An analysis of the impact performance management is having on the reflective practice of student teachers in England.

Charlotte Meierdirk
University of Portsmouth

Abstract
This paper reviews the important literature that has been produced on reflective practice and how the changing educational system, we exist in, may be constraining how reflective practice is used by student teachers and educators. The performance culture that dominates the existence of educators may be constraining the creativity of student teachers and the way they engage in reflective practice.

Keywords
Student teachers, teacher education, reflective practice, reflexive practice, performance culture, audit culture, mentoring, teacher training, performativity, identity
An analysis of literature in reflective practice

There are many different views on what reflective practice is. Reflective practice is often credited to Schon (1987), but Dewey (1909) wrote about reflective practice at the start of the 20th Century but it was not embraced to the same extent.

Schon (1987), in his book ‘Educating the Reflective Practitioner’, mainly bases his theory on more technical occupations, such as architecture and engineering. There is a small chapter on its use in teacher education but it is limited to a handful of pages. Although Schon's (1987) books may be criticised for this reason it is still of use. The theory of reflective practice has been embraced and fully integrated into the teaching occupation both at the training and fully qualified level. Becoming a successful teacher is all about reflective practice. Even with the new teaching standards, that have just been published, the term has an important role (DoE, p.4, 2012):

Teaching Standard 4: reflect systematically on the effectiveness of lessons and approaches to teaching.

Most reviewers of reflective practice concentrate on Schon's (1987) reflection in action but it is important not to discount his theory of knowing in action as this is an important part of the reflection process. Sub-consciously reflecting is important to teachers, as this is what occurs on a day to day basis. It is only when a teacher consciously reflects it becomes reflection in action. It is also important not to ignore tacit knowledge and the role it plays in reflective teaching. The role ‘knowledge’ plays in reflective practice is important. When Schon’s (1987) talks about knowing in action he is referring to tacit knowledge:

I shall use knowing in action to refer to the sorts of know how we reveal in our intelligent action – publically observable, physical performances like riding a bicycle and private operations like instant analysis of a balance sheet. In both cases, the knowing is in the action. (Schon, 1991, p. 25)
Knowledge in action is a reflective practice that does not rely on a conscious process. The knowledge is inherent in the action which is based on prior experiences. Reflective practice requires an interaction with the practitioner’s tacit knowledge. If knowledge in action is tacit knowledge it may be hard to access it. When talking to the student teacher it can be hard to access knowledge that is subconscious unless it is drawn out by another person; in most cases this would be the school mentor (Clift, Houston, & Pugach, 1990; Grimmett, 1990).

There may be situations a student teacher comes across where tacit knowledge will not be enough for the optimum outcome for the pupil and teacher. This is when Schon’s model of reflection in action becomes useful. Schon developed a three stage model for reflection in action (Schon, 1987, p.40):

1. Providing students with technical training
2. Helping the students think like a professional
3. Enable the students to develop a new form of understanding and action

Student teachers are encouraged to use reflection in action continuously where a problem is focused on and action is taken to reflect and solve the problem.

Schon (1987) himself acknowledges his concepts has limitations. Schon says it can be difficult for the student to actually know what they have gained from the reflection they have engaged in. Teacher training programs need to go beyond Schon’s concept of reflection in action to achieve reflective practice’s full benefits. Zeichner believed that teacher training should be reflective about:

…”the moral technical and political issues, as well as the instrumental issues, that are embedded in their everyday thinking and practice. (Zeichner, 1983, p.6)

Dewey (1909) had a more critical approach to reflective practice that was not limited to the classroom. The ideologies of the teacher are not addressed in reflection in action. Critical reflective practice is a:
Teacher educators’ reflective practice is given to the trainees as a ‘step by step’ process. It has its benefits as it does help the teacher to improve techniques in the classroom, but it does not address the student teacher’s principles and ideology. Teacher educators ‘reflective practice’ reinforces the technical teacher rather than the critically reflective teacher (Popkewitz & Fendler, 1999). Teacher educators encourage inquiry ‘in relation to teaching, but not in relation to the educational and social contexts in which teaching is embedded’ (K. T. Zeichner, K., 1982, p. 103).

