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Editorial: The role of reflection in teacher and teacher educator development

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Editorial on the Research Topic

The role of reflection in teacher and teacher educator development

Introduction

Reflection as a critical component of teacher education emerged as central to the enterprise of preparing new teachers with the publication of Schön (1983). Calderhead (1987) and Munby et al. (2001) articulated its importance in teacher development. LaBoskey (2002) revealed that the more reflective a preservice teacher is, the stronger she will be as a teacher. Works by Moon (1999), Russell (2005), and Brookfield (2017) provided guidance for developing teachers as reflective practitioners. Teacher educators then turned to the value of reflection for inservice teacher development (see Moon, 2004). Reflection became an implicit assumption about the quality of a teacher education program (e.g., <http://caepnet.org/>). More recently, the focus has turned to its role in the development of teacher educators (Kelchtermans et al., 2018). Beginning in the mid-1990s self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) scholars began using reflection in uncovering teacher educator and inservice and preservice knowledge and development (e.g., Loughran and Russell, 2002; Russell, 2018). In exploring international pedagogies of teacher education, Craig and Orland-Barak (2014) noted that one of the traveling pedagogies, the pedagogies that were taken up by others who read of it, was a reflective practice and that it was an essential feature of research and practice in teacher education and development across the globe.

The works reported in this Research Topic present current understandings of reflective practice in teacher education, research on teacher education and teacher educators, professional development, supervision, administration, and higher education. In this review, we explore the themes concerning reflection as a practice as revealed in this special topic. We uncovered the following themes: Collaboration, Tools and Principles, and Reverberations in Practice. We will identify each theme, reveal what we learn and the texts in this Research Topic that further reveal these understandings. The purpose of this Research Topic is to examine current understanding of the role of reflection in all of the enterprises of teacher education.

Collaboration

Collaboration is a principal feature of these studies. In fact, the role of collaborative reflection goes well-beyond isolated, individual teacher development. The studies show examples of researchers who have allowed and incorporated collaborative reflection practices into their research and professional lives. Also worth noting, the kinds of collaboration described here are improvement-aimed without being competitive, critical, or with a stance of teachers as deficient that is inherent to some institutional teacher development systems.

[Kelley et al.](#) are a longstanding portfolio group which has been in existence for over 20 years, using personal teaching narratives and critical friendship to examine and strengthen their practice. This collaboration has provided a mechanism for them to share not only the difficulties in their practice but the difficulties in being a teacher. [Haniford et al.](#) are also teacher educators who work across states and institutions to reflect on shared narratives to study their own professional learning and critical friendship in ongoing self-study research. [Mohamed et al.](#)'s work, like [Haniford et al.](#), occurs in higher education. Through their engagement in a collaborative study, they were able to explore and enact reflection in their practices as professors. For [Cardinal et al.](#), collaboration was central to their study. While examining their teaching of an assessment course, they each made personal reflections, considering ethical relationality, and imagined their long term commitments and obligations to indigenous children.

In the study with [Hall-Kenyon et al.](#), collaboration occurred across educational levels. Clinical Faculty Associates (CFAs), who were authors, contributed both as researchers and as participants reflecting on professional opportunities. [Bussey and Lay](#) came together in a critical friendship using dialogue to uncover the strategies of a university supervisor supporting student teachers in special education. In a similar fashion, [Cutrer-Parraga and Miller](#) collaborated in using reflections to increase adoption of preferred practices by resistant teachers as part of a professional development initiative. The significance of the study by [Needs et al.](#) is that the teachers themselves engaged in professional reflective collaboration in order to improve their mathematical teaching practices.

Tools

All of the articles in this Research Topic provide insight into different tools that can be useful in conducting studies on reflection; however, a few of the articles are particularly relevant for researchers studying reflection. The study on the impact of being a CFA on subsequent practice ([Hall-Kenyon et al.](#)) provides guidance about how participants in a qualitative study can become co-authors as some of the authors were university faculty and some were public school personnel on loan to the university.

[Cutrer-Parraga and Miller](#) use reflection with teachers as a strategy in improving practice. The unique feature is that they reflect not so much on the practices (leaving that for participation in professional development) but on their reasons for resisting which leads the teachers to actually take up practices they resisted. [Russell's](#) work articulates productive and promising tasks that

teacher educators can employ to increase teacher candidates' reflection and growth.

