Reflective Teaching
3rd Edition
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Reflective Teaching
3rd Edition

Evidence-informed Professional Practice

Andrew Pollard
with
Julie Anderson, Mandy Maddock, Sue Swaffield, Jo Warin and Paul Warwick
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Preface

The third edition of *Reflective Teaching* remains part of a set of integrated and complementary resources:

- *Reflective Teaching* (the core handbook for school-based professional development)
- *Readings for Reflective Teaching* (for over 120 associated and fully integrated readings)
- *RTweb* (website for supplementary, updatable guidance on Further Reading, Reflective Activities, Practitioner Applications, figures, diagrams, links, etc.)

The text has been updated to address major developments in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and to reflect contemporary policies such as Personalized Learning and Every Child Matters. This 2008 edition also responds to the introduction of master’s level study within many PGCE courses, the growth in evidence-informed professional practice and the introduction of increasingly coherent provision for continuing professional development throughout teacher careers. To address these trends, key findings have been drawn on from the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) – UK’s largest ever coordinated initiative on educational research. TLRP was commended in *2020 Vision* (DfES, 2006c) for its contribution to innovation through researcher/practitioner partnership – and we are pleased to be able to offer Research Briefings drawn from the programme.

The distinctive contexts of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are both fascinating and sources of innovation, and they are also prominent within the text. For example, UK governments now fully endorse the engagement of pupils. DfES in England states that: “Reflective schools view “pupil voice” as far more than establishing a pupil council. They are engaging pupils actively in shaping learning and teaching” (2006c, p. 21). This theme has always been prominent in this handbook and is highlighted further in this edition by a new set of photographs taken by the children of The Wroxham School. Our thanks to them.

Selective Key readings are provided at the end of each chapter. It is possible to sample some of these suggestions, and many others, by consulting *Readings for Reflective Teaching*. To assist in this, cross-referencing is provided throughout the text, as indicated by the Reading icon. Comprehensive Further Reading for each chapter remains available through the internet on RTweb and is regularly updated. Also available on RTweb (in downloadable form) are selected Reflective Activities and Practitioner Applications based on TLRP findings. Many of the diagrams and figures contained in the book are also available.

www.rtweb.info
Preface

The structure of the handbook is fully described in the Introduction and, of course, it is possible to travel around the material in many different ways. It’s your choice! The main contents page, diagrammatic chapter summaries and the overall index will help if you ever feel lost, or really want to ‘start again’.

As a whole, these resources are intended to provide flexible and comprehensive support for school-based teacher education and training – in forms that are suitable for a wide range of circumstances. In particular, whilst trainees and teachers early in their careers remain a prime audience, we believe that the materials offer strong support to mentors and to more experienced teachers in continuing professional development activities – whether self-motivated or within a performance management process for career progression. Whilst all chapters provide up-to-date overviews of key issues, they are also expected to be used selectively, depending on judgements of what is needed to meet specific learning objectives.

As indicated above, there are many routes through these materials.

The book has been produced by Andrew Pollard with the assistance of an Editorial Team – Julie Anderson (University of Bristol), Mandy Maddock (University of Cambridge), Sue Swaffield (University of Cambridge), Jo Warin (Lancaster University) and Paul Warwick (University of Cambridge). For further acknowledgements, please see page 577. My thanks as ever go to those who have offered comments, criticisms and suggestions. These are extremely helpful and you are warmly invited to continue the feedback loop.

The RT Editorial Team (Mandy, Sue and Paul standing: Julie, Andrew and Jo seated)

Andrew Pollard
Institute of Education, University of London
January 2008
Introduction: Evidence-informed professionalism across the UK

The main aim of the Reflective Teaching handbook is to support trainee teachers, school mentors, university tutors and all teachers, however experienced, who wish to reflect upon the development of their skills, understanding and expertise in a systematic fashion. Together with its supplementary materials, Readings for Reflective Teaching and RTweb, we have tried to provide comprehensive support for the development of effective classroom practice. However, these resources are intended to be more than just a practical guide to the development of classroom expertise. The analysis and activities have been set within a framework that attempts to link classroom practice and research with current educational, political and social issues. This book thus offers a broad context – the context of the ‘extended professional’ – within which to reflect upon teaching.

In the contemporary world, the requirements which governments make of teacher education are very often reviewed and amended as national priorities change or powerful ideas ebb and flow. Such requirements are important, and each chapter in this handbook thus begins with illustrations of the ‘standards’ which apply in particular parts of the UK from 2008.

Of course, lying behind such standards are more enduring educational issues. The most significant of these issues are represented in the figure below (together with corresponding chapters within this book).
These issues do not change greatly over time and the process of engaging constructively with them is what makes teaching so interesting and challenging. Indeed, expertise comes from the gradual refinement of our understanding of how such issues relate together and can be managed to achieve good educational outcomes for children.
As is indicated in the figure, Reflective Teaching is structured by this model with the chapters providing comprehensive coverage to support professional engagement in a holistic way. The book thus has a strong conceptual foundation on which professional understanding can be confidently developed.

The model above has also been the organizing framework for the UK’s Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) (see www.tlrp.org), which Andrew Pollard directs on behalf of governments and agencies in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. TLRP is the UK’s largest coordinated educational research initiative but, more importantly, is firmly committed to research which is of both high quality and practical relevance. The active participation of practitioners and policy-makers has been a distinctive feature of the work. For example, TLRP’s contributions to contemporary thinking about teaching and learning are well represented in the development of ‘personalization’.

As England’s DfES put it:

Personalising learning means taking a more structured and responsive approach to each child’s learning, so that all pupils are able to progress, achieve and participate. This will be evident in high quality, challenging teaching that engages pupils and helps them to take ownership of their learning. Better assessment, whether of learning or for learning, will promote the progress of every child and young person. All children will experience an engaging curriculum that helps them to develop the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes they need to thrive throughout their lives. (2006c: p. 41)

Personalized learning came into vogue because of concern that an over-prescriptive National Curriculum and assessment system was stifling learner engagement and thus reducing achievement. In particular, personalization is also seen as a way of promoting inclusion, and thus social justice. ‘Soft skills’ for the ‘knowledge-based economies’ are also sought, including: knowing how to work with others in a team; knowing how to evaluate information critically; taking responsibility for, and being able to manage, one’s own learning and developing the habits of effective learning; knowing how to work independently without close supervision; being resilient in the face of difficulties; being creative, inventive, enterprising and entrepreneurial. As we will see within the book, TLRP has contributed strongly to the pedagogic drivers of personalized learning, as shown in the figure below.

In summary, the contemporary context is one in which a new commitment to authentic pupil learning has been developed and is being progressively implemented. We hope that this book will contribute to this endeavour.
In promoting evidence-informed professionalism, Reflective Teaching has always sought to offer the best of educational research to teachers in accessible ways – and this process continues in this edition. In particular, the book now highlights important findings through a dozen TLRP Research Briefings. The synergy with TLRP will be built on through further developments on RTweb and in future editions.

This book and its associated resources thus have extremely serious intentions and contemporary relevance. We wish to support the continuing development of high-quality professionals who can enhance pupil attainment, and we also want to support new teachers in understanding the contexts in which they work and the significance of what they do. Because teachers are concerned with citizens of the future, with life-chances, social inclusion and with the quality of children’s experiences in the present, they can never avoid value questions. Because they deal, from moment to moment, with a constant flow of dilemmas, they can never avoid the need to exercise professional judgement. Professionals in our rapidly developing new century thus need flexible and resilient approaches to continuing development.

