The Portfolio as an Assessment tool to transform the Pedagogy of ITE: A social justice framework

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Focus of presentation

- Context of Teacher Education: Portfolios a move to professional model of education

  ITE Contested Field but highly resistant to change.

  1. Purposes,
  2. Processes,
  3. Content of ITE,
  4. Definition of quality teaching ?Assessment of teaching.

- Reflection: Defining it and looking at some common misconceptions
- A Teaching Portfolio: What is it?
- Its link to Development Education: Developing a Social Justice stance

Key argument of today's presentation

- Stance is important
- Teacher education as identity work
- Portfolio as a tool for inducting teachers into a social justice framework
- Critical engagement in literacy practices key to civic, social and political engagement and democratic societies
- Teachers need the tools to critique conventional and normative practices in teaching and learning
- Teaching is political work.

Teacher Education Context: Problematics

- ‘Good Teaching’ a highly contested field: Political, economic and neo-liberal pushes to define quality and control resources;
- Little development in teacher education pedagogical reform despite reforms in other levels;
- Little critical discourse on who and what is counted in quality education – (e.g., School/university league tables)
- Dominant teaching practices in schools and universities resistant to change;
- Innovations in teacher education, school curricula have been ‘addendums’ and often marginalized rather than central activities;
- New rhetoric on ‘knowledge based societies’ linked to economic indicators – ‘best practice’ discourse often reified and used to prescribe quality

Teacher Education: A dichotomous landscape rather than dialectical

- Critics of traditional ITE have underlined the 'rational technical' focus of much of university based ITE (Schon, 83,97,95, Leonard & Gleeson, 1999, Burke, 2002).
  1. Positivist epistemology" that assumes teachers can apply generic codified knowledge ---to "swampy lowlands" of classrooms
  2. Theory –practice dichotomy (Linear relationship between teacher learning-performance-student outcomes).
  3. Improving teaching and learning framed as a technical problem –learning is short circuited.
  4. ITE students often placed at the intersection of 2 competing cultures – schools and university cultures often directly in opposition. Conservatism of school cultures and the preservation of traditional teaching didactic teaching methods.
  5. ITE in universities 'espouse' and advocate learner centred pedagogies but model didactic methods – often resource deficient departments.
  6. Learner centred pedagogy requires different structures and more investment
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Two dominant and competing orientations for teaching and learning: Epistemological and operational implications

1. Teaching as transmission
2. Teaching as interpretative work

1. Knowledge
2. Teaching
3. Learning
4. Assessment

The portfolio: A movement toward a professional model of teacher education

Technical Model

1. **Accountability** to external agencies
2. **Teaching** is **action** –little emphasis on reflection, research, or theory
3. **Individualistic** in focus – little attention to context.
4. Teachers as '**technicians**' -Low level of participation in decisions
5. Curriculum development/assessment separated from classroom space
6. Teaching seen as doing something to others

Professional Model

1. **Accountability** to norms and values of the profession.
2. Emphasis on **reflective practice**. All action is theory embedded.
3. A **collaborative** model is stressed. A CoP supports learning.
4. Teachers as professionals –trustworthy, thoughtful, decision-makers informed by research.
5. Teachers **design, enact, and evaluate** their curriculum decisions.
6. Teaching seen in terms of mentoring others into a culture of learning

Transmission Interpretive

- Teacher-student relationship separate roles
- Teaching, learning and assessment are separate and fragmented components
- Focus on summative assessment or generic testing knowledge
- Individual focused – unit to be assessed is individual student or teacher
- Knowledge codified and decontextualised, generic, and knowledge construction process remains invisible and hidden

