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Teachers' lack of deeper analytical reflections: who is to blame?

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Reflective practice through journal writing is among the concepts that are introduced to teachers by my institution during the six-month long Certificate in Education Programmes (CEPs). The objective is to enable teachers to develop professionally by learning from their own practice after completion of the programmes. However, this can only occur if teachers are able to critically analyse issues, events and situations within their practice. Over the years, it has been realised that most teachers are unable to critically reflect. This study was of a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological nature. The sample included eight CEP graduate teachers and four facilitators of the programmes. Semi-structured interviews were the sole method of data collection. The study established that apart from the way reflective practice is introduced to the teachers, other factors such as language, teachers' attitude and their lack of capacity are responsible for how they understand reflective practice, thus impacting on how they write their reflections in their journals.

Keywords: journal; reflective practice; Certificate in Education Programmes (CEPs)

Introduction

The teacher education institution where I work as a teacher educator based in East Africa (Tanzania) aims at contributing to the provision of quality education in the region. We conduct professional development programmes for practising teachers. Some of these include six-month long Certificate in Education Programmes (CEPs) for the core subjects of mathematics, English, science and social studies.

The ultimate goal of these programmes is to create a critical mass of teachers in schools who are able to work collaboratively with colleagues to influence whole school improvement. Hence, the programmes aim at improving teachers' content knowledge, while introducing them to non-traditional teaching and learning methodologies and reflective practice.

The objective of introducing reflective practice is to enable teachers to have ownership of their professional development, and be able to learn and grow from their own practice. Apart from introducing teachers to the theory of this concept, they have a hands-on experience of reflecting through journals.

We encourage the use of journals as tools for learning to ensure that teachers are actively engaged in the reflecting process. The teachers' journal entries are read

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and responded to by facilitators during the period of the CEPs. This is done to maximise learning and to ensure that teachers conceptualise the complex process of reflecting and are able to deeply reflect by critically analysing issues, events and situations in the context of teaching and learning. Moreover, teachers are encouraged to share their journal entries with colleagues in the class for additional feedback for enhancement of deeper analytical reflections.

However, there is evidence that despite the apparent rigour involved to enable teachers to develop critical analytical skills for deeper reflections, most of them are unable to move from the descriptive to analytical level while reflecting. We hence speculate on what the problem could be. Therefore, I set out to understand this issue by exploring teachers' understanding and the knowledge of reflective practice and the activity of journal writing, and how these impact on their development of reflective journaling skills. To have an insightful analysis of this situation, I explored how reflective practice is introduced to teachers by the facilitators of the programmes.

Methodology

This study sought to explore teachers' understanding and knowledge of reflective practice and journal writing. This was inferred from both the teachers' and facilitators' sentiments about how the reflective practice was introduced to them and how this impacted on their understanding and knowledge, and the activity of journal writing.

Therefore, this research was of a qualitative interpretative/hermeneutic nature, since it focused on an analysis of the meaning that participants (teachers and facilitators) conferred upon their perceptions (Robson, 2002) of teaching and learning about reflective practice and engaging in journal writing, and ultimately how this impacted on their understanding and knowledge of the same. My role was to understand and make sense of participants' sentiments and construct meaning out of them (Usher, 1996). This involved interpretations of their perceptions and experiences in relation to their understanding and knowledge of reflective practice and the process of journal writing, while the participants were interpreters of the same. This was a double hermeneutic process (Usher, 1996) since it involved interpretations of interpretations.

The study involved 12 participants: eight CEP graduate teachers of both public (government) and private primary schools, and four certificate course facilitators. I was therefore able to access the views of both the facilitators and teachers who facilitated the programmes and engaged in reflective journaling respectively.

I considered eight teachers to be appropriate for rich and reliable data, which could lead to generalised findings in this context. I had an equal number of male and female teachers from both private and public schools who attended the CEPs at different times: in 2004, 2005 and 2006 for diverse experiences and perceptions. I deliberately sought to include four experienced facilitators who had facilitated at least three programmes due to the diverse details about their experiences of teaching of reflective practice and engaging teachers in reflective journaling.