It is exciting that the significance of evidence-informed professionalism and continuous professional development is now explicitly recognized across the UK. For example, in England, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) has introduced a new ‘progressive framework of standards’ ranging from Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) to Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs). As they put it:

The framework of standards is progressive, reflecting the progression expected of teachers as their professional attributes, knowledge and understanding and skills develop and they demonstrate increasing effectiveness in their roles. Post Threshold Teachers are able to act as role models for teaching and learning, make a distinctive contribution to raising standards across the school, continue to develop their expertise post threshold and provide regular coaching and mentoring to less experienced teachers. Excellent Teachers provide an exemplary...
model to others through their professional expertise, have a leading role in raising standards by supporting improvements in teaching practice and support and help their colleagues to improve their effectiveness and to address their development needs through highly effective coaching and mentoring. ASTs provide models of excellent and innovative teaching and use their skills to enhance teaching and learning by undertaking and leading school improvement activities and continuing professional development (CPD) for other teachers. They carry out developmental work across a range of workplaces and draw on the experience they gain elsewhere to improve practice in their own and other schools. (TDA, 2007, p. 3)

As we shall see, similar commitments to self-evaluative, evidence-informed professionalism are sustained in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

The development of General Teaching Councils in each part of the UK is another important development for evidence-informed professionalism. Scotland’s is the oldest, and was established in 1965. GTC Scotland’s principal aims are:

- to contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning
- to maintain and enhance professional standards in schools and colleges in collaboration with partners including teachers, employing authorities, teacher education institutions, parents and the Scottish Executive Department
- to be recognized as a voice and advocate for the teaching profession
- to contribute to the development of a world-class educational system in Scotland. (www.gtcs.org.uk, 2007)

The other three GTCs were set up following legislation in 1998 and, as their websites reveal, they have some similarly bold aspirations. The GTC for England: ‘provides an opportunity for teachers to shape the development of professional practice and policy, and to maintain and set professional standards’ (www.gtce.org.uk). The Council of GTC Wales aims to project: ‘an independent, representative and authoritative voice for the teaching profession in Wales and seeks to provide robust advice to the National Assembly and other organisations on teaching issues’ (www.gtcw.org.uk). The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) sees itself as an: ‘independent, self-regulatory body established to represent the professional interests of teachers’. As they continue: ‘The Council will offer a fresh and authoritative perspective on educational issues by drawing on the experience and knowledge of teachers. It will afford teachers the opportunity to contribute to, and shape, the future development of the profession in Northern Ireland’ (www.gtcni.org.uk).

One of the ways in which the GTCs are establishing their legitimacy as advocates for the profession is by drawing on and supporting research activity. There are also good, and growing, links with professional researchers – for example, the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) liaises with and works through each GTC. Of more significance, however, are the GTC’s efforts to promote research and reflective practice by teachers themselves. This
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is a key method of acquiring knowledge and building expertise and professional confidence. For example, the General Teaching Council for England sees research as: ‘a crucial source of theoretical and practical evidence on which public policy should be founded’. It supports teacher research through a Teacher Learning Academy, provides excellent summary reviews (Research of the Month) and selectively commissions its own projects including an annual survey of teacher views and experiences. Similarly, in Scotland, the GTC funds teachers to carry out detailed research on a specified range of issues within a rolling, annual programme and also provides a Teaching Scholarship Programme. In Wales, the GTC has provided a number of generous schemes for teacher research and development and leads a campaign to encourage innovative pedagogy. In Northern Ireland, a highlight of the GTC’s research support has been the establishment of an open repository (Access to Research Resources for Teachers, ARRT) to promote relevant educational research.

Of course, practitioner research on teaching and learning has a long history in the UK, with the influence of Lawrence Stenhouse in East Anglia being particularly significant. Today, it is supported by almost all education departments within higher education institutions, by many local education authorities, by numerous professional associations (both subject and phase based), and by government initiatives. The latter, however, are sometimes a little unpredictable, with considerable funds being made available at some points and a dearth of support at others. For example, recent English schemes include Best Practice Research Scholarships, School-based Research Consortia, Networked Learning Communities and the work of the National Teacher Research Panel. In Scotland, the Chartered Teacher Programme is a system-wide initiative and builds on the McCrone Report, A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century. An historic agreement between the Scottish Parliament, Executive, teaching profession, local authorities and higher education has established the Standard for Chartered Teacher (SCT) as a means of rewarding teachers who wish to remain in the classroom. The challenge is an excellent illustration of the principles of reflective teaching. As the Scottish Executive put it:

In every sphere of his or her work, the Chartered Teacher should be reviewing practice, searching for improvements, turning to reading and research for fresh insights and relating these to the classroom and school. These should be informed by those moral and social values which give point to education. (Scottish Executive, 2002, Chartered Teacher Programme for Scotland)

The point about moral and social values is important. When the first edition of this book was produced in the mid-1980s, Andrew Pollard and Sarah Tann recognized that all forms of action inevitably involve people in making judgements based on values and commitments – and this is certainly true for teachers. They therefore tried to offer a framework that recognized the necessity of professional judgements by individual teachers and yet was also

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informed by a set of value-commitments that would command widespread support in moral and ethical terms.

At a fundamental level, Pollard and Tann tried to emphasize the links between education, human rights and democracy. In this respect one can learn a great deal from looking at the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, which were both developed in the post-war years. Britain passed its Human Rights Act in 1998, which gave full effect to the Convention. The UK is also a signatory of the Council of Europe’s Special Educational Recommendation (1985) and it is worth citing some parts of this document here. For example, it states:

> The understanding and experience of human rights is an important element of the preparation of all young people for life in a democratic and pluralistic society. It is a part of social and political education, and it involves intercultural and international understanding. (1.1)

> The study of human rights in schools should lead to an understanding of, and sympathy for, the concepts of justice, equality, freedom, peace, dignity, rights and democracy. Such understanding should be both cognitive and based on experience and feelings. (3.3)

> During teacher education, trainees should be: ‘encouraged to take an interest in national and world affairs’ and ‘be taught to identify and combat all forms of discrimination in schools and society and be encouraged to confront and overcome their own prejudices’. (5.1)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child passed into international law in 1989. This provides children and young people with many fundamental protections, integrating economic and social rights indivisibly with civil and political entitlements. Article 12 is particularly interesting for teachers, since it recognizes each child’s right to express views and feelings on all matters affecting him or her, and to have those opinions taken into consideration (see Osler and Starkey, 2007, Reading 13.9, for more complete discussion of these issues).

Of course, a new approach to these issues has been very commendably made through recent English legislation under the umbrella title of ‘Every Child Matters’. This is concerned with the rights of children and young people in relation to:

- physical and mental health and emotional well-being – ‘be healthy’
- protection from harm and neglect – ‘stay safe’
- education, training and recreation – ‘enjoy and achieve’
- the contribution made by them to society – ‘make a positive contribution’
- social and economic well-being – ‘achieve economic well-being’.
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A major issue is with the coordination of services, and even reflective teachers with a commitment to ‘extended professionalism’ will be challenged. As DCSF put it:

All organisations involved with providing services to children – from hospitals and schools, to police and voluntary groups – will be teaming up in new ways, sharing information and working together, to protect children and young people from harm and help them achieve what they want in life. Children and young people will have far more say about issues that affect them as individuals and collectively. (www.everychildmatters.gov.uk, 2007)

Policies in the other countries of the UK reflect similar concerns and very helpfully make transparent the moral and social values which underpin the work of teachers and other professionals in providing multi-agency services. The work of a professional educator thus involves a heavy degree of social responsibility – and the potential for enormous personal fulfilment. We hope that this book and its supplementary resources will support readers to both improve their classroom effectiveness and realize their personal commitments.

