REFLECTION AND DIALOGUE IN POST GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EXPERIENCED LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Abstract

Recent discussion has focused on the benefits and constraints of using and teaching reflection for professional self-development (Farrell, 2007; Volk, 2010). Alongside this is an interest in the value of dialogue in teacher development (for example Edge, 2007). This paper describes the experience of advanced language teachers participating in a reflective practice project undertaken as a paper in a professional master's qualification in a New Zealand tertiary institution. Using data from teacher participant reflective essays and an end of course evaluation, the paper describes teachers' growth in reflectivity and notes the role of dialogue in promoting professional development. The paper also explores the extent to which Stanley's framework (1998) was useful in measuring levels of reflectivity. The researchers found that teachers believed the course promoted their professional development in several ways, and that the activities participants found most helpful were ones that contained an element of dialogic interaction. Participants' level of reflectivity at the end of the course was high on Stanley's (1998) framework, but it was necessary to modify parts of the framework for use in this context.

Introduction

Self- reflection as a Teacher Development Tool

There has been much discussion on the benefits of using teacher self-reflection for professional development in language teaching. Reflective practice is a process whereby teachers examine their own practice, reflecting, preferably with a trusted colleague, on areas of interest in their practice. They can identify weaknesses, plan and try out new directions, observe, record and reflect on the results, identify further areas for improvement or exploration, and start a new cycle of reflection. It is conscious, planned and systematic, as well as flexible, and the teacher normally chooses the area for reflection. It is thus empowering and accommodating of a wide range of teaching situations (Farrell, 2007). As part of a reflective practice exercise, teachers can also be encouraged to engage with the literature in their area of interest, and take a more critical look at their own practice in the light of this literature. This can involve trying new approaches in the classroom, and testing the applicability of the research findings to their context. There is sound advice and guidance widely available for language teachers on how to engage in the reflective process (notably Farrell, 2007; Richards & Lockhart, 1994).

Dialogue, as part of reflection and collaboration, is seen as powerful for teacher development by a number of writers. Day (1993) is an early advocate. More recently Louie, Drevdahl, Purdy & Stackman (2003) have encouraged teachers to do participatory research involving self-reflection with a 'critical friend', and Gray (2012) has shown the value of 'conversations' in association with observation. In addition Farrell's (2007) list of six procedures that teachers can undertake to facilitate self-reflection includes three dialogic activities (p10). Dialogic activities are also widely advocated elsewhere in the traditional teacher development literature (for example Burns, 1999; Edge, 2007; Gray, 2012; Head & Taylor, 1997; Stenhouse, 1975).

The benefits of such activities are many. Stenhouse (1975) and Day (1993) stress the importance of teachers being challenged. More recently Louie et al (2003) stress the value for teachers, in the context of 'self-study teacher research', of the opportunity for critical feedback, resulting in increased reflectivity as well as increased motivation and encouragement. Feryok's (2011) review article in the New Zealand context similarly highlights the capacity of an interlocutor to stimulate a re-evaluation of a narrative, leading to new insights. In a model called Co-operative Development (Edge, 2007) the roles of the listener include challenging as well as thematising, goal setting and trialling. Burns (1999), in the context of action research, stresses the importance for collaborating teachers of discussing common problems and deciding together how to solve them. Other benefits of dialogic activities listed in Farrell (2007) include reducing isolation and building collegial relationships, as well as promoting access to a greater range of ideas and experience for the discussion.

Dialogue is thus often used in reflective practice and professional development activities. However the impact of developmental activities and individual teacher development in general on practice in the classroom is not well understood. Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) in their best evidence synthesis (BES) addressing the links between teaching activities and student outcomes note that there is:

'a second black box [ie an unknown area of cause and effect] situated between particular professional learning opportunities and their impact on teaching practice. Little is known about how teachers interpret the available understandings and utilise the particular skills offered … or the consequent impact of these on teaching practice and student outcomes' (p. xxiii).