I used codes to identify the study's participants: T1–T8 for teachers and F1–F4 for facilitators. I also used letters F (Female) and M (Male) to distinguish them by gender. For example, MT and FT symbolise male and female teachers while MF and FF represent male and female facilitators respectively.

Semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 1a and 1b) were the sole method of data collection. These enabled me to find out what the participants were thinking about (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001) in relation to their understanding and knowledge of reflective journaling. This involved discussions and interpretations of the participants' world (of reflection), and their expressions of their understanding and knowledge of situations (journal writing) from their point of view (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2006).

Through interviews, I was able to access the past events and situations at which I was not able to be present (Scott, 1996). Thus, I was able to access and explore teachers' knowledge, values and preferences, attitudes and beliefs – situations that would otherwise be difficult to access (Tuckman, 1972, cited in Cohen et al., 2006).

For data analysis, I used the Huberman and Miles approach (Punch, 2005; Robson, 2002) of analysing qualitative data. The essential activities of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification (Robson, 2002; Walliman, 2006) were utilised.

Coding categories was done at two levels (Glesne, 2006). At the first level, descriptive codes were used (Punch, 2005) to separate the bearing of materials on a given topic from other data. This was done by searching through data for regularities and patterns, as well as for topics the data covered. I therefore stayed close to the data and let it speak for itself (Wolcott, 1994, cited in Glesne, 2006). Phrases and words, as indicated by the different quotations, representing topics and patterns were written (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

At the second level, the initial codes were broken down further into interpretative codes. I went beyond the factual data and probed what meaning was meant by them (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This is indicated by my interpretations of the descriptive data, which were then placed in a meaningful sequence (Glesne, 2006) to come up with a story that addressed my research questions.

However, having been involved in facilitating some of the programmes, I had to be aware of how my biases, particularly about how reflective journaling was introduced to teachers. I therefore engaged in reflexivity regarding the possibility of facilitators' diverse understanding of reflective practice, and how this would influence how they introduced it to teachers.

Findings

Teachers' understanding and knowledge of reflective practice and journal writing was determined by how these were introduced to them by the facilitators.

Introduction of the concept of reflective practice

Facilitators used diverse strategies to introduce the concept of reflective practice to the teachers during the programmes. However, there seems to have been a focus on using and building upon teachers' experiences in terms of either their daily activities and/or their professional thought processes. This was done to ease teachers' understanding of the new concept, since they were able 'to build on what they have already experienced' (MF4).

For example, FF3 believed that the idea of reflecting was not new to teachers. She built on their experiences of classroom thought processes to introduce the concept. She said:

When I facilitated that, I was mostly working on teachers' experiences on what they actually did in the classroom... How they took different decisions. So when we look at their thinking . . . , and as we moved on we said this is reflective practice. So, practical idea helped them . . . to understand reflective practice.

This seems to be a very simplistic way of introducing the concept of reflective practice. It does not quite define and give the systematic analytical process of reflection and its significance. The meaning and process of reflection is much more than decision making. Introducing it this way to teachers may be vague and misleading.

Conversely, apart from theoretically defining reflective practice 'in general terms' (MF4) and specifically defining the terms 'reflection' and 'practice' (FF2) for teachers, the two facilitators also used the metaphor of the mirror and related it to the process and purpose of reflective practice. MF4 argued that introducing reflective practice in this way enabled teachers to conceptualise its professional importance:

... if you stand before a mirror, it enables you to see details of your body ... Now building on that when you move to reflective practice, you can make that link that you can look at/into yourself and see details ... As teachers continue to conceptualise reflective practice process, the mirror, has to be replaced with critical questioning of oneself in relation to one's practice.

The foregoing introduction of the concept of reflective practice seems to be realistic and powerful, as it builds upon 'something they [teachers] have experienced, not once, [but] many times' (MF4). However, what makes this complex is the process that teachers have to go through to replace the mirror with self-critical questioning (MF4). Moreover, FF2 argued that the male teachers found the mirror metaphor to be more female oriented. Hence, they found it difficult to reconcile this with the concept and experience of reflective practice.