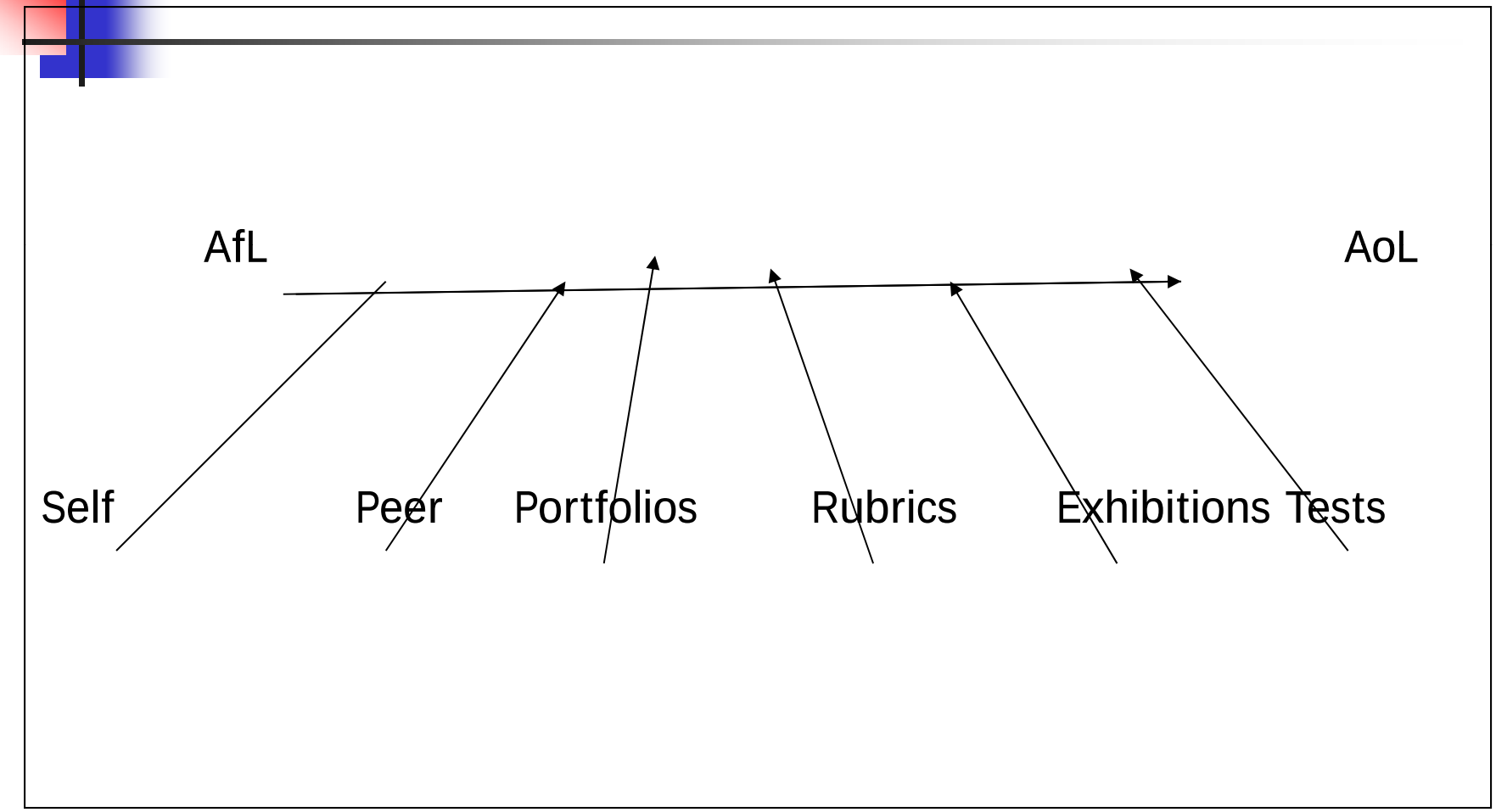
- Reciprocal relationship between student and teacher
- Teaching as learning – mutually constitutive relationship
- Assessment as learning focus- on formative feedback to assist learning
- Tools and strategies made explicit for student to understand how knowledge is constructed and coached in the tools and methods of inquiry in order to tools to reconstruct ow

Context Matters

- What is the context of ITE in your institution?
- What are the learning structures that support educators inquiry into their work?
- What is valued in terms of ‘quality’ in your institution?
- How is practice defined?
- What are the theoretical frameworks underpinning ITE work?
- Where is the integration, vision, in pedagogical and assessment practices?

Teaching Learning and Assessment: A continuum

Assessment integrally linked to learning. Students learn the tools, skills, and knowledge to evaluate their progress and to inform learning (Stiggins, 2002)



Reflection orientation

- Technical –means and predetermined ends
- Practical – means, goals, outcomes, meaning is open
- Critical – critique of the social structures underpinning work. Moral and ethical concerns.