This book has three parts. Part One is entitled ‘Becoming a Reflective Teacher’. It offers a rationale for the approach to professional development (Chapter 1) and an account of key issues for trainees and mentors (Chapter 2). It concludes with a review and examination of ways of gathering evidence in classrooms (Chapter 3).

Part Two, ‘Being a Reflective Teacher’, represents the practical core of the book. Each chapter is devoted to a particular aspect of the teaching-learning process. Each has the same structure: a significant issue is discussed, reflective activities for classroom investigation are presented, follow-up points are suggested and selective guidance for further reading is given. Supplementary resources in Readings and RTweb are indicated.

As we saw above, the issues selected in Part Two are basic to classroom life: the context and the circumstances of teachers and pupils (Chapter 4); values and the identity of teachers and pupils (Chapter 5); classroom relationships (Chapter 6); considering how children and young people learn (Chapter 7); reviewing curriculum and subject knowledge (Chapter 8); specific planning of what to teach (Chapter 9); organizing a classroom (Chapter 10); behaviour management (Chapter 11); the characteristics of classroom communication (Chapter 12); classroom teaching strategies (Chapter 13); assessment issues (Chapter 14); social inclusion and the consequences of classroom practice (Chapter 15).

Part Three looks ‘Beyond Classroom Reflection’ to consider reflective teaching and innovation as whole-school issues. We begin with guidance on learning as a newly qualified teacher (Chapter 16), before moving to consider the context of schools more generally and, in particular, continuing professional development (Chapter 17). The book concludes with consideration of the role and responsibilities of reflective teachers in society (Chapter 18).
Part One

BECOMING A REFLECTIVE TEACHER
Reflective teaching

1 Dilemmas, reflection and effectiveness

1.1 Dilemmas and challenges in classroom life (p. 6)

1.2 Reflection and evidence-informed practice (p. 8)

1.3 Standards for classroom effectiveness and career development (p. 11)

2 The meaning of reflective teaching

2.1 Aims and consequences (p. 15)

2.2 A cyclical process (p. 17)

2.3 Gathering and evaluating evidence (p. 18)

2.4 Attitudes towards teaching (p. 19)

2.5 Teacher judgement (p. 21)

2.6 Learning with colleagues (p. 24)

2.7 Reflective teaching as creative mediation (p. 25)

Conclusion (p. 26)
Enhancing professional standards and competences

Reflective activity makes a powerful contribution to the learning of many professionals – engineers, doctors and nurses, police officers, architects and lawyers, to name but a few. The same benefits are being used to enhance the quality of teaching across the UK.

For example, the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland, who are responsible for teacher education competences, puts it like this:

Those who are honoured with the title and status of teacher will be knowledgeable, skillful and reflective practitioners who will be concerned with the purposes and consequences of education, as well as what might be called technical proficiency. The concept of a reflective and activist practitioner is predicated upon the notion of the teacher as a moral agent and an informed, knowledgeable practitioner. (GTC NI, 2007, Teaching: the Reflective Profession, pp. 9–10)

In England, the key document which led towards the 2007 framework for performance management of teachers explained:

We want to encourage teachers, as reflective practitioners, to think about what they do well, to reflect on what they could share with colleagues, as well as identifying their own learning needs. (DfEE, 2001a, Continuing Professional Development, p. 12)

And the TDA’s 2006 definition of continuing professional development for teachers states:

CPD consists of reflective activity designed to improve an individual’s attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills. It supports individual needs and improves professional practice. (TDA, 2006, Continuing Professional Development: a strategy for Teachers, Annex A)

Reflection is then, a fundamental process in enhancing professional development. The concept also has strong roots in the teacher education systems of Scotland and Wales. For example, all Scottish initial teacher education courses are required to enable students to:

Reflect on and act to improve the effectiveness of their own practice and contribute to the processes of curriculum development and school development planning. (QAA, 2006, Standards for ITE in Scotland, 2.4.3)

Scotland’s Chartered Teachers extend this further again:

In every sphere of his or her work the Chartered Teacher will be reviewing practice, searching for improvements, turning to reading and research for fresh insights, and relating these to the classroom and the school. He or she will bring to his or her work more sophisticated forms of critical scrutiny, demonstrate a heightened capacity for self-evaluation, and a marked disposition to be innovative and to improvise. (Scottish Executive, 2002, Chartered Teacher Programme for Scotland)
Introduction

This book is based on the belief that teaching is a complex and highly skilled activity which, above all, requires classroom teachers to exercise judgement in deciding how to act. High-quality teaching, and thus pupil learning, is dependent on the existence of such professional expertise.

The process of reflective teaching supports the development and maintenance of professional expertise. We can conceptualize successive levels of expertise in teaching – those that student-teachers may attain at the beginning, middle and end of their courses; those of the new teacher after their induction to full-time school life; and those of the experienced, expert teacher. Given the nature of teaching, professional development and learning should never stop.

The process of reflection thus feeds a constructive spiral of professional development and capability (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 The spiral of professional development

Reflective teaching should be personally fulfilling for teachers, but also lead to a steady increase in the quality of the education provided for children. Indeed, because it is evidence based, reflective practice supports initial training students, newly qualified teachers, teaching assistants and experienced professionals in satisfying performance standards and competences. Additionally, as we shall see, the concept of reflective teaching draws particular attention to the aims, values and social consequences of education (see also Reading 1.5).

This chapter has two main parts. The first introduces some of the dilemmas which teachers and teaching assistants face and key issues surrounding evidence-based practice, professional standards and competences. In the second part, seven major characteristics of reflective teaching are identified and discussed.

RTweb also provides resources which supplement this chapter, such as a Compendium of terms, issues, organizations and legislation.
1 Dilemmas, reflection and effectiveness

1.1 Dilemmas and challenges in classroom life

The complicated nature of educational issues and the practical demands of classroom teaching ensure that a teacher’s work is never finished. When practicalities, performance standards, personal ideals and wider educational concerns are considered together, the job of reconciling the numerous requirements and possible conflicts may seem to be overwhelming. As a Key Stage 1 teacher explained to us:

I love my work but it’s a constant struggle to keep it all going. If I focus on one thing I have to neglect another. For instance, if I talk to a group or to a particular child then I have to keep an eye on what the others are doing; if I hear someone read then I can’t be in position to extend other children’s language when opportunities arise; if I put out clay then I haven’t got room for painting; if I go to evening courses then I can’t prepare as well for the next day; if I spend time with my family then I worry about my class but if I rush around collecting materials or something then I feel guilty for neglecting the family. It’s not easy . . . but I wouldn’t do any thing else.

Such dilemmas are frequently expressed – not only by experienced teachers, but even more by student-teachers.

One excellent analysis of the difficult dilemmas which teachers face has been provided by Berlak and Berlak (1981, Reading 1.3). The framework that they developed is a simple but very powerful one. Its strength derives from the fact that, although they studied only three schools in detail, they took great care to relate their analysis of the dilemmas which arose in the ‘micro’ world of the classroom to the major factors, beliefs and influences in society as a whole. Such factors, they argued, influence, structure and constrain the actions of teachers, children and parents. However, they do not do so in ways which are consistent, because of existing complexities and contradictions – hence the dilemmas which have to be faced. The resolution of such dilemmas calls for teachers to use professional judgement to assess the most appropriate course of action in any particular situation.