From the foregoing, the introduction of the concept of reflective practice lacked the essence and details of the process of carrying out analytical reflections. Simply relating reflective practice to classroom decision-making process may not enable teachers to reflect analytically. In fact it may lead to descriptive processes. Moreover, using the mirror metaphor turned out to be too philosophical and technical for teachers to relate it to analytical reflections.

Introduction of journal writing

The aspect of journal writing seemed to be introduced to teachers swiftly and in very broad terms. According to MT5, journal writing was suddenly introduced as the facilitators told teachers that 'from tomorrow you are going to write reflective journals ...' MF1 said, teachers were instructed 'to write anything, what they feel they want to write'. MT5 confirmed this: 'You can reflect on anything, not only what you have learnt, or even when you are on the way home, you write what you have seen there ...' (Sic).

MF1 argued that this was an appropriate way of introducing journal writing. He asserted that facilitators were then able to guide teachers to refine and focus on important issues during the sessions by giving feedback on their journal entries. According to him, teachers are able to learn that writing journals ...:

is not filling pages by describing everything that one learnt, but one can write a paragraph about what lesson you learnt ... and how useful or beneficial it is going to be in your working place.

Although MF1 is correct that journal writing is not a description of events and issues, there is a definite process of analytical reflecting through journaling (Holborn, 1988; also see Figure 1), which, in my judgement, cannot be done in one paragraph.

Most facilitators seemed satisfied with the ways they introduced reflective practice and journal writing to teachers. They perceived these as powerful: linking something that they have experienced daily (mirror) to reflective practice that is philosophical and technical (MF4); relating it to their classroom experiences of decision making (FF3); and also the best way to deal with adults, letting the teachers be free to write anything they feel they want to write and refine this as they go along (MF1). Apart from FF2, other facilitators argued that they would not change/modify the way they introduced this concept to teachers.

Despite the above-expressed satisfaction, it was surprising that five of the teachers could hardly remember how the concept was introduced (FT2, FT1, MT6 and MT3). FT8 blatantly declared, 'I have forgotten'. This might have occurred because of the ways reflective practice and journal writing were introduced – too vague to conceptualise the reality of the practice; too philosophical, hence, too complex for the case of the concept, and too broad, with no focus for journal writing. It would certainly be challenging for teachers to have analytical reflections in view of the above.

The foregoing introduction of reflective practice and journal writing as revealed both by teachers and facilitators impacted on teachers' knowledge and understand-

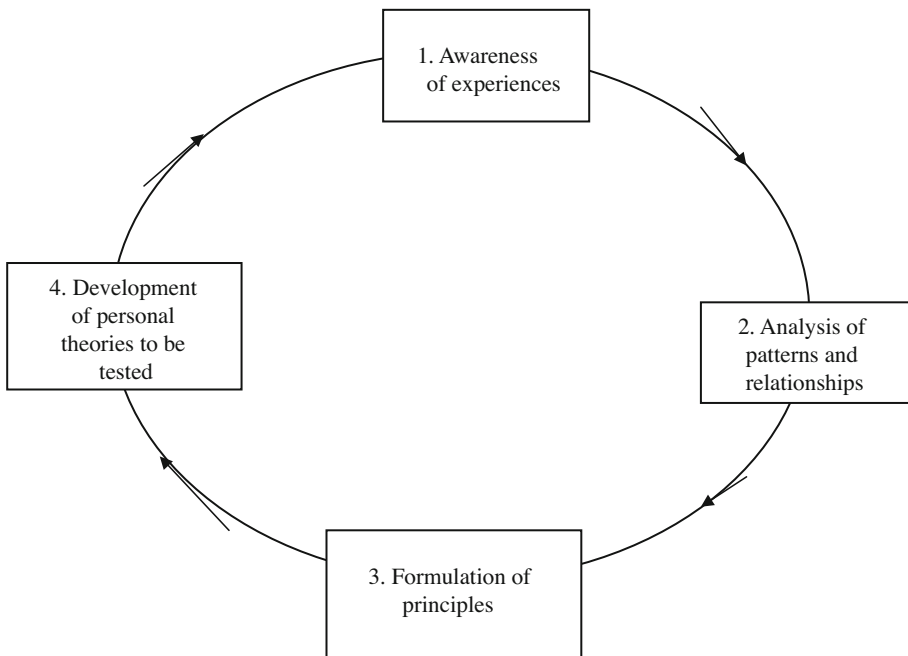


Figure 1. Steps in the reflective process. Source: Adapted from Holborn (1988).

ing of reflective journaling in terms of how they defined and described reflective practice, and journal writing and the process and its significance. In these circumstances teachers did not seem to understand that reflecting meant critical analysis of issues, events and situations.

