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Book reviews

Reflectivity in Pre-Service Teacher Education: A Survey of Theory and Practice

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The most recent publication by Danuta Gabryś-Barker, *Reflectivity in Pre-Service Teacher Education: A Survey of Theory and Practice*, concerns the nature of reflection and the development of reflectivity among preservice teachers. Despite all the novelties that have found their way into the foreign language classroom and the shift of attention from the teacher to the learner, teachers still remain an indispensable element of the educational mosaic. The extent to which teachers may exert a positive influence on the learning process undoubtedly depends on their ability to develop “reflective awareness” of themselves, and to communicate openly and empathetically with their learners. As the French writer Ernest Dimnet once said: “The object of reflection is invariably the discovery of something satisfying to the mind which was not there at the beginning of the search” (1930, p. 24; translation MD). It seems warranted to say that it is essential to introduce prospective teachers to the practice of reflection as early as possible in the course of teacher training.

In the light of the above, the publication under review provides an inspiring opportunity to learn how effective instruction in reflective teaching can

be successfully implemented in various teacher training programmes. The additional value of the book comes from the fact that its content can be inspiring not only for novice teachers, but also for experienced practitioners who are at any stage of their professional development, assuming that they are still willing enough to develop their personal and professional reflectivity.

The book is divided into five chapters, followed by an epilogue and an appendix containing unedited sample diary entries. The opening chapter (Chapter 1), "Teachers as a Professional Group," depicts teachers as a unique group of experts, with a specific focus on preservice teachers. Furthermore, the chapter focuses on teachers' motivation, attitudes and beliefs, all of which have a direct influence on their perception of the roles they perform in the classroom. In addition, the chapter discusses the issue of teachers' professional development at different stages of their career. Chapter 2, "Reflectivity in Teacher Development," offers a more theoretical approach towards teacher professional development, with the main emphasis being placed on the construct of productive reflectivity, which can be developed through various teacher training programmes as well as through action research applied in the classrooms. Chapter 3, entitled "From Critical Incidents to Critical Events in Classroom Practice," provides a theoretical background necessary for in-depth understanding of the concept of a critical incident, which is the main unit of analysis in the empirical part of the book. Moreover, the chapter takes a closer look at the impact of teachers' perceptions of themselves on the process of language instruction. The additional value of the chapter lies in the inclusion of selected examples of critical incidents from various published empirical studies, which enables the reader to gain insight into the research data presented in the consecutive chapters of the book. Chapter 4, "Diary Studies in Developing Teachers' Reflectivity," introduces the teacher diary as an effective tool that can be employed during the process of reflection. Furthermore, the author includes a number of examples of diary use taken from various educational projects. Additional reflection on diary writing by preservice teachers paves the way for the ultimate, empirical chapter of the book (Chapter 5) entitled "A Study of Pre-Service Teachers' Development Through Diary Use." It contains a discussion of diary entries collected from preservice teachers who identify and analyze almost 300 critical incidents over a period of one academic year. The study focuses predominantly on trainee teachers who are still involved in the process of developing their professional qualifications. As a result, a question arises whether more experienced teachers will find this publication worth reaching for, since it describes experiences which they may find difficult to relate to.

"Epilogue," the final part of the book, discusses classroom-based research and focused diary writing as effectual means of developing productive reflectivity in training programmes for teachers, as well as highlighting the significance of teachers' personal involvement and their personalized approach to professional devel-

opment. Teachers' personal involvement may be difficult to observe among teachers in the Polish educational context, since there seems to be a problem of personal identification with the teaching profession among them. Furthermore, Polish educators are often not willing to involve themselves in any form of professional development, mainly due to their instrumental approach to teaching practice.

Gabrys-Barker states that "teaching is a learning process and insofar as it is a process it is longitudinal" (p. 11). Some experienced teachers may believe that they have already developed a sufficient set of teaching practices and they do not need to become more reflective. Such an attitude may lead to undesirable routine behaviors or even professional burnout. No matter what their teaching experience is, educators should never stop learning, reflecting and modifying their behavior. Therefore, this book should not only be considered as a perfect tool for reflection among preservice teachers, but it can also help other, more experienced educators to improve their teaching practices and rediscover their enthusiasm for teaching. The study presented in the book undoubtedly proves that diaries may serve as a valuable source of information to be analyzed and reflected upon, under the condition that pre-service teachers are willing to remain systematic and honest in their diary writing. Furthermore, pre-service teachers, despite their eagerness, may not be experienced enough to reflect upon important educational issues and they will either give up writing, or focus mainly on survival techniques, unless supported by an experienced mentor, someone who will aid them in going through their process of reflection.

What makes this book a valuable asset to the field of teacher training is the fact that it is not only well-grounded in theory but also touches upon a number of practical issues for further analysis and discussion. What is worth stressing yet again, it has great potential not only as a useful guide for in-service teachers, but also as a valuable tool to be used in training programmes for preservice teachers, whose major concern in the initial stages of their careers is their own teaching performance.

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