But what are the major dilemmas that have to be faced? Figure 1.2 presents a version of many of them and merits some study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective teaching</th>
<th>Common dilemmas faced by teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treating each child as a ‘whole person’</td>
<td>Treating each child primarily as a ‘pupil’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing the children on an individual basis</td>
<td>Organizing the children as a class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving children a degree of control over their use of time, their activities and their work standards</td>
<td>Tightening control over children’s use of time, their activities and their work standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking to motivate the children through intrinsic involvement and enjoyment of activities</td>
<td>Offering reasons and rewards so that children are extrinsically motivated to tackle tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and negotiating topic-based curriculum from an appreciation of children’s particular interests</td>
<td>Providing a subject curriculum which children are deemed to need and which ‘society’ expects them to receive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempting to integrate curriculum subjects to increase meaningful coherence</td>
<td>Dealing systematically with each discrete subject of the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiming for quality in schoolwork</td>
<td>Aiming for quantity in schoolwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on basic skills or on cognitive development</td>
<td>Focusing on expressive or creative areas of the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to build up cooperative and social skills</td>
<td>Developing self-reliance and self-confidence in individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inducting the children into a common culture</td>
<td>Affirming the variety of cultures in a multi-ethnic society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocating teacher time, attention and resources equally among all the children</td>
<td>Paying attention to the special needs of particular children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining consistent rules and understandings about behaviour and schoolwork</td>
<td>Being flexible and responsive to particular situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting oneself formally to the children</td>
<td>Relaxing with the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with ‘professional’ application and care for the children</td>
<td>Working with consideration of one’s personal needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This book is intended to provide a practical guide to ways of reflecting on such issues and it offers strategies and advice for developing the necessary classroom expertise to resolve them.

1.2 Reflection and evidence-informed practice

There has been considerable discussion in recent years about the use of ‘evidence’ to inform educational practices (Readings 3.3, 3.2). Could this help to improve children’s learning and resolve endemic classroom dilemmas?

Some policy-makers emphasize the value of performance or benchmark evidence, such as assessment, inspection, or intake data, to challenge existing thinking. Indeed, there is regular publication of performance and inspection evidence across the system from the government departments of Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England.

Others suggest that large-scale scientific studies should be combined with systematic reviews of research to determine ‘what works’, with conclusions being passed down to teachers. The research centre for Evidence-Informed Policy and Practice in Education (www.eppi.ioe.ac.uk) systematically searches and reviews available evidence. A database of Current Educational Research in the United Kingdom has been established (www.ceruk.ac.uk) and the Economic and Social Research Council now has dedicated web provision for education (www.esrc.ac.uk). The GTCE’s ‘Research of the Month’ interprets high-quality research for teacher application.

Many educationalists, however, promote direct professional involvement in classroom enquiry, so that teachers take control of their own research and development. The latter, as we will see in Chapter 3, builds on the long tradition of action research which was established by Lawrence Stenhouse (Reading 3.1). The General Teaching Councils in each part of the UK are particular advocates of this sort of work. Indeed, the new Northern Ireland GTC is actively supporting teacher research on its website and encouraging the professional community to ‘take ownership’ of the activity; the English institution is actively promoting teacher research (see above), and the Scottish GTC has been supporting professional development since 1966. In Wales, the GTC(W) has been awarded significant funds to promote professional development and teacher research, and is emerging as a significant voice for teachers. The Welsh minister for many years, Jane Davidson, was also a strong supporter of TLRP’s role in supporting pedagogic innovation.
Minister Jane Davidson launched TLRP research within Wales (seen here with Andrew Pollard and Bob Burgess)

Of course, these approaches can helpfully complement each other. For example, in England, the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) promote all three. For example, TeacherNet provides an excellent focal point for research to support practitioners (www.teachernet.gov.uk) and the Teacher Training Resource Bank offers helpful reviews of all kinds of research (www.ttrb.ac.uk). ‘Research Digests’ are available from the DCSF Standards website (www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/research). More specifically, the Teaching and Learning Research Programme has produced User Summaries and Practitioner Applications for its major school findings (www.tlrp.org).

Taking stock overall, there is now considerable support for the use of evidence, in many forms, for the improvement of classroom and school practices. But how should this commitment be implemented?

In reviewing overall provision in England, the government agency for teacher training advised that effective teachers should:

- know how to find and interpret existing, high quality evidence from a range of sources, such as research reports, other schools’ experience, OFSTED inspection and performance data as a tool for raising standards;
- see professional development, which includes elements of research, as a means of improving classroom practice and raising standards, rather than as an end in itself;
Reflective Teaching

- see pedagogy as integral to learning;
- interpret external evidence confidently, in relation to pupil or subject needs, rather than viewing it as a threat;
- accept that systematic enquiry into specific elements of teaching is a hard but crucial component of continuing professional development – and a key to raising the esteem in which the profession is held;
- be seen as equal partners with academic researchers in the process of producing evidence about teaching and in using it to raise standards (TTA, Improving Standards through Evidence-based Teaching, 2000).

The model at Figure 1.3 summarizes the relationship between classroom practice and enquiry. It suggests that a practical problem in the classroom can helpfully be considered in terms of the issues which might underlie it. Some careful thinking might help! As we saw earlier in the chapter, this foregrounds an appreciation of classroom dilemmas – the challenge of deciding what to do when there are a number of competing possibilities. The essence of professionalism in teaching is being able to make high-quality judgements, and Figure 1.3 shows how evidence from classroom enquiry and other research sources can enhance such judgements. This is the core argument being presented by the UK General Teaching Councils, and is accepted as a driver of continuing professional development across the world.

Figure 1.3 Evidence-informed practice

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For example, pupils’ inappropriate classroom behaviour might result in an immediate, angry response from a teacher to assert control. However, later reflection might promote consideration of a number of possible longer-term issues. Are teacher–pupil relationships beginning to go awry for some reason? Do the children respect teacher authority and accept his or her actions as fair? Is the curriculum engaging the children, or causing them to become bored? Are the lessons well planned, offering focus, interest, progression and successful learning experiences? Each of these topics, and others, could merit further investigation through classroom enquiry.

Reflective professionals should thus be able to draw on, or contribute to, many sources of evidence, and use them to inform their teaching practices. However, we should note and emphasize, that a simple or direct translation of findings into action is not wise. This is because there are so many variables involved in teaching and learning, and direct ‘cause and effect’ findings rarely stand up to scrutiny. Simplistic answers to the question ‘What works?’ are thus unlikely to be secure, and professional judgement will remain a highly significant filter in interpreting the significance of research evidence for particular pupils or classroom contexts.

1.3 Standards for classroom effectiveness and career development

In recent years, competency criteria and latterly ‘standards’ have been set by governments in many countries to provide a framework for teacher training and further professional development. For instance, those for Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England are set out on their respective agency websites (see RTweb for links). We have drawn on this to highlight the relevance of each chapter of the book and a guide to QTS standards in each country is included on page 537 of this book.