Meaning and description of reflective practice and journal writing

Normally, teachers' reaction when the concept of reflective practice is introduced is 'We do that all the time'. FF3 held this view. She argued that what makes this concept new is 'just the name . . . otherwise reflective practice is common to teachers'.

Nonetheless, whilst many of the teachers did not have a solid understanding of the concept of reflective practice and journaling, two (FT8, FT1) could hardly remember its meaning. Teachers had varied definitions and descriptions of the concept. While MT3 defined and described reflections as 'just remembering what you did', FT1 defined it as a mere 'flashback of what was learnt'. Relating the concept to journal writing, MT5 understood it as a 'record of what you have seen', MT3 as that which 'helps you to keep records', and MT6 said it is a review of what has been learnt. FT2 and MT3 emphasised that it is just like revision of what one has learnt, since it makes you remember what you have learnt from morning to evening. According to FT2, journal writing enhances revision because before one writes one has 'to go back to the given notes, read and re-read them and then re-write'.

With the above understanding of the concept of reflective practice and journal writing, it would be difficult for teachers to understand and develop analytical skills for deeper reflections, as the understanding did not indicate that critical analysis is part of reflective practice.

However, FT4 and MT7, who teach at the same private school, seemed to have a relatively concrete understanding of the concept. This school has structured in-house professional development sessions, and the concepts of reflective practice and journal writing, although no substantial follow-up was done, had been introduced. Perhaps the school initiatives contributed to their understanding of the meaning of the concept.

When defining reflective practice, MT7 emphasised that for one to reflect, one has to have a conscious mind and have a critical outlook on events and issues:

To me reflective practice means to have a conscious mind first . . . and having a critical outlook on what goes around you, or your actions or actions of others . . . it is a conscious effort.

This teacher recognised that reflection is a conscious activity. Including the critical aspect in reflective practice echoes MF4's and FF2's argument that critical thinking is what underpins reflective practice: 'Reflection is actually critical thinking' (MF4). Referring to his initial experience of writing in the journal, MT7 said that by giving an account of exactly what had happened, he was narrating what had taken place, and this was not reflection.

The two teachers seemed to understand that reflecting is not a mere description of events, issues and situations; it involves critical analytical skills for deeper reflections.

Process of reflective practice and journaling

Despite facilitators' graphic descriptions of how they introduced reflective practice to teachers, and the rigour involved (requiring teachers to journal daily; facilitators reading and giving feedback to journal entries; teachers sharing their journal entries in the class and feedback given from both facilitators and their colleagues), to ensure that they understood the process of reflection through journal writing, most teachers revealed that they could not remember the process. Whilst four (FT1, FT2, MT3 and FT8) of them, when asked how the process was theoretically taught responded, 'I can't remember', two, (MT5, MT7) cited when reflections are to take place instead, 'Before, during and after ...'.

This lack of understanding and confusion shown by teachers may have been a result of lack of clarity and sufficient guidance from the facilitators. FT2 seemed to hint at this when she argued that since this concept was new to teachers, facilitators should have used their ingenuity and given guiding questions for them to understand the process of journaling. She compared this to what they (teachers) do when they first introduce composition writing in English to their grade three pupils.

Although at first MF1 disputed this idea of having a guiding format, because it might mislead teachers to have a wrong understanding of the process of reflecting, he later contradicted himself and asserted that:

If one can design a very guided structure ... a format, asking a teacher to specifically state what they have learnt for the first time, or identify what impressed them during the sessions, then facilitators would get what exactly they would want to get [a well developed reflection].