Ross and Hannay (1986) recommend that teachers should critically reflect on a daily basis. They believe all stakeholders in the student teacher’s practice should encourage critical thinking, including the school mentor and the university tutor. The technical process of reflective practice can be expanded to include a more personal, critical reflectivity. Critical reflective practice should then embrace the student teacher’s past experiences and ideological beliefs. Zeichner and Liston (1996) believe that a teacher is not engaged in reflective teaching unless they have questioned the ‘goals and values that guide his or her work, the context in which he or she teaches, or never examines his or her assumptions’ (K. M. Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p.1). It is this questioning that is needed to move a ‘technically focused’ reflective practice to one which is truly reflective.

There has been a huge shift in the English Educational system in the last 30 years. In the 1980s there was a push to improve exam results and make schools more accountable (Mansell, 2007). In 1988 the Education Reform Act was passed and the National Curriculum was introduced. The new curriculum came and with it statutory assessments at the end Key Stages: 1, 2, 3 and 4. Schools gained control over their budgets and parents had more freedom to choose their schools. In 1992 Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) was established to monitor the quality of teachers and the delivery of education.
League tables were introduced in 1992, but target setting and ‘accountability’ became more important after the change of government in 1997. Raising educational standards became the government’s priority. More money was being spent on education and with this came accountability. The government needed to justify the extra funding on education and managed this through, what Mansell (2007) refers to as, ‘hyper accountability’. The extra money being spent on education needed to show results and targets had to be met to justify this increase in expenditure.

The Education Acts of the 1990s and 2000s were supposed to free up the education market and introduce choice for parents, but at the same time they have reduced the autonomy for the teacher. As Stephen Ball points out:

> Significant parts of the teachers practice are now codified in terms of Attainment targets and programmes of study, and measured in terms of Standard Attainment Tasks. The spaces for professional autonomy and judgement are reduced. (S. J. Ball, 1994, p. 49)

Looking at our educational system, on the surface, you would imagine it to be decentralised but after closer inspection it is more centralised than one initially thinks. Although the government may be opening up the educational market it may also be reducing the power of the teacher.

In a centralised system we see:

> The teaching body starts off with relatively little autonomy from the administrative framework which defines its training programme, supervises certification and organises placements. Usually, to ensure continued control teachers are made civil servants and are subject to the same restrictive statutes which withhold the right to combine and engage in political action. (Archer, 1984, p.111)

This quote was written before the educational reforms of the late 1980s, but it can be equally applied to today’s educational system. Stephen Ball (2004; S. J. Ball, 1994)
has written numerous articles and texts on the lack of autonomy of teachers and the continual oppression of the audit culture teachers find themselves in. The references Archer makes to the centralised educational system are still applicable today (Archer, 1984).

In a centralised educational system teachers lack autonomy as they cannot chose their courses, curricula, assessment and exam procedures (Archer, 1984). There is much evidence to suggest this has is still happening in the English system. Education is dominated by targets, accountability and performativity. It is a culture, a norm that is embedded in school culture and may have become a system teachers and students are now used to (Adler & Goodman, 1986).

In a centralised system governments can tolerate some discontent but it is managed (Archer, 1984). We see this in England. We do not see direct repression, but we do see the ever present auditors that check and legislate. Ofsted can now come in and inspect schools with only two days notice (OfSted, 20.04.2010). Ofsted set the criteria and then ultimately decide on the future of a schools’ funding. Ofsted inspectors ultimately decide on the ITE funding by their grading system. Teachers, teacher educators all live in a state of fear from Ofsted as only the ‘outstanding’ providers are guaranteed funding. Ofsted can make you feel accountable for every action and this can become soul destroying (Fielding, 2001).

