Reflection of the Values in Teaching Profession Through Practice

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Values reflection is much discuss to diverse some factors related to the practice teaching to the developing and assessing of it. There is a link between the purpose of a particular reflective activity and its value. Reflection can, therefore, only be evaluated when the evaluation is framed within the purpose or context of the activity. In this article describe the features of differing purposes and related differing perceptions of value are presented with the strong link between the purpose and values of demonstrated In this scholarly paper investigated to academicians and curriculum developers in the teaching, assessing or use of reflective practice were discussed.

Keywords: Reflection, Purpose, Values, Practice, Evaluation.

Introduction

Reflection as a topic on academic curricula has now been accepted, so that Saltiel (2006) refers to it as 'the new orthodoxy'. Nevertheless, despite Saltiel's belief that it is often used uncritically, there is contention in respect of how it is taught, how it is assessed (Sumison and Fleet 1996) and how much curriculum time should be given to it, all of which give rise to critical consideration of reflection. These areas of contention arise not from a disinterest or distrust of reflection but more usually from a passion and enthusiasm for it which generates a desire to engage with reflection appropriately. In this paper, reflection is understood to be consistent with the Boud et al (1993) definition as 'an active process of exploration and discovery' that 'turns

experience into learning'. In this mode of reflective activity under discussion is that part of the active exploration may be the medium by which reflection is demonstrated.

The link between purpose and value

Reflection in education, despite the extent of its existence, appears to be in the teenage years of its maturation no longer infantile, full of potential, yet still troublesome. In order to engage meaningfully in discussions about reflection, it is important to understand the context in which it is being used and the purpose that it is hoped will be achieved. Once the purpose has been defined the value can then be judged. This paper reflection being a valuable skill or tool, rather it is a proposal that the value of reflection, and of different modes of reflection, will change with the purpose or context. The value might be judged as the value of that particular purpose within a curriculum, or the value of approaching the topic in this particular way, or the value of assessing in a particular way.

Once it is understood that both the purpose and context are changeable then it can be seen that any discussions about reflection need to be given the framework of the purpose or context in order to give those discussions focus and direction. In this respect the discussions can become constructively aligned (Biggs 2003) because the purpose will shape a particular mode of delivery or indicate what elements of reflection will be most valued at that point. Purpose and value are inextricably linked, starting with whether one values a particular purpose or not, and values change in different contexts. One of the definitions of value is 'the ability of a thing to serve a purpose' (Allen 1991) thus, the very definition of value is linked to purpose. This idea that evaluating reflection should be linked to purpose is not new but neither does it appear prevalent at the teaching and learning.

Purpose

The reflective activity has resulted in being used for a range of differing purposes. Some of these differed purposes are consider. One overarching classification of these could be the difference between 'for self' and 'for other'. When reflecting 'for self' the individual are decided the purpose or outcome. When reflecting 'for other'

the other might be a professional body, an educational establishment for example. Each of these 'others' will have their own purpose for asking for reflection. A professional body will require evidence of continued fitness to practice or some evidence of professional development and this development will be linked to the specific role of the trainer. In the educational establishment will be required evidence of fulfillment of the learning outcomes for a module or component of the study. The categories of 'for self' and 'for other' are not mutually exclusive. Where the trainer demonstrates a general professional requirement, such as fitness to practice, through reflecting on an area of practice of their own choice it could be said that there is overlap between reflecting 'for self' and reflecting 'for other'.

An additional usual way of classifying different purposes is to consider whether the purpose is seeking the outcomes of reflection or seeking the development of reflective skills. Is the outcome considered more important? Different perspectives on the event can lead to different values regarding whether process or outcome is the more valued. Fook et al (1997), in their study of social workers, observed that process skills were considered more important than outcome skills as markers of expertise in others. Saltiel (2006) found that social workers upheld this value for their own practice whilst their managers were more concerned with outcomes. In Saltiel's study, the social workers focused on process skills in their reflections. Clearly, the value that was given to processes shaped the content of the reflections; speculatively, managers may have valued more highly reflections which focused on outcomes. Tate (2004) stated that reflective practice is about process and, therefore, it may be very challenging to those who are outcome orientated. Some academics are comfortable outcomes with process of these are supposedly more concrete. In this perception of tangibility makes the assessment of such reflection show more manageable. However, Hussey and Smith (2008) contend that learning outcomes are not necessarily measurable and may defy precise definition.

Hussey and Smith (2008) recognize that some learning outcomes are explicit while some are implicit. When comparing reflections across different professional genres it can be seen that, although

the aspirations for reflective trainers may be the same or similar, there are differing professional values or assumptions that are often implicit within the genre rather than explicit (O'Rourke 2009) and which will shape the content of reflection in that genre. In this way, it is not only the purpose but the context that the specific purpose is expressed in which may need to be considered when deciding the value of a particular reflective activity.

Value

Value is a subjective term that differ with a variety of factors the value of different aspects of reflection will vary according to a change in the purpose and according to the extent to which a reflection meets that purpose. The differing views on what purposes are considered valuable may be due to personal perspectives on a particular aspect of reflection given a particular context. The value of something is the price that someone is willing to pay for a commodity. In this connection a learning economy it is the perceived worth of something. This worth can be perceived differently by different onlookers by 'self' or by 'other'. The acquire knowledge of reflection is often referred to in terms of the time cost involved. Hence, the worth or benefit of reflection can be weighed against the time that it involves. The worth of reflection might be measured in terms of 'what' benefit something will bring. Alternatively, it's measured in terms of 'how much' benefit it will bring where the degree of benefit, the significance or importance that is attached to a particular outcome, is weighed in the balance.