Understanding the process of reflective journaling could enable teachers to develop analytical skills for deeper meaningful reflections. Lack of this implies lack of deeper analytical reflections. Simply reviewing and revising what has been learnt is not being analytical for deeper reflections.

Teachers' lack of capacity

MF4 emphasised that teachers in this context lack the capacity not only to understand the concept of reflective practice, but also to meaningfully engage in reflective journaling. If this is true, it may explain why many could hardly remember the meaning, process and significance of reflective practice and journaling. Thus, they were unable to conceptualise that reflective journaling is analytical.

According to MF4 and FF2, reflective practice is really about critical thinking: 'Reflection is actually critical thinking' (MF4) and 'being reflective means engaging in a lot of critical thinking' (FF2). MF4 argued that our target (primary school) teachers lack this since they 'stopped their schooling career very early' (most of them at 'O' level). Moreover, the teaching profession in this context does not attract 'intellectually high calibre people'. Instead they are 'people who have scored very low' (MF4).

Therefore, MF4 strongly believed that due to teachers' inadequacy in critical thinking skills they were unable to critically interact with new concepts such as reflective practice and, hence, lacked the capacity that goes with the process of reflecting. Consequently, most of them found it difficult to move from a descriptive level of reflections to an analytical level. FF2 concurred with this and gave

specific figures: ‘in a group of 25 only five will seem to move to the level of analysis’.

MF4 argued further that this is the case because teachers lack the capacity to meaningfully interact with feedback and utilise it to improve on their journal entries. He said:

It would help if the feedback goes to someone who can interact with it meaningfully. For this, you need to have the capacity to interact with it and say aha! There you are, this is what I missed.

This somehow justified FF2’s claim that teachers cannot relate and utilise feedback on a previous entry to improve on the successive ones. As a consequence, some teachers simply regurgitated the descriptive feedback given to them in their subsequent entries (FF3).

If teachers lack the capacity that goes with reflection, it means that they may fail to understand the process of journaling. Hence, they would not be analytical in their reflections.

Language

The language of instruction in primary schools in Tanzania is Kiswahili. Although teachers had their secondary education with English as the medium of instruction, many of them are not proficient in the language. However, our programmes are conducted in English, and reflective journaling is carried out in English.

Language also impacted on the writing of journals and the quality of entries. MT5 said that due to language he found it very difficult to write an entry of even 100 words, although the requirement was 200 words:

I thought the lecturers [facilitators] were going to count the words ... so I write something which is 100 words (sic) ... Where am I going to get another 100 words? So I can meander (sic) (amused).

The meandering aspect might have amused MT5 because he knew that by meandering he did not write any meaningful analytical reflections.

It therefore appears that due to challenges that teachers had with the English language, some of them were not engaged in meaningful reflective journaling, but rather in mechanical writing to fulfil the 200-word count requirement. In fact MT5 enthusiastically declared that, if those journals were to be written in Kiswahili, people would write even as many as 10 pages a day. However, with reflective journaling, it is not the quantity that is significant, but the quality of the entry in terms of the thought and analytical process. Nonetheless, it appears that given the opportunity to journal in Kiswahili, teachers would perhaps become relatively more analytical.

Teachers’ attitude

Some facilitators were of the opinion that teachers’ attitude towards reflective practice and journaling was a challenge to its sustainability. One general attitude pointed out by MF4 is the instant dismissal of new ideas by teachers. He argued that

because teachers are not open minded, ‘We sometimes cultivate the culture of rubbishing everything that is new. We simply rubbish it’. This could be an indication that since the concept of reflective practice and journaling was a relatively new idea, perhaps teachers simply rubbished and dismissed it. MF4 seemed to justify the above argument when he asserted that teachers did not believe that reflective journaling could make them better teachers.

Moreover, journal writing being perceived as an additional workload by the teachers, and perhaps not recognised and appreciated by stakeholders, is acknowledged mostly by the facilitators as impacting on teachers’ attitude towards it. According to MF1:

... anything you give to teachers to write is additional work ... that is why most of them stop writing ... anything apart from lesson plans, lesson notes is additional work.