According to the BES, factors that have an impact on positive outcomes include: time for development and good use of time, external expertise, the engagement and enthusiasm of teachers, challenging of prevailing discourses, a community of practice, consistency with current research, integration of theory and practice, an understanding of theory and the enquiry process, new understandings consistent with current practice, and encouragement of on-going enquiry (Timperley et al, 2007). All of these factors are evident in the approach adopted in the delivery of the masters' level reflective practice project paper discussed in this article. During their cycles of reflective practice, students have time to critically engage with self-chosen aspects of their practice with the support of tutors on a one-to-one basis, while becoming more familiar with the current theory via a literature review task.

Measuring reflectivity

A number of writers consider levels of reflection in language teaching and how to measure them. Stanley's (1998) model presents a useful means of considering teachers' development of reflectivity, suggesting five phases and focusing on the process of reflection. Stanley's phases of increasing reflectivity that teachers might experience are:

1. *Engaging with reflection*: Engagement happens when teachers are curious enough to learn how to reflect on their teaching.

2. *Thinking reflectively*: Teachers begin to reflect, but the process is shallow, consisting of uncritical narrative and a mere consciousness of how they felt about classroom events.

3. *Using reflection*: Teachers fully understand the concept of reflection and begin to use it as a tool. They experiment with different ways of reflecting on their teaching, including when and with whom, and begin to work out what works best for them in their own context.

4. *Sustaining reflection*: Reflection inevitably throws up unpalatable findings. When teachers are able to move beyond these and continue the process of reflection, they have experienced this phase.

5. *Practising reflection*: Teachers are able to set up frameworks and systems to maintain reflection as an ongoing process.

To summarize, reflective practice is a critical teacher development tool which is empowering because it supports the teacher's (in contrast to the theoretician's) ways of knowing and learning. It is enhanced by dialogue, and can help teachers apply research findings and adapt them to their classroom situation. It also enables teachers to build theory relevant to their own context from an exploration of their own classroom practices. Development of reflectivity can move from tentative beginnings to true independence in which it becomes part of a teacher's routine. Finally

it has features which are already proven to have had a positive effect on practice (Timperley et al, 2007).

Training/mentoring for Reflective Practice and Action Research

Reflective practice, however, although powerful in its development potential, is not easy for many teachers. Guidance in the form of encouragement, support and training is needed. The introduction of more formal procedures for teacher reflection in course-based training, such as reflective practice or action research, is seen as important. The findings from (2005), Volk (2010) and Wyatt (2011) suggest that guidelines and mentoring is essential. In recent literature on course-based teacher education, Volk (2010) and Wyatt (2011) also stress the importance of the participants being able to focus on specific relevant contexts. Vine and Alve (2011) in the New Zealand context have found that, for the beginning teachers in a certificate level programme, observing lessons by experienced teachers and reflecting on them was more powerful than reflection on their own teaching experiences. Dialogic activities and observing videos of their own practice were effective for a group of in-service teachers in the context of an intensive course in Turkey (Gün, 2011). However the numbers in Author's (2005) study are small, and the research of Vine and Alve (2011), Volk (2010) and Wyatt (2011) has been conducted in the undergraduate pre-service context. Gün's (2011) research relates to more experienced teachers but not in the context of a higher level formal qualification involving more extensive engagement with theory.

Our research thus sought to investigate what effect a formal reflective practice project might have on levels of reflectivity for experienced language teachers enrolled in a postgraduate programme. In addition, as the postgraduate paper was a new one, we wanted to investigate to what extent the reflective practice paper enabled teacher development in general.

Research Methodology and Context

The research questions addressed in this paper are:

1. To what extent did participants believe the paper enhanced their development as teachers in the chosen area of focus?
2. What course activities and processes in the paper did the teacher participants believe had most enhanced any development?
3. What phase of reflectivity on Stanley's (1998) framework had the teacher participants experienced by the end of the course?

The participants in the study were qualified language teachers studying on a master's program and completing a 12 week paper entitled Reflective Practice Project. Six of the seven teachers enrolled in the paper elected to take part in the research. Five of these participants taught English as an additional language (EAL) to students in a range of settings: high school, private language school, tertiary institution and private tutoring. The sixth teacher taught a foreign language at university. There were two males and four females. Four teachers had English as their first language while the other two were bilingual. The teachers had between 6 and 20 years of language teaching experience.

