1993

Promoting Reflection During Practice Teaching in an Australian University : Clarifying the Rhetoric and the Reality

Ross Brooker
Queensland University of Technology

Thomas A. O'Donoghue
University of Western Australia

PROMOTING REFLECTION DURING PRACTICE TEACHING IN AN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY: CLARIFYING THE RHETORIC AND THE REALITY

Ross Brooker
Queensland University of Technology
and
Thomas A. O'Donoghue
The University of Western Australia

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the promotion of reflectivity during practice teaching amongst student teachers at a university in Australia. By way of background, current criticisms of what is termed the "technocratic" approach to teacher education are outlined and the emphasis which is placed on the development of the "reflective teacher" as a counterforce to this approach is considered. It is then argued that the "technocratic" position and the "reflective teacher" position need not necessarily be viewed as being in conflict. Rather, the contention is that they are both satisfactorily accommodated within Van Manen's (1977) "theory of reflectivity".

For the study reported in the remainder of the paper, Van Manen's levels of reflectivity provided a helpful framework for the concepts, language and practices of reflection. The study details an investigation of the reality and rhetoric of promoting reflectivity amongst student teachers engaged in one practice teaching period of their Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) pre-service programme at an Australian university. Firstly, the paper reports on the extent to which the process of reflection was mentioned and clarified in the university's official practice teaching literature, and on the stated priority for its development as a practicum aim. The paper then goes on to outline the findings of the second phase of the research which explored the extent to which reflectivity was promoted in the practice of university lecturers supervising students on practice teaching.

THE BACKGROUND

(i)   Current criticisms the "*technocratic*" view of teacher education.

Teacher education throughout much of the developed English-speaking world has come under intensive scrutiny in the last ten years. Recent attacks have relied heavily on stereotypes. Increasingly, references are being made to the remoteness of schools from the "real world" and to the vacuousness and subversiveness of educational theory. In the USA these attacks have been fuelled by such works as *Closing of the American Mind* (Bloom, 1987) and *Cultural Literacy* (Hirsch, 1987). A fear mentality that schools and universities are the cause of the deepening social and economic crisis has been created. The call is for a dramatic upgrading of the quality of teacher education, largely through higher standards of "liberal-arts" education for potential teachers, extension of programmes and considerable changes in practicum-clinical experiences (Price, 1989: 14). A related development affecting practising teachers in some of the states in the USA has been the introduction of "intrusive surveillance schemes allegedly aimed at checking efficiency and effectiveness" but constituting a bureaucratic means by which "those deemed to *know*" are able to exercise surveillance and invoke sanctions over teachers "deemed to be deficient" (Smyth and Garman, 1989: 344).

In England and Wales attacks on initial teacher education have come from, amongst others, O'Keefe and The Hillgate Group (1989) of the Right. They dismiss initial teacher education programmes as lacking in intellectual rigour as being dominated by pseudo disciplines irrelevant to "the practical world" of the classroom and as being subversively committed to preaching a spurious "gospel" of equality. This is part of a wider move which argues that schools can be magically restored to their rightful role as servants of the economy if a variety of actions are taken, including a return to the teaching of basic skills, tighter classroom discipline, longer school days, more sophisticated performance indicators and national testing (Walker and Barton, 1987). The attacks have coincided with, and taken advantage of, an alarm about teacher

shortages which make less "restrictive" routes into teaching seem especially attractive.

A major proposal of the critics in England and Wales is that initial teacher education should take place under the control of schools. Some developments have been initiated along these lines with the introduction, on a limited scale, of an articled teacher scheme. There are also suggestions for a national curriculum for training in special "training schools". Overall, the approach is an apprenticeship one which exaggerates what can be learned through imitation, reduces the knowledge which new teachers require to a set of classroom skills acquired in a single school and reduces teaching itself to a simple process of passing on what the "master" teacher knows.

A major criticism of the apprenticeship model is that it views teachers as passive learners and little is done to stimulate reflection. As a result, students teachers learn to view teaching as being all about getting through a lesson in the "correct" manner. The danger is that they may learn to view set curricula and set methods as the upper and outer limits of what is possible (Tinning, 1985; Mouton and Blake, 1984) and create structures and habits of thought which do not allow them to harness their teaching experiences for their continuing learning.