That is why FF2 and MF4 felt teachers perceive journaling as a task that overburdens them for *nothing*. They argued that teachers would rather do some monetarily rewarding work than spend time journaling. According to FF2, although teachers claim that they do not have time to journal, they give extra tuition to their students because parents agreed to give them some ‘transport’. MT7 seemed to reiterate this when he said that although time was allotted for journaling during the CEP face-to-face sessions, teachers did not utilise it, rather, they preferred to leave early for ‘other pre-occupations in town’ for extra income.

If it is true that teachers dismiss reflective journaling as a burden that does not add any value to their profession, it would therefore be difficult for them to put in extra effort to ensure that they conceptualise the process for analytical deeper reflections.

Discussions

The study established that many teachers could hardly remember how the concept of reflective practice was introduced, hence were unable to define and describe it. Moreover, all but two teachers understood reflections as a mere recollection of, or a flash back on, what one did. Journal writing was alleged to be a way of keeping records of and revising what one has learnt. This indicated that teachers lacked total understanding, or they misunderstood, hence, were not clear about the concept. This led to misconceptions and confusion about the meaning, process and significance of reflective practice and journal writing. As a result teachers were unable to move from the descriptive level to writing deeper analytical reflections. As revealed by the study, this situation could have emerged due to a complex interplay of diverse problems: the way the concept was introduced to teachers; teachers’ lack of capacity to conceptualise it; and the language issue.

Introduction of reflective journaling to teachers

Although most facilitators applauded the way they had introduced reflective practice and journal writing to teachers, teachers were unable to conceptualise the details of reflective journaling. Basing the introduction on teachers’ professional experiences of decision making (referred to as reflections) seemed inappropriate; it was too vague, hence it lacked the details of what the concept entails. Moreover, the way

teachers carry out these 'reflections' could be questionable. This reflection could simply be thinking about teaching, or a mindless following of unexamined practices, or talking about or having self-validating thoughts about how to work, which York-Barr Sommers, Ghere, and Montie (2006) discount as reflections. Although the mirror metaphor seemed powerful and realistic, it turned out to be too philosophical and technical for them to comprehend. Thus, teachers were unable to replace the mirror with correct critical questioning and reasoning (MF4).

Interestingly, whilst the facilitators did not mention reflections' typology of Schon (1987) and Killion and Todnem (1991), some teachers confused this with the process of reflective journaling. This was an indication of confusion that perhaps arose due to inadequate understanding and knowledge of the details of the concept.

The few teachers who seemed to understand that the result of reflective practice is to improve practice, seemed to focus only on the aspect of Schon's reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action Schon (1987) and for-action (Killion & Todnem, 1991) were not mentioned by either the facilitators or teachers, which is perhaps an indication of inadequate delivery of theoretical knowledge to teachers. Without teachers understanding these essential aspects of reflective practice, it would be difficult for them to understand why they were to engage in reflective journaling.

Undoubtedly, the foregoing theoretical introduction of the concept of reflective practice impacted on how teachers understood the activity of journaling. From the teachers' sentiments, in certain instances, journaling was introduced without adequate theoretical knowledge. This could be the reason why apart from the two teachers who mentioned the aspect of conscious, critical thinking as important elements of reflective journaling, none mentioned that this activity leads to new understanding and perspectives of one's practice that emanates from examining, exploring, hence refining practice (Boud & Walker, 1994; Campbell, 1995, in Peery, 2005; Schon, 1987).

Journal writing was also broadly introduced. It lacked a focus on critical incident that would perhaps have an effect on teachers' thinking and action, thus prompting them to critically analyse and examine their practice and grow professionally (Hussu, Toom, & Patrikainen, 2008). Consequently, teachers ended up narrating the daily events and issues instead of having deeper analytical reflections. Alger (2006) argues that this type:

... of descriptive writing is not reflective, but a merely a description of events without additional information related to reasoning or justification. It reads like a report of actions. (p. 294)

Narrating daily events without critically analysing them would not lead to any learning, hence teachers would not find this very meaningful to their profession, thus curtailing their journaling.