Teachers enrolled in the master's paper completed a portfolio with three main components. Firstly there was a literature review in the teachers' self-identified area of focus (such as teaching

vocabulary, conversation, pragmatics) in which they articulated a theory of teaching. The second component was a submission of four essays critically reflecting on their practice in this area of interest. The third part was a final essay summarizing teachers' learning, and a plan for future professional development in their chosen area of focus. The essays in the second component were based on a number of reflective practice activities. Two of these activities were compulsory: observation, and the formal gathering and analysis of classroom-based data for reflection. The observation could be either a peer or tutor observation of the teacher's classroom practice, or observation of a colleague's teaching. The formal data-gathering tool and analysis method were negotiated with the tutor from a number of options. The choice of tools could include, for example, a student survey, a pre and post-test, or a teacher reflective journal. Teachers selected two other reflective activities from a list of options: a second observation, audio or video recording of a segment of their teaching, narrative inquiry, a reflective journal, and peer discussion on lesson plans, worksheets, assessment tasks, or to resolve a specific area of difficulty.

Our research process utilised qualitative and quantitative data. The third component of the teacher participants' portfolio (the reflective summary essay of their learning) yielded thematic qualitative data to answer research questions 1-3. A paper evaluation, administered immediately after paper completion, was in two sections. The first section included questions on the value to participants of activities and teaching strategies (research questions 1 and 2), and the second involved further questions to assess their phase of reflectivity and attitudes to reflective practice (research question 3) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participants completed the summary essay and the evaluation. It was not possible to preserve anonymity for the reflective summary essay since it was part of the assignment programme for the course. However, analysis took place *after* the marking of assignments and notification of results. The data were collated and analysed using descriptive statistics for the quantitative data, and by identification of the themes emerging in the qualitative data from the reflective summary essay and in the open response type items in the evaluation. Each researcher analysed half of the qualitative data for theme, and moderated the analysis of the other researcher for consistency. Where there was variance, we discussed and re-analysed the data. Reflective comments in the summary essay and in the open-ended responses in the evaluation were analyzed for evidence of phases of reflectivity using Stanley's (1998) five phase framework.

Because we believed phase 4 of the framework (Sustaining reflection) was a substantial lift in level, we found it necessary to divide Stanley's phase 4 into three phases, defined below with examples from participant comments:

4a was maintaining contact with reflection in the face of negative results:

> I began to review the strategies I was using and started to consider techniques that would allow for improvements in these areas. (Ed, summary essay)

4b was asking more specific questions or brainstorming ideas in order to address negative results:

> If I gave the students more time to think, they could perhaps be led to find the information for themselves and the lesson would be more student centered. (Pam, summary essay)

and 4c was using workable methodology to address the issues:

> I would devise and provide my observer with a **checklist** to obtain feedback on key points ... and afterwards we could ...[discuss] the observation. (Lynn, summary essay)

Participants' comments were coded for evidence of the phase of reflectivity experienced by each participant. Where two comments or one extended comment matched a phase of reflectivity, it was assumed that the participant had experienced this phase.

Results and Discussion

Influence of the paper on participants' development as teachers

Data analysis revealed insights into the nature of the participants' development as teachers, as well as into the role of the paper in fostering their progress. There were five key outcomes for teacher participants developing their teaching *within* and *outside* their chosen area of focus.

1. *Confirmation of teaching theory:* All six teachers commented that effective teaching strategies had been validated and so aspects of their teaching theory, formulated after in-depth reading, had been confirmed.
2. *Refinement of teaching approach:* Five teachers indicated they had adjusted their approach to teaching in their chosen area.
3. *Limitations in teaching skills and strategies*: These were acknowledged by three teachers.
4. *Increased subject knowledge*: This was noted by two teachers.
5. *Development outside focus area*: An interesting finding was that teachers also showed development *outside* their area of focus. For example four teachers indicated new realisations about the nature of teaching and learning in general. As well, three teachers commented on increased knowledge about reflective practice.