The evolution of such standards can take a considerable time. For example, in 2000 the English DfEE began to consult on a new national framework for professional development through all career stages. As they put it:

We believe that it would be helpful for teachers if we set out the standards of practice most teachers already aspire to in a national framework which all new and existing professionals could use to monitor progress and aid the planning of their professional development. The framework would map out the progression possible in a teacher’s career, such as induction, passing the performance threshold and Advanced Skills Teacher, in terms of the skills and characteristics that they should expect to demonstrate at each point. The framework would also include the qualities needed for middle management roles such as subject leadership and the way these would develop for school leadership and headship. (DfEE, 2000b, p. 7)
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By 2007, following many further stages of consultation with teachers, school leaders and teacher education providers, the new framework took effect. The framework defines the professional attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills of teachers at five, progressive career stages:

- **Q** – qualified teacher status (QTS)
- **C** – core standards for mainscale teachers who have successfully completed their induction
- **P** – post-threshold teachers on the upper pay scale
- **E** – excellent teachers
- **A** – advanced skills teachers (ASTs)

The standards are the ‘top level’ statutory framework for continuing professional development and performance management as well as for initial teacher training. However, in setting out the characteristics of teachers at each career stage, they do not prescribe the ways in which training and support for professional development should be provided. At a second level, the TDA is expected to issue non-statutory guidance on areas such as assessment of the standards and partnerships between higher education institutions and schools. A third, more applied, level consists of exemplars of good practice produced by providers and training schools. Such resources include this book, its accompanying Readings and internet site, RTweb, with their supplementary resources and ideas providing support on a chapter-by-chapter, topic-by-topic basis.

The provision in England thus takes the form of a pyramid, with a set of statutory requirements at the top, followed by non-statutory guidance on certain areas and then a large base of resources and examples of good practice. There is enormous scope here for high-quality reflective practice.

Broad standards and competences are helpful in defining goals for students, mentors, headteachers, tutors and others who are engaged in initial teacher education. They can:

- set out clear expectations for teachers at key points in the profession
- help teachers at different points in the profession to plan and monitor their development, training and performance effectively, and to set clear, relevant objectives for improving their effectiveness
- ensure that the focus at every point is on improving the achievement of pupils and the quality of their education
- provide a basis for the professional recognition of teachers’ expertise.

However, we need to be clear about the status of such models and criteria (BERA, 2001). The requirements described above (and, in more detail, at the start of each chapter in this book) set out the skills, knowledge and understanding which have been deemed to be appropriate
for teachers in the particular context of England in the year 2007. However, those required where a centralized National Curriculum and legally defined assessment procedures exist may well differ from those which are called for where teachers and schools are more engaged with a greater degree of partnership (as, for instance, in Northern Ireland and Scotland). Those called for where class sizes are high and resources scarce (as in many parts of the world) may vary from those needed when much smaller classes or groups are taught with good access to equipment. In particular, the standards required in 2007 are unlikely to remain constant. To illustrate this point, it is interesting to consider the requirements made of apprenticed ‘pupil teachers’ in England almost 160 years ago.

**Figure 1.4** Regulations respecting the education of pupil teachers, 1846

_ Regulations respecting the education of pupil teachers.
_ Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education. 1846.
_ Qualifications of candidates:
  - To be at least 13 years of age.
  - To not be subject to any bodily infirmity likely to impair their usefulness.
  - To have a certificate of moral character.
  - To read with fluency, ease and expression.
  - To write in a neat hand with correct spelling and punctuation, a simple prose narrative read to them.
  - To write from dictation sums in the first four rules of arithmetic, simple and compound: to work them correctly, and to know the table of weights and measures.
  - To point out the parts of speech in a simple sentence.
  - To have an elementary knowledge of geography.
  - To repeat the Catechism and to show that they understand its meaning and are acquainted with the outline of Scripture history. (Where working in schools connected with the Church of England only.)
  - To teach a junior class to the satisfaction of the inspector.
  - Girls should always be able to sew neatly and to knit.

We have to remember then, that officially endorsed standards are historically and contextually specific. Despite the moderating influence of available research, they are likely to be strongly influenced by the cultures, values and the priorities of decision-makers who happen to be in power at the time of their construction. In the case of teacher development in England, the present framework for professional standards describes the particular formulation of skills, knowledge and understanding which has been deemed appropriate for the particular time and
circumstances. During a 40-year career, a teacher is likely to experience many such systems, and historical or comparative reflection will help keep them in perspective. Indeed, Hay McBer’s influential report on teacher effectiveness cautioned against over-conformity when they emphasized that ‘teachers are not clones’ and asserted that professionals always have to use their judgement about circumstances, pupils, contexts and teaching approaches (2000, para. 1.1.4). This, of course, is an important element of reflective and evidence-informed teaching.

In summary, our view is that evidence-informed reflection makes an important contribution throughout professional life. Novice teachers, such as those in initial teacher training, may use it to improve on specific and immediate practical teaching skills. Competent teachers, such as those who are newly qualified, may use reflection as a means of self-consciously increasing understanding and capability, thus moving towards a more complete level of professionalism (Calderhead and Gates, 1993, Reading 2.4). Expert teachers, such as those who have passed more advanced competency standards thresholds, will work at a higher level, understanding the various issues concerning children, curriculum, classroom and school so well that many decisions become almost intuitive. Reflective activity makes an important contribution throughout a professional career.

2 The meaning of reflective teaching

The concept of reflective teaching stems from Dewey (1933, Reading 1.1) who contrasted ‘routine action’ with ‘reflective action’. According to Dewey routine action is guided by factors such as tradition, habit and authority and by institutional definitions and expectations. By implication it is relatively static and is thus unresponsive to changing priorities and circumstances. Reflective action, on the other hand, involves a willingness to engage in constant self-appraisal and development. Among other things, it implies flexibility, rigorous analysis and social awareness.

Dewey’s notion of reflective action, when developed and applied to teaching, is both challenging and exciting. In this section, we review its implications by identifying and discussing what we have identified as seven key characteristics of reflective practice. These are:

1. Reflective teaching implies an active concern with aims and consequences, as well as means and technical efficiency.
2. Reflective teaching is applied in a cyclical or spiralling process, in which teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously.
3. Reflective teaching requires competence in methods of evidence-based classroom enquiry, to support the progressive development of higher standards of teaching.
4. Reflective teaching requires attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness.

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Reflective teaching is based on teacher judgement, informed by evidence-based enquiry and insights from other research.

Reflective teaching, professional learning and personal fulfilment are enhanced through collaboration and dialogue with colleagues.

Reflective teaching enables teachers to creatively mediate externally developed frameworks for teaching and learning.

Each of these characteristics will now be considered more fully.

### 2.1 Aims and consequences

Reflective teaching implies an active concern with aims and consequences as well as means and technical competence.

This issue relates first to the immediate aims and consequences of classroom practice for these are any teacher’s prime responsibility. However, classroom work cannot be isolated from the influence of the wider society and a reflective teacher must therefore consider both spheres.

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An example from the history of educational policy-making in England will illustrate the way in which changes outside schools influence actions within them. Following the initiation of a ‘Great Debate’ by Prime Minister Callaghan (1976) many of the ‘taken-for-granted’ s in education were progressively challenged during the 1980s and 1990s. Successive Conservative governments introduced far-reaching and cumulative changes in all spheres of education. Many of these reforms were opposed by professional organizations (see for example, Haviland, 1988 and Arnot and Barton, 1992) but with no noticeable effect on political decision-making (see also Reading 18.4). Indeed, the allegation was made that educational policy was being influenced by a closed system of beliefs – an ‘ideology’ deriving from a small number of right-wing politicians and pressure groups. Meanwhile, teachers and pupils worked to implement the new forms of curriculum, assessment, accountability, management and control which had been introduced, despite the fact that the profession at the time was largely opposed to the principles on which the reforms were based (see Osborn et al., 2000; Pollard et al., 1994, Reading 18.5).