If the overall quality of education is to be improved, teachers must be prepared who are capable of becoming more aware of their subjective beliefs about teaching and its contexts. In particular, there is a need to develop teachers' capacities for reflective action (Dewey, 1933) and to move them away from a perception of the everyday reality as given, clearly defined and in need of no further verification beyond its simple presence (Zeichner, 1981: 5). In contrast to "routine action", namely, action which is prompted by tradition, authority, official pronouncements and circumstances, "reflective action" incorporates active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads (Dewey, 1933: 9). In addition, reflective thinking involves a state of doubt, hesitation,

perplexity, mental difficulty, in which thinking originates, and an act of searching, hunting, inquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity (Dewey, 1933: 12). This position, as the following section demonstrates, underpins much of the thinking in the contemporary "reflective teacher" literature.

(ii) The "reflective teacher" literature.

Over recent years a body of literature on the crucial importance of developing "reflective" teachers has emerged as a counterforce to the "technocratic approach" to teacher education. Works such as Schon's, *The Reflective Practitioner*, which appeared in the USA in 1983, have had a significant influence on those promulgating the importance of the "reflective teacher" perspective. Within a year many teacher education programmes in that country were being described in Schonian terms, as promoting "the wisdom of practice", "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action". By the late 1980's the term had begun to pervade teacher education establishments in Australia. The trend was given a boost with the publication of Schon's second work, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, in 1987.

As with the advocates of a technocratic approach to teacher education, those who argue for the development of a more reflective practitioner do not accept that all is well with teacher education as it exists at present. Gordon (1985) characterises much of teacher education in the USA as being based on an efficiency, scientific, deterministic model of teaching and learning which has fostered acritical, apolitical, highly managerial and prescriptive paradigms. Similar concerns with regard to the situation in England and Wales have been expressed by Stones (1984), Fullan (1985), Hopkins and Reid (1985) and Boydell (1986). Henry (1983) and Price (1987) cast Australian teacher education in the same mould; as being "technocratic", "routine" and "recipe-oriented" producing teachers with utilitarian perspectives.

One of the main concerns is that existing approaches to teacher education do not produce teachers who are able to improve themselves and their schools. The argument is that what is needed are approaches which

would make problematic the knowledge and skills disseminated in teacher education programmes, fostering an open attitude of inquiry into teaching and learning and a reflective orientation towards practice which allows for continuous professional development at induction and inservice level. This view represents a vision of teaching which assumes that teachers develop over time, cognitively, technically and socially (Zimpher, 1988: 58). It is considered crucial that the associated processes be developed in student teachers not just while on campus but also while engaged in practice teaching and field experience.

At the same time, a cursory look at the literature of "reflection" reveals that it is a term which has a great range of meanings and has been appropriated to serve any number of prevailing ideologies. In the hands of some theorists, the act of reflection is rife with political implications. For others, its usefulness as a strategy derives from the very fact of its value neutrality. What is disturbing, as Bullough (1989: 15) points out, is that because of its charm and power to inspire action, agreement on the meaning of reflectivity and implications for the development of programmes for its promotion amongst student teachers is assumed, not won, with unfortunate results. As he puts it, reflectivity becomes a slogan prone to meaninglessness where it may serve comfortably as an aim for any and all types of programmes. In the same vein, any objective expressing a desire to develop students' powers of reflectivity by getting them to focus on their classroom teaching experiences is equally meaningless since the absence of a clear concept of reflectivity makes it extremely difficult to delineate the processes involved.

Accordingly, it was considered appropriate to give an exposition on the position favoured by the present authors, namely, that of Van Manen (1977). Particular attention is given to the practical implications of this position with regard to strategies which could be used for the promotion of the reflective process amongst student teachers during pre-practice teaching and post-lesson conference sessions. It is, however, accepted that these and other strategies can also be used for the development of the process while students

are engaged in other aspects of practice-teaching and field experience.

(iii) Van Manen's theory and the development of the reflective teacher.

Van Manen's (1977) notion of "levels of reflectivity" accommodates a diversity of viewpoints with respect to reflection. It also provides a useful framework of language, concepts and practices for examining reflection in a university's practice teaching literature and in supervisory practices of lecturers with student teachers during the practicum.