The audit and performativity culture breeds conformity (Adler & Goodman, 1986). There is no room for questioning as teachers are too busy justifying their own existence. It is unsettling to think that it could be possible that education itself may be indoctrinating. The standards set for student teachers do not require reflexivity and a questioning of our educational system.

Educational policy is dependent on the influence of a number of factors which Archer (1984) refers to as transactional worth. The government negotiates with different groups, and draws up educational policy depending on the transactional worth of those groups. Teachers will only influence educational change if they can provide resources (transactional worth) to the government that they believe to be useful. Teachers only have one resource to ‘trade’, with the government, and that is their
expertise and knowledge of education. If that knowledge is not seen as useful then teachers have no other resources. As Stephen Ball (1994, p.50) points out ‘The teacher is increasingly absent rather than a subject of discourse’ (S. J. Ball, 1994, p. 50), but this may be because teachers lack any transactional worth.

England now has an educational system that is tightly controlled. Teachers are told the assessment they should use, the courses the pupils should study and they are told what knowledge they need to progress through their careers. Is it possible teachers no longer have knowledge that is valuable to the government, because the government is controlling the knowledge that the teachers receive?

Some students now come to university unable and, it seems, unwilling to question the status quo. They have ‘gone through’ the English educational system and some students see it as the norm to be told exactly what to cover and to have targets set for them. They want their future mapped out because they are used to it (Mansell, 2007). Pupils are taught to pass tests which may not lead to an improvement in their wider education with:

*England’s children subjected to more national examinations than their counterparts anywhere else in the world, school carers can be seen as mainly exam preparation, with short bursts of education in between. (Mansell, 2007, p.245)*

In ITE the teaching standards on ‘reflective’ standard is about ‘evaluation’ not reflexivity. This standard is approached by producing lesson evaluations showing *reflection in action*. In education teachers are continually driven to reach the next level. Many new teachers are used to this perforamativity and conformitvity, as the education system is about ‘ticking boxes’ and meeting criteria (Mansell, 2007). Teachers themselves are judged by this criteria: ‘Performance management is the process for assessing the overall performance of a teacher or headteacher’ (TDA, 2010). It is the new education culture. Results and targets are driving education and this is reflected by our teachers and their training.
The focus here is primarily on performance itself as a system of measures and indicators (signs) and sets of relationships, rather than on functions for the social systems and the economy. (S. Ball, 2004, p.145)

The realm of teaching and education has now embraced the audit culture to such an extent it now seems like normality:

...if language in which teaching is spoken about is predominantly improvement, value added, cost effective efficiency and effectiveness, measurement of achievement, learning outcomes, flexible delivery, markets and the like, then it should not be too surprising if this lexicon gradually begins to have the appearance of being credible natural, logical and a common sense way of talking about what is important to teaching. (S. Ball, 2004, p.247)

Performance culture dominates education: its structure, its culture and its discourse. It is dominated to an extent that there is less room for the teacher’s identity and questioning of the ideology of education (Britzman, 1994).

Conclusion
The student teachers may be less questioning of themselves and the educational system because of the need to conform. New teachers are joining a professionalism that they want to fit into. Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) talks about adapting a language that makes us feel that we belong to a group. With new teachers their main concern is feeling they belong to their school and its culture and one way to do this is through conformitivy. The schools and cultures the student teacher joins have very strong practices and ideas and it can be difficult for the new teacher to maintain their sense of self in such environments. Zeichner refers to this phenomena as the ‘washed out effect’ (K. M. Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981, p.7).

Teachers are finding different ways to represent themselves. Many define themselves in terms of results and grades. There is a new language in teaching that represents the teacher and who they are and it is a language of performance (Bernstein, 1996). The terms and expressions teachers use are a ‘taste of a
profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person...a
taste of the context in which it has lived its socially charged life..' (Britzman, 1994, p.293). There will be a natural struggle between the performance culture of education and the teacher's identity. It is important to recognise this struggle because this will produce a more reflexive student teacher.
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