Such a stark example of the contestation of aims and values in education raises questions concerning the relationship between professionals, parents and policy-makers. It is possible to start from the seemingly uncontroversial argument that, in a democratic society, decisions about the aims of education should be ‘democratically’ determined. However, it has also been suggested (White, 1978) that teachers should adopt a role as active ‘interpreters’ of political policy. Indeed, that most teachers accept this argument is shown by the way in which they have implemented legislation even when they did not support it – though in the 1990s an unusual number of teachers in England did leave the profession. More recently, Bramall and White (2000) analysed the National Curriculum 2000 and suggested that, whilst there are explicit aims and a rationale, these may not be ‘owned by’ teachers and may not relate to the operationalization of these in the actual curriculum. Indeed, there may be a gap between the ‘official’ rationale of the National Curriculum and the day-to-day experience of many classroom teachers – a problem that reflective teachers may wish to address.

These kinds of stance are very different from the idea of the autonomous professional with which many teachers once identified. Yet it can be argued that the existence of unconstrained autonomy is only reasonable and practical if ends, aims and values are completely uncontroversial. However, as soon as questions about educational aims and social values are seriously raised then the position changes. In a democratic society, the debate appropriately extends to the political domain and this, of course, is what has happened in recent years.

This does not mean though, that teachers, even as interpreters of policy, should simply ‘stand by’ in the procedure. Indeed, there are two important roles that they can play. In the case of the first, an appropriate metaphor for the teacher’s role is, as both White (1978) and Sachs (2003) have suggested, that of ‘activist’. This recognizes that primary-school teachers are individual members of society who, within normal political processes, have rights to pursue their values and beliefs as guided by their own individual moral and ethical concerns. They should thus
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be as active as they wish to be in contributing to the formation of public policy. Second, whilst accepting a responsibility for translating politically determined aims into practice, teachers should speak out, as they have done in the past, if they view particular aims and policies as being professionally impracticable, educationally unsound or morally questionable. In such circumstances the professional experience, knowledge and judgements of teachers should be brought to bear on policy-makers directly – whether or not the policy-makers wish for or act on the advice which is offered (for interesting developments of this argument, see Thompson, 1997). Indeed, it is important that, within a modern democratic society, teachers should be entitled to not only a hearing, but also some influence, on educational policy. Professional and subject associations, such as the Association for the Study of Primary Education (ASPE) and the Geographical Association (GA) together with the General Teaching Councils of each part of the UK, provide collective forms of organization for such voices. However, in recent years, teacher unions such as the NUT, ATL and NAHT have undoubtedly been the most effective in making their voices heard.

The reflective teacher should thus be aware of the political process and of its legitimate oversight of public educational services. They should also be willing to contribute to it both as a citizen and as a professional (see also Section 2.7 of this chapter and Reading 1.4 on ‘creative mediation’, and Chapter 18 for activity beyond the school).

2.2 A cyclical process

Reflective teaching is applied in a cyclical or spiralling process, in which teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously.

This characteristic refers to the process of reflective teaching and provides the dynamic basis for teacher action. The conception of a classroom-based, reflexive process stems from the teacher-based, action–research movement of which Lawrence Stenhouse was a key figure. He argued (1975, Reading 3.1) that teachers should act as ‘researchers’ of their own practice and should develop the curriculum through practical enquiry. Various alternative models have since become available (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Elliott, 1996; McNiff and Whitehead, 2006) and, although there are some significant differences in these models, they all preserve a central concern with self-monitoring and reflection (see also Pring, 2000, Reading 3.2).

Teachers are principally expected to plan, make provision and act. Reflective teachers also need to monitor, observe and collect data on their own and the children’s intentions, actions and feelings. This evidence then needs to be critically analysed and evaluated so that it can be shared, judgements made and decisions taken. Finally, this may lead the teacher to revise his or her classroom policies, plans and provision before beginning the process again. It is a dynamic process which is intended to lead through successive cycles, or through a spiralling process, towards higher-quality standards of teaching. This model is simple, comprehensive.
and certainly could be an extremely powerful influence on practice. It is consistent with the notion of reflective teaching, as described by Dewey, and provides an essential clarification of the procedures for reflective teaching.

Figure 1.5 represents the key stages of the reflective process.

**Figure 1.5** The process of reflective teaching

### 2.3 Gathering and evaluating evidence

Reflective teaching requires competence in methods of evidence-based classroom enquiry, to support the progressive development of higher standards of teaching.

We can identify four key skills here; reviewing relevant, existing research, gathering new evidence, and analysis and evaluation, each of which contributes to the cyclical process of reflection (see Section 2.2). Drawing on the experience of colleagues receives particular attention in Section 2.6.

*Reviewing relevant, existing research.* The issue here is to learn as much as possible from others. Published research on the issue of concern, from teachers or from professional researchers, may be reviewed. Internet-based search techniques make this an increasingly
Reflective teaching requires attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility and whole-heartedness.

Open-mindedness. As Dewey put it, open-mindedness is:

An active desire to listen to more sides than one, to give heed to facts from whatever source they come, to give full attention to alternative possibilities, to recognise the possibility of error even in the beliefs which are dearest to us.

(Dewey, 1933, p. 29)

Open-mindedness is an essential attribute for rigorous reflection because any sort of enquiry that is consciously based on partial evidence, only weakens itself. We thus use the concept in the sense of being willing to reflect upon ourselves and to challenge our own assumptions,
Reflective Teaching

prejudices and ideologies, as well as those of others. However, to be open-minded regarding evidence and its interpretation is not the same thing as declining to take up a value-position on important social and educational issues. This point brings us to the second attribute which Dewey saw as a prerequisite to reflective action – ‘responsibility’.

Responsibility. Intellectual responsibility, according to Dewey, means:

To consider the consequences of a projected step; it means to be willing to adopt these consequences when they follow reasonably . . . Intellectual responsibility secures integrity.
(Dewey, 1933, p. 30)

The position implied here is clearly related to the question of aims that we discussed above. However, in Dewey’s writing the issue is relatively clearly bounded and he seems to be referring to classroom teaching and to school practices only. Zeichner (1981/2) takes this considerably further. Moral, ethical and political issues will be raised and must, he argues, be considered so that professional and personal judgements can be made about what is worthwhile. It clearly follows that a simple instrumental approach to teaching is not consistent with a reflective social awareness (see also Reading 1.5).

Wholeheartedness. ‘Wholeheartedness’, the third of Dewey’s necessary attitudes, refers essentially to the way in which such consideration takes place. Dewey’s suggestion was that reflective teachers should be dedicated, single-minded, energetic and enthusiastic. As he put it:

There is no greater enemy of effective thinking than divided interest . . . A genuine enthusiasm is an attitude that operates as an intellectual force. When a person is absorbed, the subject carries him on.
(Dewey, 1933, p. 30)

Together, these three attitudes are vital ingredients of the professional commitment that needs to be demonstrated by all those who aim to be reflective teachers.

In modern circumstances, these attitudes of open-mindedness, wholeheartedness and responsibility are often challenged, and the morale of many teachers has been low in recent years. Halpin (2001) argues that maintaining ‘intelligent hope’ and imagining future possibilities are essential for committed educationalists. Beyond simple optimism, this requires ‘a way of thinking about the present and the future that is permeated by critique, particularly of the kind that holds up to external scrutiny taken-for-granted current circumstances’ (p. 117). Maintaining a constructive engagement, a willingness to imagine new futures, and a self-critical spirit are thus all connected to reflective practice.

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2.5 Teacher judgement

Reflective teaching is based on teacher judgement, informed by evidence-based enquiry and insights from other research.