Van Manen identifies three levels of reflection, each of which describes different criteria for choosing among alternative courses of action. Level One is concerned with "technical rationality". The primary emphasis at this level is on the efficient and effective application of educational knowledge for the purpose of attaining given ends. To reflect at this level is to question the appropriateness of various courses of action in the classroom but not to enquire about purpose. Level Two is that of "practical reflection" which involves the clarification of the assumptions that are the basis of practical action. The interest is with the moral, ethical and value considerations in the educational enterprise. Reflection at this level is concerned with deciding the worth of competing educational goals and experiences, not just harnessing energies for their attainment. Level Three is on the level of "critical reflection". Here, the focus of reflection is on the way in which educational goals and practices become systematically and ideologically distorted by structural forces and constraints at work in various aspects of society including educational settings.

Within a teacher education programme, reflection at Van Manen's three levels can be promoted in a variety of contexts. One context is that of the pre-practice teaching and post-lesson conferences. Amongst the major means which can be used to promote reflection within these contexts are questioning, pausing and suggesting.

With respect to reflection at Level One, the major attempt is to move the students away from any notion that there is one "correct" way of teaching and encouraging them to

consider the appropriateness of various strategies. This is not to ignore the importance of the supervisor communicating to students, verbally or through examples, information, ideas and practices related to their teaching needs (Turney, 1982: 83). Neither is it to ignore the importance of the supervisor being firm and authoritative in giving directions to student-teachers where the welfare of the pupils might be in danger or where there is a tendency to violate school rules. Within such parameters, however, the supervisor can facilitate student-teachers' analysis of their teaching plans and practice-teaching, thus encouraging them to be autonomous in their decision making about their planning, choice of content and teaching strategies, and in accepting responsibility for their decisions. Attention can also be given to classroom discipline and management, student motivation and evaluation.

Cruickshank (1985) has argued for the development of reflectivity at a level which corresponds with Van Manen's first level. He has been criticised on the grounds that he appears to give legitimation to a focus on the pedagogical and behavioural skills of teachers to the exclusion of social and moral purposes to which teaching should be directed (Gore, 1987). However, as Killen (1989) points out, while Cruickshank certainly did not intend reflective teaching to be a vehicle for consideration of these issues, being primarily concerned with the development of the skills of planning, teaching and assessment, there is ample room for their consideration in other parts of the teacher education programme. Furthermore, Smyth's (1989) point in relation to supervisory practices which concentrate on technical aspects of teaching is also noteworthy, namely, that they are morally sustainable as long as they are open to the possibility of being "turned back" upon themselves so as to establish through dialogue, the veracity of their own means.

While reflection at Van Manen's second level can best be promoted in lectures and seminars through the questioning of assumptions, a variety of strategies can be used during pre-practice teaching and post-lesson conferences while students are engaged in field experience. Such conferences should give attention to engaging students in justifying their

teaching decisions and in examining their ethical implications. At the planning level, students are encouraged to begin to ask themselves why they chose one topic over another. When discipline and management concerns are addressed they are encouraged to question whether or not the approach taken is in accordance with desired social ends.

As with the promotion of reflection at Van Manen's second level, the major forums for the promotion of student reflection at the third level are lectures and tutorials. However, opportunities for "critical reflection" exist at the pre-practice teaching and post-lesson conference stages. Students are encouraged to examine the influences which school and teacher culture has on them and, in particular, to analyse any difficulties they face as a result of conflict between personal values and institutional pressures to conform. The students engage in a critique of domination, of institutions and of repressive forms of authority. It is also appropriate, for the purpose of promoting a view of educational problem solving as being not just an individual matter but a social matter also, that supervisors would encourage students to reflect on how they might, as potential members of a professional community, engage in appropriate action.

The remainder of the paper presents and discusses the findings of a study, in one university in Australia, which investigated the importance which is attached to the promotion of reflection both in its official documents related to practice teaching and in the supervision practices of the lecturers during the practicum.