These positive outcomes as a result of engaging in reflective practice are consistent with the claims for reflective practice of Farrell (2007), and Richards and Lockhart (1994), and the conditions under which they were achieved match those found to be effective in the promotion of teacher development by Timperley el al (2007).

The nature of the teachers' development is illustrated below through three case studies representing the diversity of teachers, languages taught, student cohorts and teaching contexts.

Louis

Louis' first language (names have been changed for anonymity) was Chinese. He was fluent in English and he was teaching ESOL to a group of adult Pasifika migrants in a community programme. He chose to develop a theory of teaching collocations underpinned by the Lexical Approach. As part of his approach, he used storytelling as a vehicle for his students to notice

collocations. The course *confirmed for him the value of the strategy of storytelling* (Outcome 1) as indicated in his following comments:

> I am more convinced that storytelling is an appropriate and effective method for my students…. [It] fits in with the Samoan students' way of learning… [and] is also constructive to a good classroom atmosphere.

As well, Louis reflected on how he could *refine his approach* to teaching collocations (Outcome 2) and made some very systematic, specific statements on the improvements he wanted to make.

> Firstly, I should keep a collocation as basic as possible when identifying them. Secondly, more example sentences should be given to the students to help them to form and test their hypotheses. Thirdly, I should select some shorter and less complex stories. Finally, I have learned from the observer's comments that it is appropriate to pay some attention to grammatical forms in teaching, even though this is a meaning-focused approach.

Later comments in his summary essay confirmed that Louis had carried out his first and third intentions, signifying he was developing and refining his teaching of collocations.

Louis also indicated the paper had prompted *development in his pedagogy outside his focus* (Outcome 5). For example, in reflecting on his lesson planning, he realised he needed to choose activities that were practicable in the classroom:

> [I need to] adjust my criteria for adopting and designing practising [sic] activities for my students by paying extra attention to the feasibility of activities, rather than only focusing on the goals of them.

Comments such as this from Louis and other teachers show that they were not just limiting their reflections to the area they elected to study; in addition, the paper was fostering a broader application of reflective practice. It seems that once teachers started to reflect in their chosen area, their reflections stayed 'turned on' and were of wider benefit in their teaching.

Mary

Mary was a Pasifika teacher whose first language was English. She was working in a high school with predominantly Pasifika students, and her focus was on teaching conversation in multi-level ESOL classrooms. Part of this focus was developing ways to meet the challenge of teaching students at different levels. Like Louis, participating in the paper allowed her to *confirm her theoretical knowledge through her practice in the classroom* (Outcome 1). Firstly, she found using trained peer tutors in the ESOL classroom was an effective strategy for working with less able students. Secondly, planning and introducing a variety of tasks was important for motivation in multilevel classes. A further aspect of Mary's development was the realisation that she lacked the advanced linguistic knowledge necessary to develop her learners' conversational skills. Subject knowledge, as recognised by Pachler, Evans and Lawes (2007) is 'the basis of a teacher's professional experience' (p. 10). Mary became aware of her need to be 'knowledgeable and confident of the features of spoken discourse' in order to raise her own students' awareness of these features. Later reflections showed she *had increased her subject knowledge* (Outcome 4). She gained:

> 'a greater understanding of what needs to be taught explicitly such as the genre stages of an interview … and the appropriate responses required (chat and chunks).'

'Knowing what you don't know' is an important step in development, which Mary recognised.

Valeria

A third teacher was Valeria, a native speaker of Spanish, fluent in English, teaching in a tertiary institution. Like Mary, her area of interest was the teaching of conversation, in her case the teaching of Spanish through the use of authentic texts to beginner level. *A key aspect of her theory of teaching, was confirmed* (Outcome 1) - authentic texts could be used even at beginner level. However, she came to realise there was also a place for scripted dialogues, which can provide a sense of security to low level learners, and *she refined her theory of teaching* (Outcome 2) to include student exposure to both kinds of dialogues: authentic and carefully scripted. Like Mary*,* she also became *aware of limitations in the content of her teaching* (Outcome 3), realising she had 'not been focusing enough on the features of oral language such as repetitions and false starts.' Like Louis, Valeria *showed development outside her area of focus* (Outcome 5). She became aware of the value learners placed on pair and group conversations, and also realised the importance of clear instructions for keeping learners on task and that these instructions could usefully be given in L1. This finding indicates that reflective practice allows even experienced teachers to be reminded of, or come to new awareness about, the value of basic aspects of pedagogy. In addition, like two other teachers, Valeria commented on her increased knowledge of reflective practice. In particular, the assignment writing helped her to be disciplined in her thinking and to develop reflective strategies:

> [assignment writing] forced me to reflect on certain issues and to think about things more coherently and constructively.