Teachers’ knowledge has often been criticized. For instance, Bolster (1983) carried out an analysis of teachers as classroom decision-makers and suggested that, since teacher knowledge is specific and pragmatic, it is resistant to development. Bolster argued that teacher knowledge is based on individual experiences and is simply believed to be of value if it ‘works’ in practical situations. However, this gives little incentive to change, even in the light of evidence supporting alternative ideas or practices. On this analysis there is little need for teacher judgement, since teachers will stick to routinized practices.

For an alternative view we can draw on Donald Schon’s work (Schon, 1983, Reading 1.2) on the characteristics of ‘reflective practitioners’. Schon contrasted ‘scientific’ professional work such as laboratory research, with ‘caring’ professional work such as education. He called the former ‘high hard ground’ and saw it as supported by quantitative and ‘objective’ evidence. On the other hand, the ‘swampy lowlands’ of the caring professions involve more interpersonal areas and qualitative issues. These complex ‘lowlands’, according to Schon, tend to become ‘confusing messes’ of intuitive action. He thus suggested that, although
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such ‘messes’ tend to be highly relevant in practical terms, they are not easily amenable to rigorous analysis because they draw on a type of knowledge-in-action – knowledge that is inherent in professional action. It is spontaneous, intuitive, tacit and intangible but, it ‘works’ in practice.

Schon also argued that it is possible to recognize ‘reflection-in-action’, in which adjustments to action are made through direct experience. As he put it:

When someone reflects-in-action, he [sic] becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case. He does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he frames a problematic situation. He does not separate thinking from action . . . His experimenting is a kind of action, implementation is built into his enquiry.

(Schon, 1983, p. 68)

Such ideas have received powerful empirical support in recent years, with the sophistication of teachers’ classroom thinking and ‘craft knowledge’ being increasingly recognized and understood by both researchers (Elbaz, 1983; Calderhead, 1988b; Olson, 1991; Cortazzi, 1990, Reading 5.2; Brown and McIntyre, 1992) and policy-makers (TTA, 2000). It is clear that effective teachers make use of judgements all the time, as they adapt their teaching to the ever-changing learning challenges which their circumstances and pupils present to them. In recent years, there has also been much greater recognition of the role of intuition in the work of experienced teachers (Atkinson and Claxton, 2000; Tomlinson, 1999a, b) and decision-making. Nevertheless, one of the most exciting policy developments of recent years is the way in which forms of evidence-informed practice are being encouraged to support continuing professional improvement (DfEE, 2001a).

Educational researchers’ knowledge has also often been criticized. Most of this derives from work undertaken by former teachers who have moved into academia. It may be based on comparative, historical or philosophical research, on empirical study with large samples of classrooms, teachers, pupils or schools, on innovative methodologies, or on developing theoretical analyses (see Chapter 3, Section 3). Additionally, many researchers regard it as their duty to probe, analyse and evaluate – particularly with regard to the impact of policy – even though this is not always popular with governments! Whatever its character, such educational research has the potential to complement, contextualize and enhance the detailed and practical understandings of practising teachers.

In recent years, considerable effort has been made to improve the relevance, significance and impact of educational research, and to engage with practitioners and policy-makers. Indeed, the best work is of very high quality and is an important source of ideas and evidence on teaching, learning, policy and practice. Over 130 selections of such work are provided in Readings and further advice on relevant publications (with regular updates) is offered.
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through RTweb’s Notes for Further Reading. For ease of use, this material is organized using the chapter headings of the text of this book.

Politicians’ knowledge of education has also often been criticized – and some will feel that this is an understatement! However, governments have a democratic mandate and are appropriately concerned to ensure that educational services meet national needs. Teachers would thus be unjustified if they ignored the views of politicians, though independence, experience, judgement and expertise remain the defining characteristics of professionalism. Indeed, where politicians’ views appear to be influenced by fashionable whims, media panics or party considerations rather than established educational needs, then a certain amount of ‘professional mediation’ may be entirely justified (see Section 2.7).

Taken as a whole, we strongly advocate attempts to maximize the potential for collaboration between teachers, researchers and politicians. For such collaboration to be successful it must be based on a frank appreciation of each other’s strengths and weaknesses. Whilst recognizing the danger of unjustified generalization, we therefore identify these strengths and weaknesses (see Figure 1.6).

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers’ knowledge</td>
<td>Often practically relevant and directly useful</td>
<td>May be impressionistic and can lack rigour</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Often communicated effectively to practitioners</td>
<td>Usually based in particular situations which limits generalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Often concerned with the wholeness of classroom processes and experiences</td>
<td>Analysis is sometimes over-influenced by existing assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers’ knowledge</td>
<td>May be based on careful research with large samples and reliable methods</td>
<td>Often uses jargon unnecessarily and communicates poorly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Often provides a clear and inclusive analysis when studied</td>
<td>Often seems obscure and difficult to relate to practical issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Often offers novel ways of looking at situations and issues</td>
<td>Often fragments educational processes and experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians’ knowledge</td>
<td>Often responsive to issues of public concern</td>
<td>Often over-influenced by short-term political considerations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May have a democratic mandate</td>
<td>Often reflects party-political positions rather than educational needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May be backed by institutional, financial and legal resources</td>
<td>Is often imposed and may thus lack legitimacy</td>
</tr>
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Figure 1.6 A comparison of teachers’, researchers’ and politicians’ knowledge
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We arrive then, at a position that calls for attempts to draw on the strengths of the knowledge of teachers, researchers and politicians or policy-makers. By doing this, we may overcome the weaknesses which exist in each position. This is what we mean by the statement that reflective teaching should be based on ‘informed teacher judgement’. The implied collaborative endeavour underpins this whole book.

2.6 Learning with colleagues

Reflective teaching, professional learning and personal fulfilment are enhanced through collaboration and dialogue with colleagues

The value of engaging in reflective activity is almost always enhanced if it can be carried out in association with other colleagues, be they trainees, teaching assistants, teachers or tutors. The circumstances in primary schools, with very high proportions of contact-time with children, have constrained a great deal of such educational discussion in the past – though this is gradually changing as whole-school professional development assumes a greater priority. On teacher-education courses, despite the pressure of curricular requirements, reflection together in seminars, tutor groups and workshops, at college or in school, should bring valuable opportunities to share and compare, support and advise in reciprocal ways.

Wherever and whenever it occurs, collaborative, reflective discussion capitalizes on the social nature of learning (Vygotsky, 1978, Reading 7.3). This is as significant for adults as it is for children (see Chapter 7) and it works through many of the same basic processes. Aims are thus clarified, experiences are shared, language and concepts for analysing practice are refined, the personal insecurities of innovation are reduced, evaluation becomes reciprocal and commitments are affirmed. Moreover, openness, activity and discussion gradually weave the values and self of individuals into the culture and mission of the school or course. This can be both personally fulfilling and educationally effective (Kohl, 1986; Nias, 1989, Reading 5.1).

Recently, when the development of coherence and progression in school policies and practice have become of enormous importance, collaborative work is also a necessity. At one level, it is officially endorsed by the requirement to produce ‘school development plans’, a process which has been seen as ‘empowering’ (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991; see Chapter 17). More detailed work on the nature of primary-school cultures and the development of the ‘intelligent school’, whilst affirming the enormous value of whole-school staff teams working and learning together, has also shown the complexity and fragility of the process (MacGilchrist et al., 2004; Southworth, Nias and Campbell, 1992, Reading 17.2). Beyond schools, the development of Networked Learning Communities and other forms of web-supported activity are very exciting – though not always sustained. Professional, subject and phase-based associations, together with the four UK General Teaching Councils, often provide important opportunities for collaborative work.