THE STUDY

The Rhetoric

In 1992 the undergraduate pre-service courses at the university was as follows:

> Bachelor of Education (Secondary)
> Bachelor of Teaching (Early
>   Childhood/Primary)
> Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood)
> Bachelor of Teaching (Primary)

For each of the years of the Bachelor of Teaching (Primary), the subject outlines for the practice

teaching component refer to the importance of the development of reflectivity. In the first year of the course, students undertake ten days of classroom observation in semester two. In the second year students undertake two 15 day periods of practice teaching with observational studies, one in semester one and one in semester two. With respect to the first semester, the practice teaching subject outline in the university's *Handbook* for 1992 states that:

> *It is envisaged that further observation, analysis and critical reflection (will) be fostered in students trial theories of teaching.*

The semester two practice teaching subject outline states:

> *This school experience should challenge students to further develop and exhibit an awareness of reflective and analytic positions concerning curriculum, and teaching and learning within another context.*

In the third year, students undertake two 20 day periods of practice teaching with the emphasis very much on actual classroom teaching experience.

Despite the references to reflection mentioned already, it is noteworthy that there is no clarification of, or elaboration on, the concept in any of the university's official literature on practice teaching. Furthermore, the priority which should be given to the development of reflection as a practicum aim is not made clear. It was the realisation that such deficits existed in the rhetoric which raised the question as to whether they were also evident in the practice of university lecturers supervising students on practice teaching. This, in turn, led to the formulation of the specific research questions outlined below.

The reality

It was decided to pursue the question of whether the already identified deficits in the rhetoric existed in the supervisory practice of lecturers by focussing on the supervision of practicum in the first practice teaching period in year three. Such a focus was justified in view of the fact that the development of the reflective process with respect to this practicum is referred to as follows in the evaluation statement in the university's *1992 Field Studies Handbook* which is distributed to staff and students:

> *... Students must have completed "Other Practical Experiences" section in a satisfactory manner. <u>Continue self evaluation/reflection</u> (authors' emphasis).*

The statement, with is reference to reflection, is repeated in the 1992 Field Studies Handbook for the second practice teaching period in year three.

The main research question was investigated by posing three key questions:

1. What, in Van Manen's terms, is the supervisors' understanding of reflection as expressed by them in interviews and as ascertained from their dialogue with students in pre-practice teaching and post-lesson conferences during the practicum?

2. What, in Van Manen's terms, is the importance attached by supervisors to the promotion of reflection in comparison to the promotion of other aspects of teaching?

3. If reflectivity is promoted at all, which levels in Van Manen's terms are given priority?

Methodology

The first phase of the study focused on document analysis. Following case study method, data for the second phase of the study were collected from interviews and non-participant observation with six volunteer lecturers from four (out of a total of six) schools (departments) within the Faculty of Education at the university. Three male and three female participants provided a gender balance. Experience in practicum supervision ranged from two to twenty years with the average period being ten years.

Each of the supervisors was formally interviewed before and after the practice teaching experience. In each instance the interviews were semi-structured and based upon a schedule of questions distributed to the supervisors prior to the interviews. The initial interview explored the supervisors' notions of supervision; what they tried to develop in their students through their supervision; their approach to supervision; and the nature of any preparation for the supervisory task. Because of the nature of the research questions, the interviewer was careful not to introduce the term "reflection" into the initial interview. However, the supervisors' understandings of reflection and how their supervision might have promoted it amongst

student teachers was openly explored with them in the post-practice teaching interviews.

Data were also collected from pre-practice teaching (at the university) and post-lesson conferences (immediately following a student teaching episode at the school) between supervisors and student teachers. In addition, the researchers kept field notes on the school-based activities of supervisors to provide a supportive descriptive account of supervisory practices. All interviews and conferences were tape recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Categories and themes were generated from the data by using the constant comparative approach to analysis (Glasser and Strauss, 1967).

Findings and Discussion

With respect to the role of supervision, there was consistency between the views expressed by each supervisor in pre-practice teaching interviews and those expressed in post-practice teaching interviews. At various stages they spoke about themselves as having moved in the last number of years from being primarily concerned with assessing students to being mediators, counsellors, co-ordinators and support persons providing a link between the university and the schools. Also, all saw themselves as being moderators of grades. They stated that while the supervising teachers in the school have the main responsibility for awarding of grades, they are drawn into adopting their moderating role in cases where there are major discrepancies in grading between different schools.

The supervisors also highlighted the fact that they are unaware of any standard model of supervision recommended by the university. Accordingly, each supervisor approached supervision differently. In each case they conducted a pre-practice teaching meeting at the university and post-lesson meetings with their students at the school.