If value is subjective, who is doing the judging in this activity, the value might be measured by the trainer or individual, or by the educational tutor. An individual may consider that the outcome of a reflection has high value and the educational establishment may, measuring against different criteria, value the same outcome differently. Furthermore, Hussey and Smith (2008) observe that beneficial and relevant learning may take place for the learner, which is valued by the tutor, even though it is not part of the stated explicit learning outcome for that task. To consider another complexity, the judging is being done by 'other' there may be differences of opinion on what is

valued. It has been noted that markers' individual values can affect their interpretation of a piece of work. Exploration of theory and reference to literature might be given credit by one marker, while the depth of personal exploration and insight might be more highly valued by another marker.

Where the desired outcome for a particular reflective activity is the ability to reflect, rather than an outcome resulting from the reflection, this may be seen as a luxury when the skills of reflection are competing with other outcomes to be made explicit on professional courses. It is typical, instead, for reflection to be used as a tool, to assist in demonstrating some other quality, rather than as an activity in its own right. This choice between developing the skills of reflection and developing the products of reflection may affect any decision on whether to formally assess the work or not. The reflection can be graded due to the need to maintain the trust of the students which is necessary for the developing of ability in reflection; they draw on the work of Fink (2003), Pierson (1998), and Ruth-Sahd (2003) to support this. However, they said the content of the student's reflection used as evidence of completion of course objectives. Nevertheless, the given focus of the assignment is the development of a student's abilities not the producing of a satisfactory outcome. This values reflect of the idea that outcome is different and discrete from process by refuting a false duality which implies either/or when they are closely linked and intertwined. Brockbank and McGill (1998) appear to accept the notion of when they advocate that an assessment strategy must ascertain that both process and outcome have taken place in the reflective learning.

Contextual factors

There are other factors which affect the character or form of reflections. These factors relate to the context of reflection rather than to its purpose. One contrast between the requirement of a professional supervisor and the requirements of an educational establishment is in the degree of specificity of reflection, that is, to address any part of practice or to address pre-set outcomes. Using reflection for the purpose of demonstrating specific learning outcomes could be said

to be 'reflecting to order'. Here, the trainer or student trainer is undergoing experiential learning where they are determining what is 'significant' about a particular learning experience. At the same time, they must seek out experiences that demonstrate a particular quality or skill and which may, or may not, coincide with what they consider most significant about their learning. Many professional students reflect 'in order to pass' due to the requirement of many courses seeking to demonstrate specific learning outcomes through the mode of reflection. Moon (2004) suggests that the purpose or the reasons why people are reflecting will guide even which event is selected for writing about. This selection may not necessarily determine what an individual reflects on but will certainly influence what is reported as being reflected on the public, declarative of reflection.

Moon (2004), states that reflection is not straight forward however, reflective activity often makes it look as though it is. Reflecting may not be a linear process; there are many models of reflection depicting a circular, spiral or iterative journey through the reflective process. Formal written accounts of reflection need to be linear although informal learning journals may take many forms and styles. These other, non-linear, styles may not be valued equally by all readers (O' Rouke 2008). So, the form in which the reflection is presented will also vary according to the purpose and according to what is valued.

There is also the variable factor of which audience the reflection is intended for. In this connection might which language, length, style or genre is utilized to express the reflection. They used words given a synopsis or extended exploration in creative prose. Which of these would be the more acceptable might depend on whether the discipline was creative writing or a professional culture where a 'scientific style' was the accepted norm. Donaghy and Morss (2000) stress the importance of contextualizing reflection to each professional discipline, although their argument relates to differences in professional processes rather than to professional style.

The assessment of reflection continues to be of concern, not only due to some of the ethical issues which it raises (Ghaye 2007) but

also due to the issues of trust, already mentioned, that are considered to decrease the student's freedom to learn. Despite this, academic staff are assessing reflective assignments in one way or another and wrestling with the reliability of grading those (Williams et al 2000). This has led to the publication of several tools for use in assessing reflection, for example, Hatton & Smith (1995), Fund et al (2002) and Moon (2004). Whether a particular tool will be considered valuable will depend on the purpose or context in which it is to be used. As with all assessment tools, each of these tools concentrate on a particular aspect or outcome that is considered desirable; for example, Fund et al (2002) paper reports on a tool for the assessment of what is being reflected on rather than how good is the quality of reflection. Good is perhaps implicit in their aim of identifying the level of meta-cognition in their students' work, however, even when the particular level of meta-cognition is identified, there is still the matter of degrees of performance to consider. Instead of debating whether it is more worthy to teach or more worthy to assess it is time to accept that reflection can be used for either and that when we teach reflection will have one shape and that when we assess reflection will have another shape. When reflection is used simultaneously for both teaching and assessment then the conflict remains, particularly if the same tool is used (McMullan 2006). Then, there is an additional need to think about the relative weighting of each component (teaching or assessing) and to make transparent to the student the relative expectations between the two.

Conclusion

According to Moon (2004) we reflect in order to learn or we learn as a result of reflecting or set out to reflect there are potential benefits for the individual. In this paper has discussed the multi-factoral nature of the practice of reflection and the way of context to affect the perceived value. The continued interest in the best way to use, promote or assess reflection will be enhanced by identifying the purpose or context that frames each discussion. In this way, the organization of knowledge pertaining to reflective practice can be developed and full fledged.

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