

# Where is Reflection in the Learning Process?

## Investigating Our Practice



Today, we finished the second week of an interpersonal communications course. The students in the course are first term college students, a few fresh out of high school. As is my common practice, I end my week of instruction with reflective questions for the students:

- What was your significant learning this past week?
- What principles for everyday life can you extract from our class activities? (Note: The activities are experiential).
- What did you learn or what was reinforced about yourself?
- What can you take from the class activities to use in your life outside of class?

I asked the students to get in small groups to discuss these questions. They got in their groups and just looked at one another with baffled looks on their faces while remaining silent. I tried rewording the questions and providing examples and still got blank looks when they returned to their group discussions.

### **Products of a Standardized System**

I began to get frustrated by their lack of response until a major AHA struck me . . . *They are products of a standardized system where they were asked to memorize standardized information and spit that information out on standardized tests.* When finished with one unit of information, they were asked to quickly move onto the next unit. They were not given the time, skills, and opportunities to extract

that good counselors and educators need to be engaged in ongoing reflective practice.

The critically reflective habit confers a deeper benefit than that of procedural utility. It grounds not only our actions, but also our sense of who we are as teachers in an examined reality. We know why we believe what we believe. A critically reflective teacher is much better placed to communicate to colleagues and students (as well as to herself) the rationale behind her

*They were not given the time, skills, and opportunities to extract personalized meanings from their studies.*

personalized meanings from their studies. Reflection was not part of their curriculum as it cannot be measured nor tested.

### **Educators as Reflective Practitioners**

When I entered my doctoral program, I was quickly introduced to [David Schon's Reflective Practitioner](#) (in an adult learning course), and was immediately drawn to the importance of reflective practice. Later, as a counselor and teacher educator, I have held tightly onto the belief

practice. She works from a position of informed commitment. She knows why she does and thinks, what she does and thinks. ([Stephen Brookfield](#))

The only way that educators can teach and promote reflective practice by their students (of all ages) in their own classrooms is to engage in, embrace, and fully understand this process themselves.

It is important to realize the implications for our students of our

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own critical reflection. Students put great store by our actions and they learn a great deal from observing how we model intellectual inquiry and democratic process. Given that this is so, a critically reflective teacher activates her classroom by providing a model of passionate skepticism. As Osterman (1990) comments, “critically reflective teachers – teachers who make their own thinking public, and therefore subject to discussion – are more likely to have classes that are challenging, interesting, and stimulating for students” (p. 139). ([Stephen Brookfield](#))

I fear that many educators and educators-in-training are not reflective practitioners. There are several resources to assist educators in gaining knowledge and skills for reflective practice:

- [Stephen Bloomfield \*Becoming a Critically Reflective Practitioner\*](#)
- [Reflective teaching: Exploring our own classroom practice](#)
- [Reflective Practice Online Resource](#)
- [Educational Leadership: Getting into the Habit of Reflection](#)

If reflective practice is not encouraged within one’s teacher education program or school work environment, then it becomes that educator’s responsibility (verging on an ethical responsibility) to do so on his or her own.

### ***Reflection in the Classroom***

Learners do not just receive information only at the time it is given; they absorb information in many different ways, often after the fact, through reflection. The most powerful learning often

happens when students self-monitor, or reflect.

Students may not always be aware of what they are learning and experiencing. Teachers must raise students’ consciousness about underlying concepts and about their own reactions to these concepts. ([ETE Team](#))

Reflection in the classroom can begin at a young age. Reflection during instructional time can be facilitated through:

- Structuring lesson plans to support reflective thinking.
- Providing lesson components that prompt inquiry and curiosity.
- Providing resources and hand-on activities to prompt exploration.
- Providing reflective thinking activities that prompt students to think about what they have done, what they learned, and what they still need to do.
- Providing reflection activity worksheets for each lesson plan to prompt students to think about what they know, what they learned, and what they need to know as they progress through their exploration. ([ETE Team](#))

There are specific classroom activities that can assist students in engaging in reflective practice.

- [Think-Pair-Share](#)
- [Think Books – Reflective Journals](#)
- [Exit Tickets](#)
- Blogging - [Application of Blogs to Support Reflective Learning Journals](#)
- Podcasts or Vodcasts

I further discuss reflection as part of the learning process in [The Flipped Classroom: The Full Picture](#). 🌱

*By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.*  
[Confucius](#)

### References

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