(Van Manen, 1977)

What activities sponsor reflection? Portfolio work can include all of the following

- Action Research-problem based
- Case Studies/ethnographic studies
- Reflective journalling
- Microteaching/Supervision of practicum
- Structured curriculum tasks (lesson planning to include a social justice dimension or linking local content knowledge with global issues of sustainability, equity, human rights, etc

A social justice framework (Moje, 2007)

1. All practice needs to be culturally responsive in order to be viewed as ‘best practice’
2. SJP as a **bridge** from everyday knowledge to conventional content knowledge
3. As a way to **teach skills to** navigate cultural and discursive communities
4. As a way to teach students to **challenge and reshape** conventional academic knowledge

The portfolio as a scaffold to induct student teachers into the discourses and disciplines of education

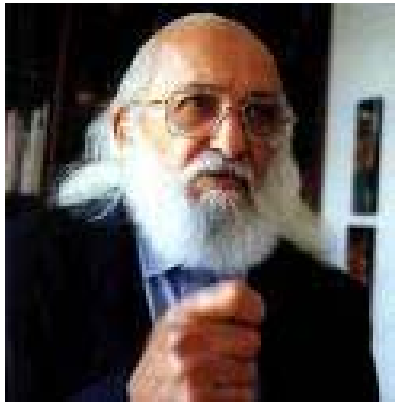
- Literacy practices are key in order to teach students the skills and induct them into the tools and discourse communities of the disciplinary knowledge base of teaching
- We must teach student teacher to understand the underpinning epistemic, social/cultural assumptions underpinning knowledge production- power lies close to the know. Prod.
- Writing and presentation key literacy practices that scaffold the construction of the portfolio

Stance is important: Critical Reflection a key capacity to become an 'activist' educator

- 'Teaching to Transgress' bell hooks (1994)
- 'Teaching against the grain' Cochrane-Smith & Lytle(1990)
- 'Teaching is never neutral -domesticating or emancipatory' P.Freire (1970)
- Viewing practice as value laden and reflecting a particular worldview is an important starting place and engaging with a commitment to 'hunt assumptions' as a basis for knowing (Brookfield, 1995)

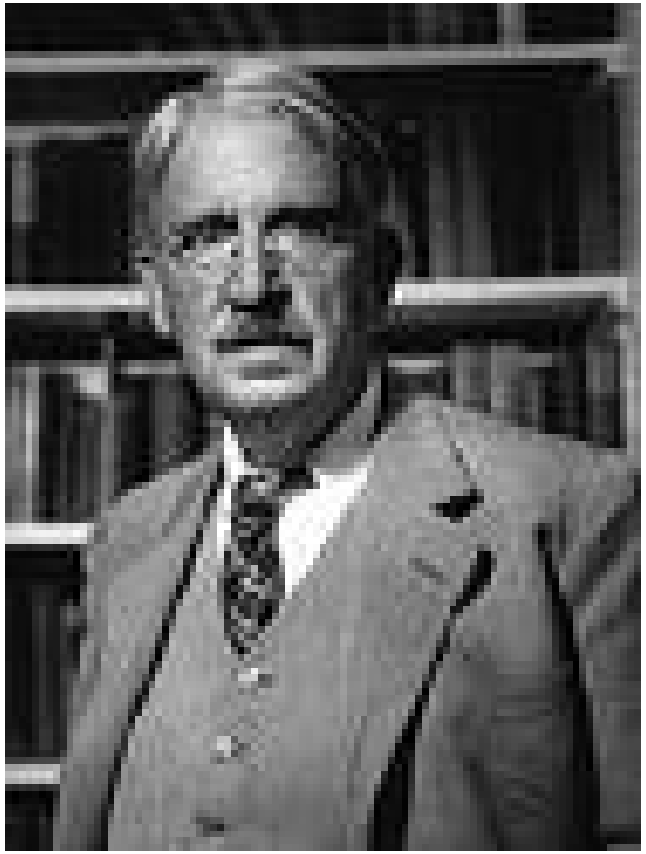
Education as Transformation: Processes are in foreground

- Praxis – Action that is informed and committed.
- Naming the world -Reading the world as text and subtext
- The portfolio a process to induct students into valuing and committing to inquiring into their world view as key social and professional practice responsibility.
- Dialogue and Conversation the methods of ‘coming to know’ our assumptions, beliefs and values.