In the case of some supervisors, pre-practice teaching meetings were held with individual students while other supervisors met with groups of students. With regard to post-lesson meetings, all supervisors met with students individually. In some instances, supervisors subsequently met with groups of students. Only two of the supervisors provided written feedback to the student teachers for their consideration. One of the two in question argued that this feedback is necessary in order to provide the basis for discussion.

With the exception of one supervisor who specifically mentioned and continually revisited with students, the notion that "there is no one way to plan and to teach", there was a clear tendency by supervisors at pre-practice teaching and post-lesson meetings to focus the student teachers' attention on the development and refinement of the technical skills of teaching. In particular, they stressed the importance of planning skills such as "preparation", "writing clear objectives", "preparing specific content to teach", "preparing what you are going to say", "formulating good questions beforehand"; teaching skills such as "using good questioning techniques and eliciting answers", "using a variety of teaching strategies", "looking for the inclusion of the whole class", "effective use of motivation and communication skills", "good chalkboard writing"; and classroom management skills such as "effective use of voice" and "sound discipline and class control". Some supervisors adopted an instructive approach in impressing upon students the importance of mastering the basics of these teaching skills while others addressed this issue in a more interactive manner through questioning. All expressed concern that the university-based courses do not provide students with adequate opportunities for the acquisition of what are seen as basic teaching skills.

None of the supervisors indicated that they possessed a clearly formulated and comprehensive position on the nature of reflectivity, on the nature of any constituent parts which it might have and of the relationship of the parts to each other and to the whole. Furthermore, the term itself was rarely used by the supervisors in interviews with the researchers or in dialogue with the students, suggesting that it is a concept whose meaning and importance do not feature at the centre of their professional lives. This is somewhat surprising given the importance attached to "reflection" both in the teaching and teacher education literature and in the university's practice teaching documents.

The fact that the supervisors had not given serious consideration to the meaning of the concept of reflection and to how it can be developed in student teachers during practice teaching became particularly clear when they were questioned directly on such matters in the post-practice teaching interviews. The language of one of the supervisors gave indications of a struggle to determine the place of the development of reflection in students during

practice teaching in each of the three years of their course. This was expressed by her as follows:

Year One   –   teach well
Year Two   –   reflect on lessons
Year Three   –   reflect on curriculum.

Furthermore, the fact that this issue is unresolved in her thinking was evident in her willingness to consider the possibility that the development of reflection should not be a priority for pre-service teacher education but "may only be for practising teachers". However, this lecturer, as with all of those interviewed, did not articulate any possible meanings of the concept of reflection.

At the same time, there was some articulation of ideas that showed glimpses of correspondence with Van Manen's position. Ideas encompassed within his notion of reflection at the "first level" were expressed as follows:

It is important to make sure that the student teachers' are aware of alternatives so that they can think of new things they can try.

Third year students should be a bit insightful with respect to lessons by asking why did it go well and what needs to be done next time.

Your teaching is an ongoing action research model. You should be constantly adjusting methods. We need to develop the notion of teachers as learners.

Furthermore, the potential existed for promoting reflection at this level in a more comprehensive and systematic manner. In particular, the importance which all of the supervisors placed on student teachers' self evaluation shows much promise.

A common expression of the supervisors was that "students evaluating themselves is very important". There was some variation in the approaches adopted by supervisors for the encouragement of this capacity. Two supervisors emphasised with their students the need, as one of them put it, for teachers to "think about what went well with the lesson and what didn't go well, and why". It is arguable that while the intent is worthwhile, the means are not very helpful as they fail to allow for the fact that novice teachers need to have their thinking focused on specific aspects of their teaching practice (Turney et al., 1982: 83).

One of the lecturers insisted with her students that they write out their self evaluations after teaching lessons:

I check to see if they have done a self-evaluation to see if they are overpraising or under-praising of themselves, and how the lesson can be improved. This ability must be developed in them. I am not happy just with "this lesson went well".

This approach is helpful because of its potential to engage the student teachers' metacognitive processes. Unfortunately, as with the previous approach noted, there was no accompanying focus of students' thinking on specific aspects of their teaching practice.

A third approach, favoured by the remaining three lecturers, employed questioning to facilitate a process of self-evaluation. Students were confronted with such questions as "how do you like multi-aged teaching" and "this is an interesting management style (adopted by the teacher). What do you think?" With respect to this approach, one lecturer explained his style as follows:

I use questioning to encourage them to engage in self-evaluation. I look at each student differently and get them to self assess their practice, identify what are strengths and weaknesses and think how to improve it. I give them my perspective to think about rather than saying "this is what to do". They still come with a "you tell me what to do" mentality. It is hard to break them out of it."

