessment results even though they had no reason to be because they had achieved well during the sequence of lessons [because they verbally answered questions well and participated fully in the learning activities]. "

Reflective task 2.5   Balancing formative and summative assessment

Refer to Case Study 2.1 and reflect on the questions in Table 2.3, selecting those appropriate to your current stage of development. As you work through this and the following two case studies, the reflective questions should guide you in what you need to be considering at your own current stage of development.

Table 2.3 Robert

1   What aspects of curriculum and pedagogic knowledge are in evidence in Robert's reflections?

2   What evidence is there that Robert's reflections improved his teaching and enhanced his pupils' learning?

	If you are beginning your teacher training	*If you are at least half way through your teacher training*	*If you are a newly or recently qualified teacher*
3	In your initial observations of teaching, and your first encounters with pupils, perhaps through supporting their learning in groups, note some examples of what Robert calls the 'learning function' of assessment. What factors have contributed to learning, and why?	Think about a lesson that you have taught recently. What did pupils learn? Reflect on their skills as well as knowledge. What contributed to this learning? What evidence do you have that learning took place?	What tensions exist for you between assessment as a means of giving a summative grade and assessment as a tool to inform learning (formative)? Give an example. How can you resolve this tension in your planning and teaching?

Case Study 2.2   Collaborative professional learning to investigate pupils' misconceptions in science

David had learned as part of his PGCE science course that we all develop individualized views of how the world works as we grow up. Pupils bring to their science lessons a range of alternative perspectives (of the curricular concepts) that often need re-developing in order for them to acquire the correct factual understanding. David was about to teach magnetism to a Year 8 class, and his research led him to appreciate that students confuse electrical force and magnetic force in physics. Discovering that very little research has actually been undertaken in the area of pupils' misconceptions in magnetism, David undertook what reading he could, then discussed issues with members of the department before planning a series of lessons informed by social constructivist

theories of learning. Following his evaluation of the sequence, David produced a report for the department and invited their feedback. His work generated much interest, despite the prevailing climate of accountability.

> " I had involved many staff throughout the project. My chosen group was normally taught by two teachers, the head of science had shown an interest, there was a physics specialist with whom I consulted, and there was of course my mentor; all of these had some input. At the end of the review, I produced a written report for all staff, spoke to them individually and invited their responses.
>
> Their responses were positive, revealing that it had introduced new ideas to them all, most said it had highlighted misconceptions that they had not been aware of, and several stated that it would affect how they taught the topic in future. One teacher, who had not taught the topic to his Year 8 group at the time of reading the report, even asked to use my **scheme of work**. Some felt it was a good idea to introduce gravity when looking at the Earth's magnetic field as it was something they had never done previously, although a note of caution was raised in that introducing gravity into the topic may in some way actually fuel a misconception where one had not previously existed. In this respect several staff thought that they would only introduce gravity if they felt a connection already existed, or introduce it as an extension task for more able pupils. "

Reflective task 2.6   Learners' errors and misconceptions

Refer to Case Study 2.2 and reflect on the questions in Table 2.4, selecting those appropriate to your current stage of development.

Au: We have changed "Reflection task" nos. as sequence order. Pls. check.

Table 2.4   David

1	What aspects of curriculum and pedagogic knowledge are evident in David's teaching and reflections about learning?		
2	What evidence is there that David's reflections improved his teaching and enhanced his pupils' learning?		
	If you are beginning your teacher training	*If you are at least half way through your teacher training*	*If you are a newly or recently qualified teacher*
3	Discuss with your peers (for example in your university teaching group, or with other trainee teachers in school) what you all feel to be the common errors and misconceptions or alternate understandings in a subject that you teach. Check this list with an experienced teacher and invite comment. What information does this give you about how you could approach your teaching with any given class?	Before planning a scheme of work or sequence of lessons, consider the collective knowledge and experience of others, both peers and experienced colleagues. How do they, or would they, address pupils' misconceptions or alternative understandings in this topic? What can you learn from the 'mistakes' they have made in making assumptions about learners' prior knowledge and understanding?	What has your own teaching experience taught you so far about learners' common errors and misconceptions in topics/subjects you have taught so far? There are many different ways to assess how successful you are in helping your students learn, list the different approaches and their strengths and weaknesses. Are there any areas where your own subject knowledge, and/or your pedagogic knowledge, needs strengthening? Who can help you to do this, and how?