Teachers' lack of capacity

Reflective practice can only be enacted by critical thinkers (Barnett, 1997, cited in Ghaye & Ghaye, 1998). However, this study revealed that our target teachers lacked critical thinking skills. It was suggested that this is due to the relatively short time they spend in a schooling system which does not expose them to these skills (Moon & Boullon, 1997). Therefore, teachers lacked experience in reflective thinking.

Owing to the above factors, teachers were unable to conceptualise and have concrete understanding and knowledge of the meaning, process and significance of the concept and therefore develop the skills that can enable them to have 'critical examination of their own motivation, thinking and practice' (Chitpin, 2006 p. 75) through journal writing. As a result, teachers were unable to move from descriptive reflections in order to have deeper analytical reflections. This perhaps caused frustration, disorientation and conflict among the teachers (Admiraal & Wubbels, 2005, cited in Forde, McMahon, McPhee, & Patrick, 2006). It is therefore possible that they did not see the relevance of time spent on reflection and may have perceived it as a waste of time (Moon & Boullon, 1997).

Moreover, owing to a lack of capacity, teachers were incapable of meaningfully interacting with feedback to improve their journal entries. Hence, feedback did not achieve its goal of ensuring success and motivation arising from achievement. Rather, it seemed to frustrate, discourage and make teachers feel incompetent at journaling. Therefore, the potential of feedback to promote deeper levels of reflection (Samuels & Betts, 2008) was inhibited.

Language

Language is the key to all development and words play a central role, not only in the development of thought, but also in the growth of cognition as a whole (Vygotsky, 1962, cited by Santrock, 2004). For teachers to comprehend the meaning, process and significance of reflective practice and journal writing, there is a need for both facilitators and teachers to have a shared language of instruction.

This study revealed the implications of teaching the concept of reflective practice in English to teachers who were more proficient in Kiswahili. This impacted on the way teachers comprehended what it entails and consequently the development of their journaling skills. Teachers were unable to cognitively understand the concept in terms of its meaning, process and significance since it was taught in English, hence they failed to develop adequate journaling skills.

Therefore, reflective journaling in terms of analysing issues became a big challenge since teachers were unable to develop analytical thought in the English language. This may reveal that teachers' inability to meaningfully interact with feedback could also have been due to poor language competence. This scenario relates to Ramasamy's (2002) experiences when she tried to engage students who were not proficient in English in reflective journaling. She asserts that language competency is an essential requirement to engage teachers meaningfully in reflective practice, and it is challenging to engage students who are struggling with (English) language in reflective thinking and learning.

Way forward

Introduction of the concept to teachers

The sudden way reflective journaling is introduced to teachers, compounded with inadequate theory, the rigour involved in relation to journaling and the insistence on a particular format of journaling as suggested by the feedback given, may be too overwhelming for teachers, resulting in their resentment of the whole concept. I therefore suggest that relevant theory has to be carefully stipulated and articulated.

Moreover, the rigour involved has to be carefully considered. As Hobbs (2007) suggests, we should slowly introduce the concept of reflective journaling with only the barest minimum reflection. Moreover, we should not force teachers to reflect in the form of a substantial assignment early on. This perhaps is too much too quickly, which may increase the likelihood of resentment and negativity.

Barnett (1997) cited in Ghaye and Ghaye (1998), states that reflection is enacted by critical thinkers. We are aware that our target teachers are not exposed to critical thinking either through their schooling or teacher education programmes. Thus, this curtails their understanding of the meaning, process and significance of reflective journaling. Therefore, while introducing this concept, we should consider including aspects of critical thinking. These might enable teachers not only to understand and have appropriate knowledge of the concept, but also have deeper critical, analytical reflections.

Language

Both literature and this study reveal that language impacts considerably on how teachers comprehend the details of reflective practice, hence affecting the development of their reflective journaling skills. It is therefore imperative that the issue of language is seriously considered.