Another emphasised that when the practice teaching period is over she sits down with the school practice teaching co-ordinator and the student. She then attempts, through questioning, to promote dialogue between all parties as they look at the student's report, focusing on "highs and lows with regard to teaching itself and involvement in the school,"

This latter approach goes furthest towards promoting reflection at Van Manen's first level, namely, the level of technical rationality, where the concern is with the examination of the appropriateness of various courses of classroom action, yet doing so divorced from purpose. Such reflection could be enhanced further by the students responding in written form to the questioning and dialogue. At the same time, in drawing attention to this matter sight should not be lost of the fact that the supervisors are not

consciously guided by theoretical positions such as those of Van Manen.

Van Manen's second level, that of "practical reflection", is concerned with the anticipation and clarification of the assumptions that are the basis of practical action. In the lecturer-student interactions observed, situations arose which held the potential for initiating the student-teachers into this process of deciding the worth of competing goals and experiences rather than just harnessing energies for their attainment. However, there were no indications at any stage that the potential was being fulfilled to any extent whatsoever. There was no attempt to encourage the student teachers to question the fact that most of the schools followed a rigid timetable with the weekly allocation of time to each subject being prescribed at the beginning of the school year. The curriculum itself was also viewed as being non-problematic even though it is the subject of much continuing debate throughout Australia.

Furthermore, the students gave no indications of any desire to engage in discussion on such matters. Rather, as one supervisor put it, "their main concern is with getting a high grade and they bring strong pressure on us to give it to them". This, of course, is understandable given that the Department of Education requires that the university grades the student teachers' practice teaching performance and that the level of the final grade is then a major factor in determining whether or not the graduating teacher secures employment.

The extent to which supervisors promoted reflection at Van Manen's third level, namely, the level of "critical reflection", was the final focus of analysis. This level of reflection centres upon the way in which goals and practices become systematically and ideologically distorted by structural forces and constraints at work in various aspects of society including educational settings. Rowell and Prophet (1990: 23) take up this matter as follows:

> *Schooling takes place in a specific context, with social, economic and political waves contributing to the shaping of ...curriculum.*

They go on to argue that, by looking at themselves within their communities, students can be guided in a critique of the pattern of social relationships and institutions in an endeavour to heighten awareness of their sociocultural reality.

As with lecturers' notions on reflection at "level one", isolated ideas which can be seen as showing a concern for the promotion of reflection at Van Manen's "third level" amongst the student teachers in this study, arose during "conversations" with interviewers. The variety of such ideas is demonstrated in the following comments:

> *I am against mind controlling. I favour the facilitation of personal and professional development; I try to develop a sense of autonomy in the student teachers.*

> *Practice teaching is a time when I can encourage the student teachers to consider if teaching is the profession for them.*

> *Student teachers should get out to see what the total school environment is about and get to understand the politics of schools.*

Again, however, it is important to keep in mind that in making comments of this nature supervisors were not consciously guided by theoretical positions such as those of Van Manen. Furthermore, they were not followed up in any fashion by the supervisors with the student teachers either in pre-practice teaching or post-lesson conferences.

At the same time, it is noteworthy that many opportunities for promoting student teachers' abilities to engage in "critical reflection" presented themselves. Amongst such opportunities were when supervisors impressed on each student teacher in pre-practice teaching conferences the importance of finding out the philosophy one's practice teaching school along with its regulations, the details about the school uniform and the code of dress expected of the teaching staff. However, there was no attempt made to encourage the student teachers to probe the assumptions underlying the school ethos and to delve into its origins and the interests which shaped it so that they might be rescued from taking it for granted. In other words, there was no attempt made to develop students who would become "elaborators of culture rather than mere reproducers of it" (Zeichner and Teitelbaum, 1982: 107) and who would become open to considering the range of possibilities that exist beyond what has become institutionalized in their immediate settings.

A further finding of the study related to the preparation of lecturers for the supervisory task.