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Whatever their circumstances, reflective teachers are likely to benefit from working, experimenting, talking, and reflecting with others. Apart from the benefits for learning and professional development, it is usually both more interesting and more fun!

2.7 Reflective teaching as creative mediation

Reflective teaching enables teachers to creatively mediate externally developed frameworks for teaching and learning.

‘Creative mediation’ involves the interpretation of external requirements in the light of a teacher’s understanding of a particular context, bearing in mind his or her values and educational principles. For example, the 1990s in England were characterized perhaps more than any other decade of the twentieth century by increasingly centralized control of education. Following the Education Reform Act, 1988, this first impacted on the curriculum and was quickly followed by national assessment and inspection. There was steady critique of pedagogy (e.g. Alexander, Rose and Woodhead, 1992) and at the end of the decade there was a massive change in the scope of teachers’ pedagogic judgement through the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998b) and National Numeracy Strategy (DfEE, 1999). Such detailed prescription had seldom previously occurred in England. Regarding literacy, 15 minutes of text-level work at whole-class level was to be followed by 15 minutes of word/sentence-level work, then 20 minutes of group work, including independent group activities and guided reading or writing, and finally a 10-minute plenary to consolidate learning. Echoes of such policies had considerable effect in Wales, but Scotland and Northern Ireland managed to retain a larger measure of partnership between teachers and policy-makers.

In a study of change in primary education through the 1990s, Osborn et al. (2000) identified four different kinds of ‘creative mediation’ deployed by teachers to interpret such requirements (see Reading 1.4).

- **Protective mediation** calls for strategies to defend existing practices which are greatly valued (such as the desire to maintain an element of spontaneity in teaching in the face of assessment pressure).
- **Innovative mediation** is concerned with teachers finding strategies to work within the spaces and boundaries provided by new requirements – finding opportunities to be creative.
- **Collaborative mediation** refers to teachers working closely together to provide mutual support in satisfying and adapting new requirements. As Osborn et al. (2000, p. 78) state: ‘One of the unintended consequences of National Curriculum implementation was the unprecedented level of collaboration which emerged amongst primary teachers.’
- **Conspirational mediation** involves schools adopting more subversive strategies where teachers resist implementing those aspects of external requirements that they believe to be particularly inappropriate.
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Such forms of mediation exemplify major strategies in the exercise of professional judgement. Clearly they need to be carefully justified – but the irony is that creative mediation is often the source of essential forms of innovation for future development. Indeed, in England, the Innovation Unit (www.innovation-unit.co.uk) has an explicit role in seeking out and building on such creativity.

See RTweb for links to the General Teaching Councils and professional associations which support creative mediation. The discussion is also followed up in Chapter 8, Section 3.4 and in Chapter 18, Section 3.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered the spiral of professional development and the potential to raise standards of teaching through evidence-informed judgement. We have outlined the seven key characteristics of reflective teaching.

Some readers may well be wondering if this isn't all just a bit much to ask. How is the time to be found? Isn't it all 'common sense' anyway? Two responses may be made. First, it is certainly the case that constantly engaging in reflective activities of the sort described in this book would be impossible. The point, however, is to use them as learning experiences. Such experiences should lead to conclusions which can be applied in new and more routine circumstances. This is how professional expertise is actively developed. Second, there is certainly a good deal of 'common sense' in the process of reflective teaching. However, when reflective teaching is used as a means of professional development it is extended far beyond this underpinning. The whole activity is much more rigorous – carefully gathered evidence replaces subjective impressions, open-mindedness replaces prior expectations, insights from reading or constructive and structured critique from colleagues challenge what might previously have been taken for granted. 'Common sense' may well endorse the value of the basic, reflective idea but, ironically, one outcome of reflection is often to produce critique and movement beyond the limitations of common-sense thinking. That, in a sense, is the whole point, the reason why reflection is a necessary part of professional activity. The aim of reflective practice is thus to support a shift from routine actions rooted in common-sense thinking to reflective action stemming from professional thinking.

Teachers can confidently expect to raise their standards of professional competence through adopting processes of reflective teaching – and the remainder of this book is designed to provide support in that process.
**Key readings**

The dilemmas in educational decision-making, which suggest that reflection is a continually necessary element of teaching, are analysed in:

*Dilemmas of Schooling.*
London: Methuen.

Contemporary UK teacher education is structured by statements of competences and standards in each country (see the guide on page 537 for detailed coverage in relation to this book). The most recent innovation is that from the Training and Development Agency for Schools in England.

TDA (2007)
*Professional Standards for Teachers in England from September 2007.*
London: TDA.

These statements are subject to review, analysis and debate – such as that illustrated by Simco and Wilson below. The Furlong *et al.* text is a report of the largest recent research project on contemporary UK teacher education.

*Primary Initial Teacher Training and Education: Revised Standards, Bright Future?*
Exeter: Learning Matters.

Furlong, J., Barton, L., Miles, S., Whiting, C. and Whitty, G. (2000)
*Teacher Education in Transition: Reforming Professionalism?*
Buckingham: Open University Press.

Two works by Dewey which have influenced thinking on reflective practice are:

Dewey, J. (1916)
*Democracy and Education.*
New York: Free Press.

Dewey, J. (1933)
*How We Think: a Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process.*
Chicago: Henry Regnery.
Reflective Teaching

The work of Zeichner on reflective teaching is also very stimulating. See, in particular:

**Reading 1.5**

On the potential gains, embracing both practical competence and social emancipation, which are claimed to derive from self-evaluation and classroom enquiry, see:

**Reading 3.1**


A thoughtful generic handbook on applying reflection in teaching and learning is:


The best contemporary book on the use of evidence-informed principles of teaching and learning in primary schools is:


For a range of views on the nature of professional knowledge and its relationship to more theoretical analyses, see:

**Reading 1.2**
Reflective teaching

Making Sense of Teaching.
Buckingham: Open University Press.

For case studies of teacher’s practical reasoning, see:
Passionate Enquiry and School Development.
London: Falmer.

Elbaz, F. (1983)
Teacher Thinking: a Study of Practical Knowledge.
London: Croom Helm.

Clandinin, D. J. (1986)
Classroom Practice: Teacher Images in Action.
London: Falmer Press.

Cortazzi, M. (1990)
Primary Teaching How It Is: a Narrative Account.
London: David Fulton.

For an influential perspective on the ‘art’ of teaching, including the concept of ‘connoisseurship’, see:

The Educational Imagination.
New York: Macmillan.

Hugh Sockett and Judyth Sachs provide contemporary arguments for morally informed and socially aware teachers:

The Moral Base for Teacher Professionalism.
New York: Teachers College Press.

The Activist Teaching Profession.
Buckingham: Open University Press.
Reflective Teaching

Given the influence of Dewey on reflection in professional life, and the intellectual openness advocated by him, we should be prepared to engage with those who espouse very different views. For a direct attack on Dewey and on educationalists, see:

O’Hear, A. (1991)
*Education and Democracy: Against the Educational Establishment.*
London: Claridge.

**Readings for Reflective Teaching** (the companion volume) offers other closely associated work on the issues raised in this chapter. This includes work by authors such as: John Dewey, Donald Schon, Ann and Harold Berlak, Marilyn Osborn, Elizabeth McNess, Patricia Broadfoot, Robert Tabachnick and Ken Zeichner.

**RTweb** offers additional professional resources for this chapter. These may include *Further Reading*, illustrative *Reflective Activities*, useful *Web Links* and *Download Facilities* for diagrams, figures, checklists and activities.