

Book title: Reflective Teaching 3rd Edition

Author: Andrew Pollard

Publication date: 2008

1. What is your overall impression of the book?

'Reflective Teaching is a comprehensive study into the many aspects and factors a 'reflective teacher' needs to consider about the classroom environment and the different types of learners he will face. Mr Pollard has extensive experience in teaching from early years to secondary school level before he focused his efforts in becoming a teacher educator and researcher. The level of knowledge Mr Pollard has in relation to 'pedagogy' is evident throughout the book as he covers many areas from issues in the classroom to the diverse cultures that affect pupil learning.

The book is not intended to be a step by step guide for how a teacher should conduct himself in the classroom, but is more of an in-depth analysis of teaching as a profession and the challenges that are faced by its practitioners. The author touches upon many of the fundamental factors that affect a teacher's performance and aims to direct the reader towards the answers by encouraging a 'reflective' approach where teachers can understand more about their own strengths and weaknesses and this will in turn benefit them when teaching pupils.

2. Who do you think would benefit most from reading the book? What will they learn?

The book is a thought provoking social and cultural reflection on how teaching has evolved and how anyone who is new to this profession or even has considerable experience, may continue to progress and prosper by understanding the science of teaching. This in turn can only be beneficial for the pupils they teach. As a trainee teacher, I found the book riveting and benefitted from the many themes that the author has explored. Often we pick up on certain factors but are unable to reflect on what they mean and how they affect us until we find an academic explanation or insight which helps us to relate to those factors.

Any teacher who is either newly qualified or is still training would benefit greatly from reading about how self-reflection can make us better teachers and more adaptable practitioners. The knowledge of 'self' seems to be the underlying theme of this book as well as the need to know our students. This book speaks extensively about the psychology of children and how certain fears and anxieties they have can affect their learning and also the learning of their peers. A teacher who is new to this profession would struggle to make connections with certain disruptive behaviour and the social and cultural diversity within the classroom. These are the same areas where academic studies can extend a teacher's foresight and mould his attitude without the privilege of having spent years in the profession.

3. What did you think about the quality of the writing? Please consider the tone, structure and ideas. Does it suit the audience?

The book is divided into three parts beginning with the stages a teacher should consider when studying about 'reflective learning'. Despite the length and content of the book, the language used remains simple and accessible, with avoidance of high level references which could discourage a student teacher. The first chapter looks into mentoring and the characteristics of 'reflective teaching' which stems from the theory of 'reflective action' as discussed by Dewey (1933). The second part explores the areas of focus a 'reflective teacher' needs to have when considering the environment he is in and the different types of students he will face. The section introduces the effects of 'culture' and social divide on learners and how family background has a bearing on the attitudes developed by the student. The section on 'Values and Identities' was of particular interest to me as it explored deeper psychology that inhibits a teacher and can take him away from his role of developing his pupils. The nature of the 'roles' of both teacher and pupil is also analysed. The classroom environment is crucial for the dynamics of the class and the many different factors that can either secure or disrupt this environment is given particular attention. The theories of behaviour and learning patterns were also touched upon, giving a critical reflection on how effective these theories are and how the reader needs to be open-minded when considering their effectiveness. Other areas of 'self-presentation' which is vital if a teacher is to build a positive relationship with the students is closely reviewed and this is an area where newly qualified teachers should take particular care.

The tone of the content is very professional and educational. Some books written by teachers for the guidance of teachers has a very basic and casual style as it is intended to be light reading but there is no doubt that Mr Pollard was writing an analytical and academically proficient book which students should read and refer to throughout their early years.

4. Please discuss the research used to underpin the ideas. What evidence does the author use? Is it robust and up-to-date?

Mr Pollard has carried out extensive research while writing this book. He has also worked alongside; Julie Anderson who is at 'University of Bristol', Mary Maddock, Sue Swaffield and Paul Warwick who are from the University of Cambridge. The list of the sources he has used have been given at the end of the book. These consist of academic papers and journals and the most valuable source the author has relied upon, his own extensive experience.

'Pedagogical Studies' is an extensive area as is 'reflective practice' so there are many theories to consider and no doubt that everything mentioned will not be suitable for every teacher in every situation however there is a lot of research and analysis here which should provide something beneficial to all readers including experienced teachers.

5. What did you learn from reading the book? What ideas/approaches/practice will you change or adopt as a result of reading this book?

The book highlights the need for every teacher to keep self-reflecting and this process is evolving all the time. Teaching can be complex and requires a flexible and adaptable approach. The sections that deal with 'behaviourism' was interesting from an academic perspective but I will be focusing a great deal on 'classroom climates and interpersonal relationships'. This section discusses extensively the environment of the classroom and how relationships are formed between teacher and students and also between students. These chapters highlight the dynamic environment of the classroom and how different factors affect perceptions children have of the teachers and the perceptions children even have of themselves. To understand how children think and what motivates them to learn is crucial if a teacher is to be successful therefore to have knowledge of these factors and be able to self-reflect contain the key elements to any teacher's success.

6. Could you share a quote from the book that particularly resonated with you?

"In considering ourselves as teachers, the first step is to consider the person we are. We could do this in terms of social, cultural and educational background, experience and qualifications, positions, interests and personality'. This quote is taken from the chapter; 'Values and Identity: Who are we'? This knowledge and perception we have of ourselves is called 'self-image'. This is how we view ourselves and how we wish our students to see us and often plays a key role in preparing us to form a learning and successful environment within the class.