[Brookfield \(2017\)](#) argues that hunting personal assumptions within our practice can be a profitable strategy in uncovering knowledge of practice. In their study, [Brandenburg et al.](#) provide clear evidence of this kind of reflective practice by revealing strategies for uncovering assumptions and how doing so leads to improvement in practice. [Bussey and Lay's](#) work is somewhat similar because they were exploring what was learned about teachers' knowledge of supervision through analysis of the stories they told.

The study by [Kosmanou and Vassilaki](#) on the development of professional identity provides clear guidance for using linguistic analysis for examining written reflections of teacher candidates. [Kaldi and Zafeiri](#) demonstrate how collecting and studying reflections produced by students during practicum can be used for the purpose of evaluation of a program. They learned that their analysis of teacher candidate reflections pointed them to areas for improvement for a teacher education program as well as revealing the modes of reflection teacher candidates are prepared to take up. [Faggiano](#) describes and demonstrates the use of a tool she has named *the semiotic bundle*. What is interesting is not just that [Faggiano](#) used the tool but also provides enough detail that others can use the tool to promote increased skill in doing reflection with teacher candidates. [Mohamed et al.](#) explain how the use of action research in a higher education context can help professors develop reflection and improve their teaching. Because of its use in a higher education context, this reflection could enable more professors to study their own practice to improve it.

Reverberations

The articles in this volume document two kinds of what we labeled reverberations. Some articles articulated the ways in which scholars enacted reflection practices and pedagogies that existed in the context they reported on but then they also provide evidence that the practices reverberated or rippled across levels of teacher education.

The article by [Jara and Russell](#) provides the clearest evidence of this reverberation. Rodrigo as a new dean sought to increase the reflective capabilities of his faculty and then reported the reverberations as his faculty took up reflection themselves and then included it in their work with pre-service teachers. They also noted the ways in which the teacher candidates used it in their teaching. In their study with CFAs, [Hall-Kenyon et al.](#) document the ways in which CFAs who taught preservice teachers to engage in reflection at the university then used those practices in their later work with public school colleagues. [Needs et al.](#) study the ways in which reflection on and interpretation of student thinking during problem solving improved the practices of teacher educators, teachers, and public school students. They report the ways their reflection reverberated into their practice and that of their students. These studies reveal that carefully designed reflective activities reverberate across teacher education and teaching contexts—moving from the university, to teacher education, to preservice and inservice teachers and even to public school students.

The other form of reverberation is best captured by the phenomenon of *traveling pedagogies* as labeled by Craig and Orland-Barak (2014). While identifying the themes evident in a three-volume research report on international pedagogies, they noted pedagogies or practices that showed up in multiple studies in their volumes. These pedagogies were adopted across international boundaries, but were slightly different as adapted to new contexts as the pedagogies traveled across the globe. Reflection was one of those traveling pedagogies.

We found similar pedagogies and practices in this volume. In documenting their collaboration, Haniford et al. report traveling pedagogies as they took up the practices of their collaborators in their own practice as teacher educators (see also Brandenburg et al.; Cardinal et al.; Cole et al.; Kelley et al.). Russel reports numerous practices he engaged in with his students, who then provided anecdotal evidence to him of using these strategies in their practices. These studies provide clear evidence that when researchers take up reflection in their research and practice, there are reverberations across levels of teacher education and across contexts.

Conclusion

Reflection emerged as a key practice in teacher education and teacher development in the late 1980/s. It continues to be a basic strategy in preparing teachers and improving teachers across the globe. Mohamed et al.'s work documents the movement of reflective practice from teacher education to other higher education contexts. In this volume, we included the article by Vanassche, which provides guidance in studying teaching and teacher education. Reflection is one of her four propositions. She argues that when reflection flourishes the other three propositions flourish as well, and teacher educators are then prepared to reframe traditional forms of knowledge in ways that are more helpful for preparing teachers.

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This collection of studies and articles demonstrates, as Moon (1999) suggested, the power of reflection for promoting growth. Using reflection to promote growth and development serves a dual purpose—to demonstrate growth and to uncover knowledge. When reflections are collected and analyzed, they can provide insight into the development and thinking of all involved in the education of teachers.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

In memoriam

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Lynn Thomas.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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