While outside the chosen area of focus, this kind of general development was an important goal of the paper (Outcome 5).

Thus these three teachers indicated that completing the reflective practice project enhanced their development as teachers. Through the reflective cycle they not only confirmed or modified their theory of teaching in their chosen area of focus, but also developed in other areas such as subject knowledge, basic pedagogy and reflection.

Findings from the summary essays written by Louis, Mary, Valeria and the three other teachers were confirmed by the end of course paper evaluation. Because of the generalized nature of the paper evaluation responses, the themes did not always match those identified in the summary essays. However, the data provided useful support for the overall findings on the nature of the teachers' development, with all participants stating that the course had changed their teaching practice during the semester. They indicated the course had provided them with a process that had allowed them to become more aware of their own practice, change their teaching in-course, and develop skills to bring about future change.

The role of specific course activities in enhancing development

To examine in more detail the role of specific course activities in enhancing the teacher participants' development (our second research question), the summary reflective essay and the

evaluation were analysed for reference to these activities. Table 2 identifies the development activities that were chosen, and instances of learning which teachers, according to their summaries, believed had resulted from each activity.

[Table 2]

This data shows the three activities that the majority of teachers believed had generated learning were the literature review task (4 teachers), the observations (5 teachers) and the peer discussions (4 teachers). The teachers found the reading and literature review helpful in developing their ideas, and four of the six teachers made comments such as:

> With my beliefs established and backed up in the literature I had been reading, I decided to learn more about how the Lexical Approach could provide solutions to these problems [learner difficulty in producing language with native-like fluency] in my teaching. (Ed, summary essay).

Thus writing had fostered an understanding of theory and the integration of theory and practice (Timperley et al, 2007).

The activity that teacher participants most consistently referred to in their learning was observation of their teaching. While one tutor observation of their teaching was compulsory, four teachers also elected to use another observation as a source of data for reflection. Observation was always followed by discussion with the tutor-observer so this was a highly dialogic activity. Five of the six teachers indicated they planned to make adjustments to their teaching as a result of the feedback from the observations. Both these experienced postgraduate students and Gün's (2011) experienced undergraduates valued self- or tutor- observation of their teaching with dialogic activities, in contrast to Vine and Alve's pre-service students who learned more from observing others, suggesting that it is important to consider the level of experience when choosing the focus of observational activities for language teacher education.

Peer discussion was the other optional activity seen as more useful in promoting teacher development. This was also by definition dialogic. Four teachers chose to discuss their teaching with a colleague, and one teacher carried out two discussions. Discussions enabled teachers to see things that they could not perhaps have seen for themselves. For example, one teacher commented:

> I realized through discussions with a colleague that this … worksheet…[had] too much to cover in one lesson. (Mary, summary essay).

The popularity of the observation and discussion activities may be because of their dialogic nature, as noted by Gray (2012).Teachers had the opportunity to learn from others through being challenged and discussing issues, observing the classroom practice of other teachers, or receiving input on their own practice from an observer. In comparison, audio recording, the 'other data gathering activities' and the reflective journal, were all more isolated activities and were either not used by more than one or two students or were not regarded as a source of learning by the majority of those who used them. Narrative inquiry is also dialogic but was chosen by only one student (who found it effective). Perhaps its lack of popularity was partly due to the fact that it is an activity not yet widely understood by practising teachers.

These findings from the summary essay were supported by qualitative data from the first section of the anonymous end-of-course evaluation. In addition, quantitative data from the evaluation indicated that all participants rated writing assignments as 'very useful' (top of the 3 point rating scale). Two teachers provided further comment on the value of writing assignments, noting that the writing shaped their thinking and learning and allowed them to strengthen/consolidate their ideas.