In recent years the university in question has conducted no formal preparation programmes for lecturers to facilitate the development of student teachers' reflective abilities while on practice teaching. The general thrust of lecturer preparation has been of an organisational nature, dealing with such matters as the importance of establishing good relationships with the host schools, making sure all of the necessary form filling is done and ensuring that the student is complying with the schools' regulations with respect to dress and decorum. Furthermore, most of this has been communicated in written form and no major forum has existed wherein supervisors could discuss any of their reservations and questions. Accordingly, it is not surprising that in their pre-practice teaching and post-lesson conferences, supervisors concentrate almost totally on focusing the student teachers' attention on developing and refining the technical skills of teaching.

CONCLUSION

In recent years a substantial body of literature stressing the crucial importance of developing "reflective" teachers has emerged. Associated with this has been a trend towards incorporating the term "reflection" into the objectives of teacher education programmes. This paper reported the findings of a study, in one Australian university, aimed at evaluating the extent to which the notion of reflectivity is mentioned in practice teaching documents, and is subsequently developed and promoted by lecturers in one practice teaching period for students enrolled in the Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) pre-service programme. It has demonstrated that while the university's practice teaching literature for the degree in question stresses the importance of students developing their reflective abilities, the meaning of the term "reflection" is not clearly articulated. Furthermore, the supervising lecturers did not possess a developed notion of the concept and their supervisory practices indicated that their priorities with respect to the purpose of practice teaching, at best lay at the most basic level of reflective activity.

Consequently, it is mandatory that this situation be addressed in teacher education programs as the understanding of reflection, by lecturers and students, would seem to be an essential starting point for its development in student teachers. To ignore this mandate destines reflectivity to be no more than a meaningless slogan. Furthermore, the notion of reflection is in danger of being

brought into disrepute if the rhetoric in teacher education course documents is not matched by the reality of practices aimed at its promotion amongst student teachers.

This case, contextualised in one university, is offered to other teacher educators so that they might consider their perceptions and practices. The notion of reflectivity is a powerful one which holds great possibilities for transforming teaching practice. However, unless the rhetoric is clarified and the notion of reflection is clearly articulated and related to practical outcomes, the notion will go the way of all other well meaning but ill defined notions which have entered the teacher education debate over the years. This process needs to be supported by meaningful attempts to prepare lecturers for the effective promotion of reflection in their supervisory practices. This study provides a framework for developing enlightenment and guiding activity on these matters since it can "speak" to others in similar and related contexts who share some of the same concerns.

REFERENCES

Bloom, A. (1987). *The Closing of the American Mind.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Boydell, D. (1986). Issues in teaching practice supervision research: A review of the literature. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 2(2), 115-125.

Bullough, R.V. (1989). Teacher education and teacher reflectivity. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(2), 15-21.

Cruickshank, D.R. (1985). Uses and benefits of reflective teaching. *Phi Delta Kappa*, 66(10), 704-706.

Dewey, J. (1933). *How We Think.* Boston: D.C. Heath.

Fullan, M. (1985). Integrating theory and practice. In D. Hopkins and K. Reid (Eds.). *Rethinking Teacher Education.* London: Croom Helm.

Glasser, B. and Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research.* Chicago: Aldine.

Gordon, B.M. (1985). Teaching teachers: 'Nations at Risk' and the issue of knowledge in teacher education. *Urban Review*, 17(1), 33-46.

Gore, J. (1987). Reflecting on reflective teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(2), 33-39.

Henry, J.A. (1983). Collaborative relationships within school based experiences. In D.A. Rice and B.J. Ungerer (Eds.). *Thirteenth Annual Conference Proceedings*, South Pacific Conference of Teacher Education, Brisbane.

Hirsch, E.D. (1987). *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Should Know*. Boston, M.A.: Houghton Mifflin.

Hopkins, D. and Reid, K. (Eds.). (1985). *Rethinking Teacher Education*. London: Croom Helm.

Killen, L.R. (1989). Reflecting on reflective teaching: A response. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(2), 49-52.

Mouton, J. and Blake, R. (1984). *Synergogy*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Price, D. (1989). The practicum: A recent review of the literature. *The South Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 17(2), 13-26.

Rowell, P.M. and Prophet, R. (1990). Curriculum in action: The 'practical' dimension in Botswana classrooms. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 10(1), 106-112.

Schon, D.A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.

Schon, D.A.. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Towards a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Smyth, J. (1989). Developing and sustaining critical reflection in teacher education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 4(4), 343-361.