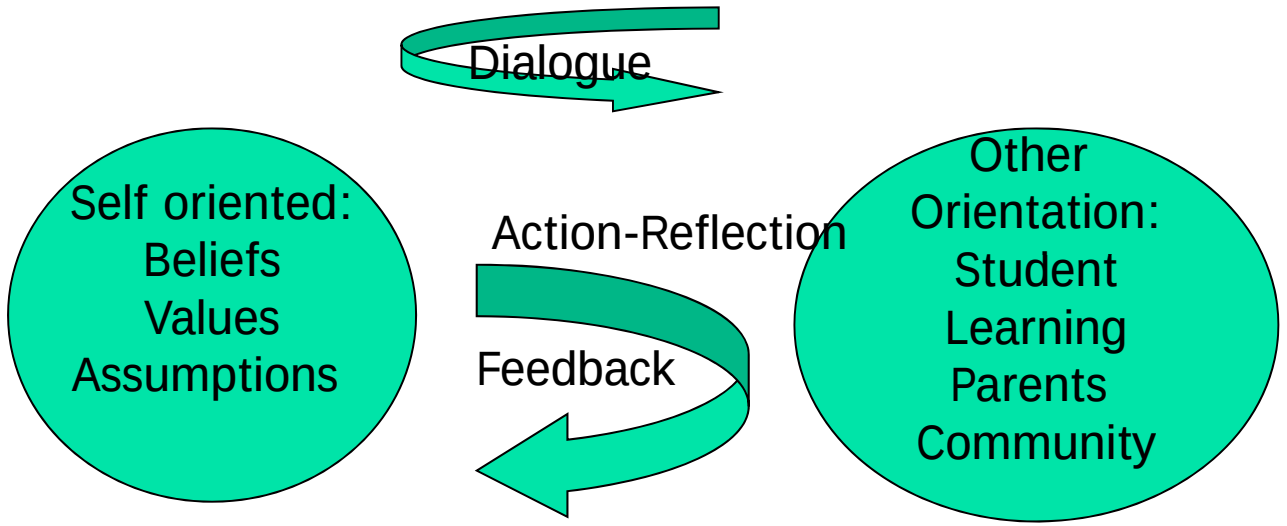
Education as “Experience” and “Reflecting on Experience” John Dewey

- Democracy and education are crucially linked
- Reflective intelligence: How we Think (1933)
  1. Meaning-making,
  2. Inquiry,
  3. Community building
  4. Dispositions of open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, responsibility



Portfolio construction: Essential toolkit

A learning and assessment culture that promotes inquiry into one's worldview by using the following : Dialogue, Feedback, Writing, Presentation, Structures that open up the particular to interrogation: Portfolio inquiries can be such a scaffold.



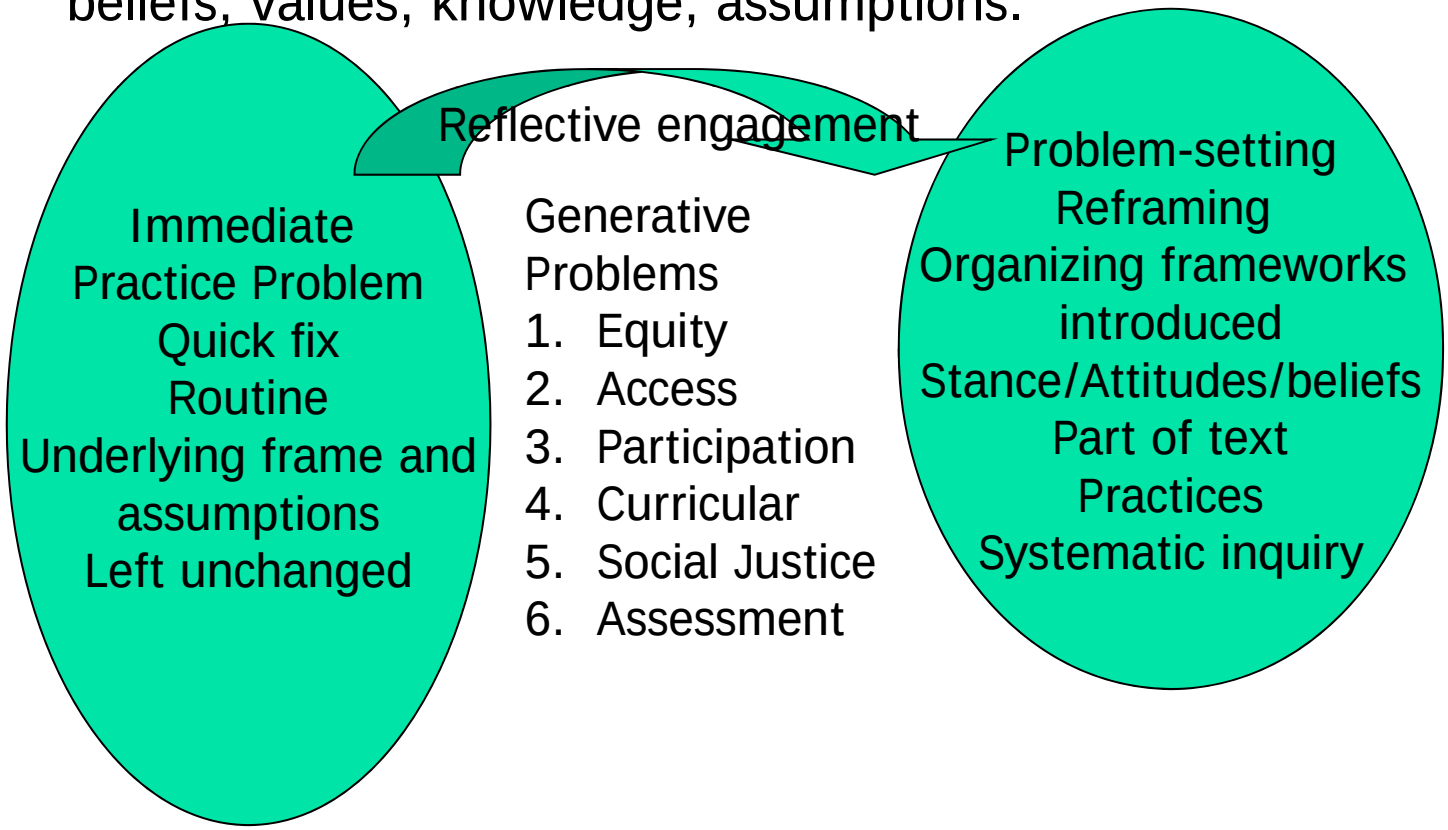
Education as ‘wide awakeness’ and ‘moving beyond’ where they are.