> Writing assignments gave me the opportunity to consolidate a lot of my ideas, and predictions about theories were confirmed...My professional knowledge increased and my approaches in teaching became…clearer as a result of what I had learnt (participant 5, paper evaluation).

The one-on-one tutorials, another dialogic activity, were rated by all the teachers as either 'very useful' (5 teachers) or 'useful' (1), supporting the findings about the value of guidelines and mentoring of Author (2005), Volk (20101) and Wyatt (2011). One teacher expressed appreciation of the individualized and private nature of the tutorials, saying they were:

> … very helpful and worthwhile as [they] … helped me to hone in on areas of need in a more informal setting rather than in a whole class setting. [They] also promoted individual accountability for your own work, and … you could also discuss difficulties in a more private setting which affected your progress (participant 5, paper evaluation).

Teachers also commented on their development as learners. They felt personally involved in the learning process, and supported by the tutors. Again this underlines the importance for them of having a dialogic "sounding board" rather than working in isolation. One teacher noted:

> Reflective practice can narrow the gap between tutors and students which definitely optimizes learning (participant 1, paper evaluation).

In summary, it is evident from the survey data that these experienced teachers felt the course assisted them in their development as teachers, and that dialogic activities, together with the writing, especially the literature review, contributed considerably to this development.

Phase of Reflectivity on Stanley's Framework at End of Course

To address our third research question on the teachers' phase of reflectivity experienced by the end of the course, a qualitative analysis was conducted on data from the end-of-course summary essay and from the second section of the paper evaluation.

Table 3 indicates the number of teacher comments (taken from the summary essays) showing evidence of each phase of reflectivity. It was difficult to measure phase one (Engagement in reflection) since the teachers were compelled to undertake reflection as part of their course. Teachers were thus assumed to be at phase one by virtue of their enrolment in the course. Teachers were assumed to be at phase one. [Table 3]

As can be seen from Table 3, all teachers had a number of entries up to and including phase 4b, whereas only 4 teachers had any evidence that they experienced phases 4c or 5. Of these, two had not securely reached phase 5, because they had only one brief entry at this level. Those who did (Louis and Valeria) had either two entries or a fully developed plan in one entry. Louis, who

had chosen to focus on the teaching of collocation, had a series of student interviews planned in detail:

> In order to carefully analyze the students' improvement in speaking, I will do a series of interviews …These interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed…[analysis of this data] will be able to reveal how collocation teaching is constructive to students' speaking. (Louis, summary essay)

He also had a system for maintaining peer discussion in his teaching practice. Valeria, who was focusing on the teaching of authentic spoken Spanish, planned to keep a reflective journal and regular peer observation.

> Next year, I am planning to write another reflective journal and to arrange an exchange of teaching observations with other colleagues. (Valeria, summary essay)

The other four teachers showed ample evidence of phase 4 reflection in that they all continued to engage with and practise reflection after encountering evidence of deficiencies in their practice.

It could therefore tentatively be concluded that the level of reflectivity experienced by the end of the course was high in all participants, at least at phase 4b. However evidence from the paper evaluation was needed to ascertain whether or not this could be attributable to the course.

Paper evaluation data furnished confirmation that participants believed that the course had not only given them enthusiasm for adopting and continuing reflective practice, but had also influenced the tools they used. Five out of six participants who completed the evaluation indicated that in on-going reflective exploration they intended to use similar tools to the ones they had trialled on the course. Effects of the course on ability to engage in reflective practice included knowing how to investigate (participants 3 and 5) and realizing that reflection on practice can be as beneficial as reading and understanding theory (participant 1).

> Prior to this course of study, I wouldn't have known how to go about investigating a troublesome aspect of my teaching. The completion of [the course] means I can use teacher-initiated action research to bring about improvement. (participant 3, paper evaluation)

> Yes, a huge influence. Previously, I thought professional development is only limited to learning more and more from the literature. However, self-reflection can more precisely satisfy our own needs. (participant 1, paper evaluation)

There were two issues for us in interpreting Stanley's phases. In assessing the evidence for phase 1 (Engaging) we realised that participants were required to engage with reflection as part of their master's course, so it was not clear whether teachers really intended to use reflective practice outside the context of the course. In addition we found that the assessment of phase 4 (Sustaining) was difficult as Stanley's description was too broad. Our division of this phase into three sub phases facilitated greater calibration.