We are fully aware that our target teachers are more proficient in Kiswahili than English. This could be one of the reasons why they do not understand the meaning, process and significance of reflective practice and journaling. In this context, we should consider teaching all concepts introduced to teachers, including reflective practice in Kiswahili. This would not only enable them to comprehend the details of this concept, but it would also help them to develop analytical thought in a language that they are more proficient and competent in, thus, facilitating them to write analytical reflections.

Conclusion

This study reveals that several factors are to blame for teachers' lack of deeper analytical reflections. The way the concept of reflective journaling was introduced did not equip teachers with appropriate and adequate knowledge and skills to enable them to become analytical reflective practitioners. Moreover, teachers' lack of critical thinking skills, their incompetence in English language and their dismissive attitude towards new concepts made it difficult for them to conceptualise the complex process of reflective journaling. They failed to make any efforts to understand the process of reflective journaling, and thus became incapable of having deeper analytical reflections.

To enable teachers to become more analytical in their reflections, we need to reconsider the way we introduce reflective practice, making it more tangible for teachers' appropriate understanding, use of Kiswahili rather than English, and introduce and develop critical thinking skills as part of the programme. However, these issues will need serious thought before viable decisions are made.

Notes on contributor

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Appendix 1a: Interview guide for CPs

General introductory questions

- For how long have you been teaching?
- For how long had you been teaching by the time you attended the Certificate in Education programme?
- Why did you choose to attend the programme?
- What did you expect to achieve/learn from the programme?
- Were your expectations met?
- What were the successes of the programme?
- What were the challenges you experienced in this programme?
- What efforts were made to resolve the challenges?

Reflective practice specific questions

- What do you remember about reflective practice? Knowledge of the concept to be explored – what it means; types of reflections; process of reflecting etc.
- How was this concept introduced to you? Comment on the theoretical and practical experience.
- How did you find the experience you had of reflective practice during the programme? Different ways of reflecting (reflective dialogue and journal writing) to be explored.
- What about the experience of journal writing? Issues of daily writing of journals, sharing these with programme facilitators and getting feedback to be explored.
- Did you find it useful during the programme? Why? Why not?
- Do you still reflect? When? Why and why not?
- How do you reflect? Different ways of reflecting to be asked.
- How do you find journal writing? (What are your experiences of journal writing? Issues of time and other enabling aspects of journal writing to be explored.
- Do you face any challenges with this concept of reflective practice? Every challenge to deeply reflect to be explored.
- How do you go about dealing with the challenges?

Appendix 1b: Interview guide for facilitators

General questions on the CEPs

- How many CEPs have you facilitated so far?
- What are your experiences of conducting these programmes – negative and positive experiences will be explored.
- What are the successes of conducting these programmes?
- What are the challenges of conducting the CEPs?
- How do you resolve the challenges?
- How do you think CPs benefit from the programmes – in terms of acquisition of knowledge and skills?
- What are CPs' expectations of the CEPs?
- Do you think these expectations are met? How and why?
- What are the objectives of these programmes?
- Do you think these objectives are achieved? Why and why not?

Specific questions on reflective Practice

- How have you introduced the concept of reflective practice to the CPs?
- What are the objectives of introducing this concept to the CPs?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this aspect of introducing this concept to the CPs?
- How do CPs receive this concept? How do they react to it? Why these reactions?
- How do they understand the process of journal writing?
- How do they perceive journal writing? Why?
- What is your perception of reading CPs' journal entries and giving feedback?
- What impact do you think this exercise has on CPs' journal writing?
- What is the CPs' view of sharing their journal entries with facilitators?
- What is the quality of CPs' journal writing in relation to the process of journaling? Why this type of quality?
- How is the consistency of journal writing during the phase to face sessions? And why is it the way it is?
- What did you find about CPs' journals during the school practicum phase of the programme? Explore reasons why or why not CPs were either journaling or not.
- What are some of the sentiments that CPs express about reflective practice and journal writing?
- How do they evaluate the concept of reflective practice, particularly journal writing? CPs' reaction to this form of evaluation will be explored.
- Have you ever introduced another form of reflection other than journal writing? Why and why not?
- What was CPs' reaction to the other forms of reflection in comparison to journaling?
- Did you encourage it (the other form of reflection)? Why and why not?