Maxine Greene, philosopher

- “...to move beyond where they are. We think of nurturing their efforts to make sense of their experiences by tapping capacities too often ignored; imagination, perception, feeling, the sense of the body in movement. And we want to do so by encouraging an awareness of lived situations, of perspectives, contingent on gender, class, ethnic identity, the sense of being in whatever can be called the known world “ (2007,1)

Reflection is a tool for 'making sense' of practice dilemmas over time commitments of engagement, dialogue, relationships and support

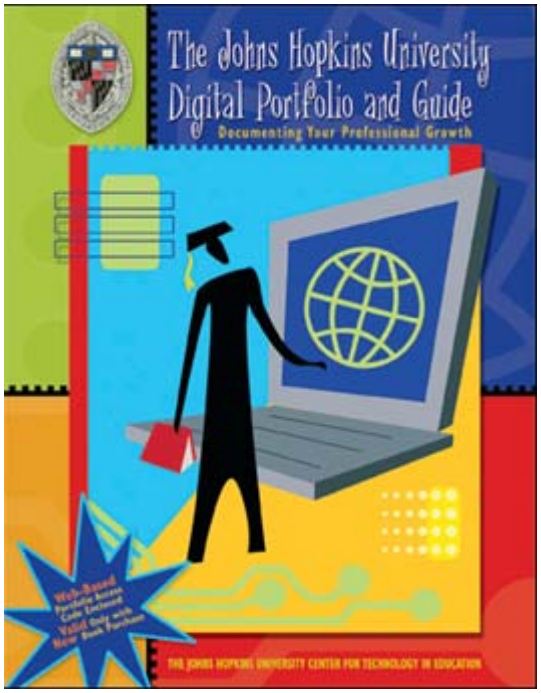
Teaching practice an intellectual activity: lens to interrogate our beliefs, values, knowledge, assumptions.



Learning to Teach: What do we know?

- Teacher's initial beliefs, values, assumptions and predisipositions matter;
- Quality of teachers' interactions with students matter in improving learning;
- Critical thinking has to be mentored and carefully scaffolded;
- Context matters- teaching is an intellectual, cultural and local activity;
- Students if left to their own devices will use a 'quick fix' kind of thinking – this short circuits learning;
- The 'making sense' of teaching and learning processes have to be made explicit
- An explicit social justice orientation has to be mentored.