Case Study 2.3   From teaching to learning

Raj was in her final term of a BEd primary course. This is her reflective response to re-reading feedback from lesson observations of her lessons:

> After carefully examining my lesson observations, I recognized that the feedback I was given indicated I tended to have a very teacher-led approach. Although I had outlined in my plan that I would provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively, I did not exploit this technique in practice. It was pointed out to me, that letting pupils mind map new vocabulary with their peers, gives them more autonomy over their learning.
>
> The constructivist approach places the pupil at the centre of the learning process whereby learners are encouraged to "find their own way through the tasks, developing and creating their own knowledge" (Kinchin 2007: 35). As a result, I modified my lesson plans in order to promote more independent and collaborative learning. This led to students brain-storming key items of vocabulary in groups. This helped me see how to adapt the concept of 'thinking time' during the categorization of activities. This 'thinking time' allowed students to share and reflect their answers with their peers, was an additional method of learning collaboratively and allowed me to formatively 'listen-in' on their discussions. It was clear to see that through application of this theory, pupils were much more engaged with their learning. They enjoyed working together and were enthusiastic during whole-class feedback. Formative assessment allowed me to monitor how well pupils were coping. Pupils responded with greater items of vocabulary when they were working with their peers. The less able pupils significantly benefited from the more able pupils. They worked collaboratively, sharing knowledge with one another, which enabled them to achieve the best results possible. Personally, this is an area which I need to develop. I must plan effective opportunities which place the pupil at the centre of the learning process,

enabling them to come up with their independent learning strategies. This pupil-centred approach encourages the pupil to find their own way through their learning. Thus it is imperative that I find the correct balance between teacher-led and pupil-led activities. I need to ensure that pupils have freedom to work independently but that I also provide sufficient scaffolding within the lesson, equipping pupils with the appropriate tools to work autonomously.

(Raj, primary BEd, year 3, part way through final teaching practice) ”

Reflective task 2.7   The transition from 'teaching' to 'learning'

Refer to Case Study 2.3 and reflect on the questions in Table 2.5, selecting those appropriate to your current stage of development.

Summary

In this chapter we have drawn your attention, with a very brief introduction, to the socio-political climate in which reflective practice has become established in teacher education. The so-called 'new professionalism' will have a lasting impact on your training and career development as you are required to meet initial and ongoing national professional standards throughout your working life. Many beginning teachers, both trainees and NQTs, struggle with the tensions that come from the desire to teach creative and exciting lessons in schools that are often focused on exam results and other key performance indicators. Here, two case studies have been presented to explore these tensions. The first shows how collaborative working practices can involve a whole subject department in a deeper understanding of aspects of pedagogy, and the second explores how one trainee reflected on the problems that can arise from summative assessment practices.

Table 2.5   Raj

1	What aspects of curriculum and pedagogic knowledge are in evidence in Raj's teaching and reflections?		
2	What evidence is there that Raj's reflections improved her teaching and enhanced her pupils' learning?		
	If you are beginning your teacher training	*If you are at least half way through your teacher training*	*If you are a newly or recently qualified teacher*
3	Trainee teachers are, rightly, concerned most about their 'performance' in the classroom. At the start of your teaching, you need to ensure that you have classroom presence: confident body language, a strong voice. You will need a detailed lesson plan and well-organised resources. You should also know your pupils' names, understand the school's policies on **sanctions** and **rewards**, and have some basic classroom management strategies at your disposal. Before you start to teach, reflect on the extent to which all this is in place.	At some point in your training, you will be ready to move from anxiety about your teaching to concerns about pupils' learning. Raj has clearly reached this stage. What evidence is there of this? What evidence do you have of your own readiness to reflect more on how your pupils are learning? How does your planning reflect this? What subject, curriculum and pedagogic knowledge are you using to enhance your pupils' learning?	If you have moved to a new school after your training, you will to some extent, have needed to go through the processes again of establishing your classroom presence in a new context. At what point has this become (on the whole) effective, and what evidence do you have of this? To what extent are you able to focus on aspects of your pupils' learning more than on your own performance? How are you doing this? How do the 'theories' you acquired in training continue to inform your practice?

In recommending reflective practice as one of the most important tools you will have as you build your expertise, we also caution against allowing reflection to 'take on a life of its own' (Valli in Calderhead and Gates 1993: 9). By this she means that some things are really worth reflecting about and others less so; there is no automatic correlation between reflection and enhanced classroom practice. While the level of your reflections will vary according to the stage of your professional development and the context about which you are reflecting, the two constant criteria in deciding how you reflect and what you reflect about should be:

- Does this reflection *improve* my teaching?
- Does it *enhance* my pupils' learning?

The final case study illustrates how one trainee used reflection to develop one aspect of her work as she strived to develop her teaching within a social constructivist framework. All three beginning teachers in these case studies use deep, informed reflection which augurs well for the future learning of their students and for their later career progression.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as you move through the other chapters in this book, discovering many different facets of reflection, and finding those that suit you best, we urge you to bear in mind that as a teacher you are charged with helping every child to achieve their full potential, and to keep in mind the key message of this chapter, that what you reflect on should support that important goal.

Key learning points

- The standards reflect a model of professional accountability but also of professional excellence.
- Teachers often face tensions between the 'professional artistry' of their role and the more technicist aspects associated with exam results as a key indicator of school performance.

- Reflective practice as you begin teaching will enhance your ability to deepen and broaden your knowledge and understanding of the core strands of the professional standards throughout your teaching career.
- Choosing what to reflect on is important; the purpose should always be linked to improving teaching and learning.