Smyth, J. and Garman, N. (1989). Supervision as school reform: A critical perspective. *Journal of Education Policy*, 4(4), 343-361.

Stones, E. (1984). *Supervision in Teacher Education*. London: Methuen.

The Hilgate Group (1989). *Learning to Teach*. London: The Claridge Press.

Tinning, R. (1985). Student teaching as a pedagogy of necessity. Paper presented at the AIESEP International Conference in Physical Education and Sport, Adelphi University, New York.

Turney, C. (1982). *Supervisor Development Programmes: Role Handbook*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.

Van Manen, M. (1977). Linking ways of knowing with ways of being practical. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 6(3), 205-228.

Walker, S. and Barton, L. (1987). *Changing Policies, Changing Teachers: New Directions for Schooling*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Zeichner, K. (1981). Reflective teaching and field-based experience in teacher education. *Interchange*, 12, 1-22.

Zeichner, K. and Teitelbaum, K. (1982). Personalized and inquiry-oriented teacher education: An analysis of two approaches to the development of curricula for field experiences. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 8(2), 106-112.

Zimpher, N. (1988). A design for the professional development of teacher leaders. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(1), 53-60.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

John Smyth
Flinders University of South Australia

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I want to raise four issues:

1. Why the interest in reflective approaches, now?
2. What is to be gained from this approach?
3. What are some of the advantages?
4. What are the drawbacks?

The basic argument of the paper is that the notion of "reflective practice" has generally had a positive history and connotation in schools, and that it is worth persisting with, but unless we develop some touchstone principles to guide us as to what it means to act reflectively, there is a distinct danger that a constructive and useful approach will be "at risk" as good ideas are appropriated by governments for other ends - ones that are not necessarily in the interests of students or teachers.

I want to conclude by canvassing some of the principles that might underlie a re-assertion of what it is that is fundamentally important about reflective approaches.

WHY THE INTEREST?

There are a number of major changes occurring across a range of professions and professional groups that are having a profound impact on the shape and nature of professional knowledge. Perhaps the major factor has been the breakdown of traditional forms of production (the so-called Fordist notions) and their replacement with much more flexible forms of specialisation, and ways of responding to customers and clients. With the dramatically increased speed of communication and the new micro-technology, it is now much easier for capital to move around so as to take advantage of global comparative advantage.

The effect of this has been that rigid, centralised forms of production are no longer the most appropriate. We have a dramatically changed sets of conditions. Donald Schon (1991) captured the essence of these changes for education when he indicated that disciplined-based forms of knowledge, which in the past had been used to try and construct grand theories of the way the world works, are no longer relevant. What we have in their place, are much more locally-based theories that recognise the idiosyncrasies of site-specific circumstances, and that acknowledge the integrity and worth of knowledge won by people at the workface. This represents a major shift in the centre of gravity of knowledge. The view that there are particular elite groups in our society whose responsibility it is to develop knowledge for and on behalf of others, has endured for a long time (and even now is only dying slowly in some quarters). What characterises these new locally-based approaches is the much more negotiated (even devolved) ways, in which the people who do the work are given a much more significant stake in it. As Schon (1991) put it in his most recent work, what we have is a "reflective turn", in which practitioners are allowed to give voice to the reasons that lie behind what they do. What this means, essentially, is that those of us in universities and other educational agencies have to grapple with a changed role for ourselves - namely, how to work with practitioners in assisting them to observe and describe what it is they do, and with what effect. Schon (1991) put it in terms of *"exploring the understandings revealed by the patterns of spontaneous activity that make up practice"* (p.5). Our role, therefore, becomes one of helping insiders to *make sense of experience*, often in quite strange and puzzlingly new sets of circumstances - rather than telling them what these experiences ought to look like.

This is quite a different emphasis to the past where "practice" was regarded mainly as a field of application, where ideas were developed by someone else (who usually wore the label of theorist or policy maker), then exported back to the field of practice to be implemented. The emphasis in the reflective approach is upon practitioners being assisted to theorise their own accounts of practice, and how they might use that as a springboard for action. What this change does is turn the world dramatically on its head. The issue is not "what is best for practitioners to do", but rather "what do practitioners need to know, and what do they already know or understand that might help them gain those insights?". Herein lies the really interesting (and daunting) aspect to the reflective turn - there is no uniform approach!!