Conclusion

To conclude, our data showed that there were positive findings for all three research questions. Firstly, the teacher participants believed the paper had enhanced their professional development in the chosen area of focus. It enabled them to carry out some in-depth reading, confirm or modify a theory of teaching developed from the reading for the literature review, come to new understandings of the limitations of their practice, and develop their pedagogical practice as well as increasing their subject knowledge. Secondly, the course activities that most enhanced this development appear to be those that involved interaction with either tutor or colleagues. So activities that promoted dialogue (observations, one-on-one tutorials and peer discussions) seemed particularly beneficial in bringing about changes in teaching. In addition, the written components of the course (literature review and reflective essays) were confirmed as useful in shaping ideas and linking theory to practice. Finally the course was also successful in promoting reflectivity. By the end of the course all participating teachers at least sometimes showed evidence in the qualitative submission data of reflectivity ranging up to phase 4b on Stanley's framework. Four reached beyond this (two securely to phase 5 and two sometimes to 4c and 5).

The researchers were particularly interested in further findings in three areas. The first was the teachers' perceptions that the course extended their awareness of their general teaching practices not only inside but also outside their area of focus. Second was the value of observation of their teaching combined with dialogic activities and processes for experienced teachers. Thirdly, with the addition of sub phases to encompass three aspects of sustainability in phase 4, Stanley's framework was effective as a measure of reflectivity in a formal assessment of experienced teachers in a postgraduate programme. This is in spite of the difficulties in the assessment of evidence for phase 1. A post-course survey, however, could be useful in assessing the engagement of participants in the absence of compulsion.

Carrying out a longitudinal case study based research project in this context would serve to confirm or disprove what we and others have found. It might also yield further data on the relationship between the levels of reflectivity reached on the course and the ability and willingness of teachers to undertake further formal reflective practice and even action research further out from graduation. A larger study with a greater number of participants may also be needed to reinforce the trustworthiness of outcomes.

Acknowledgements

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Table 1: Data Collection

Method	Data for study	Types of data	Research question
1. Course portfolio	Reflective Summary Essay	Qualitative	1, 2, 3
2. Paper evaluation	Section 1	Qualitative & Quantitative	1, 2
	Section 2	Qualitative	3

Table 2: Activities chosen by teacher participants

Activity	Louis	Pam	Ed	Mary	Lynn	Valeria	No. of teachers reporting learning
1. Lit review*	√	√√	√√	√	√√	√√	4
2. Tutor Observation*	√√	√√	√√ √√	√√	√	√√	5
3. Observation by peer				√√			1
4. Observation of colleague					√√	√√	2
5. Peer discussion: Worksheet	√√	√√	√√	√√			4
6. Peer discussion: Lesson plan	√√						
7. Reflective Journal		√		√√	√	√√	2
8. Audio tape		√					
9. Narrative enquiry					√√		1
10. Other data gathering: • Surveys	√√					√√	2
• Student test results			√√				1

Compulsory activity

√ = Teacher participant chose this activity

√√ = Teacher participant indicated they learned from this activity

	Phase 1 Engaging	Phase 2 Thinking reflectively	Phase 3 Using	Phase 4a Sustaining in spite of negative evidence	Phase 4b Continuing to ask questions	Phase 4c Workable methodology to answer questions	Phase 5 Practicing
1.Louis	Enrolment	0	1	5	3		**1 extended**
2.Lynn	Enrolment	2	4	3	6	**1***	1 tentative
3.Valeria	Enrolment	1	3	2	1	0	**2**
4.Pam	Enrolment	1	1	4	3	**1**	1
5.Ed	Enrolment	0	4	4	**4**	0	0
6.Mary	Enrolment	0	3	10	**3**	0	0

Note: Bolded entries indicate highest phase participants deemed to have experienced on the framework