Portfolios in Teacher Education



- Portfolios have a long history in the arts, architecture etc.
- From the late 80s and early 90s portfolios adopted in ITE both as summative and formative assessment tools.
- New views of teaching, learning, knowledge challenged traditional views of 'doing' teaching.
- An authentic assessment tool – seeks to document practice problems and their resolution in context.
- A new focus on capturing the complexity of teaching documenting it, interrogating it and assessing it
- Assessment for Learning (AfL) and AoL.

Processes: Selection, Coached, Mentored, Reflective Writing, Serious Conversation

- “A teaching portfolio is the structured documentary history of a (carefully selected) set of coached or mentored accomplishments substantiated by samples of student work and fully realized only through reflective writing, deliberation, and serious conversation” Shulman, 1994.
- “It is important to keep in mind that the portfolio is a broad metaphor that comes alive as you begin to formulate the theoretical orientation to teaching that is most valuable to you. Your theory of teaching will determine a valuable portfolio entry” (Shulman, 1998)

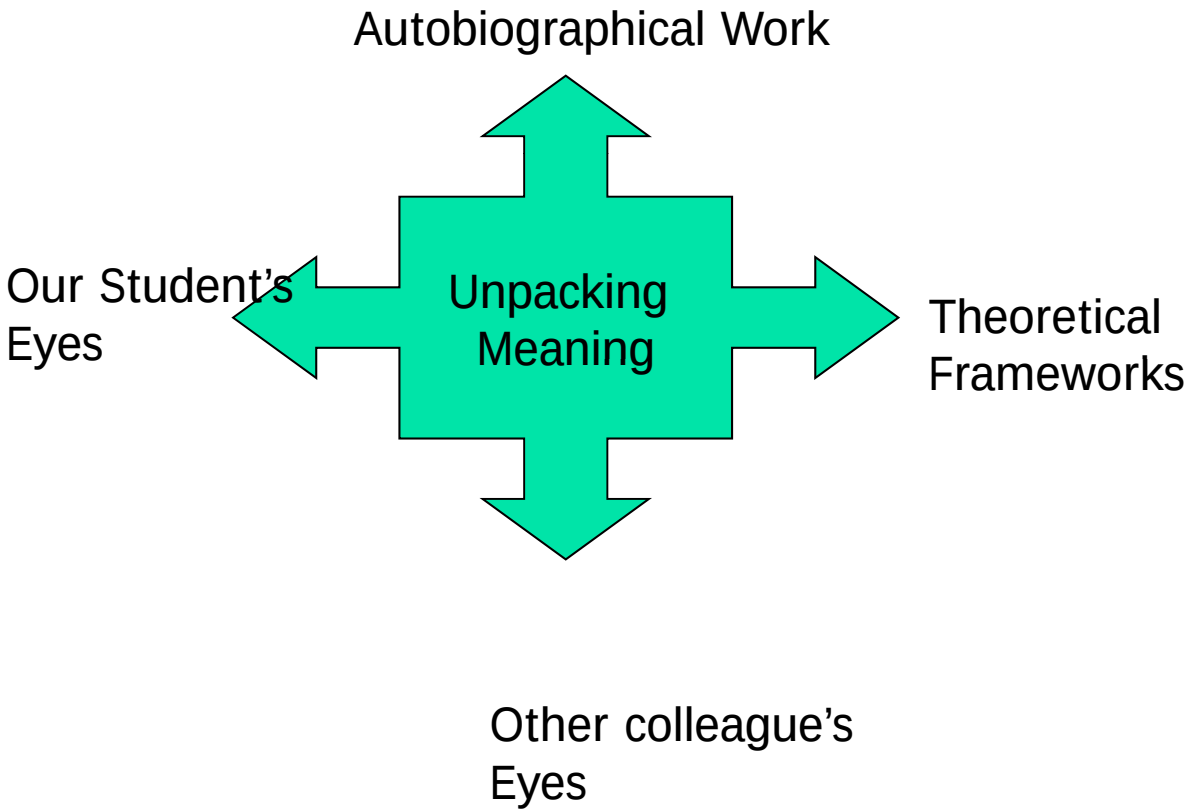
Structure of the Portfolio: UCC

- A Teaching Statement: A statement which includes the initial understanding of what it means to teach.
- Three Portfolio Entries which examine a learning the student has identified as key to their development as a teacher over the course of the year. It includes a title, abstract, reflective statement and supportive evidence from the practice site
- A Conclusion: A statement that synthesises the learning to be a teacher over the year.

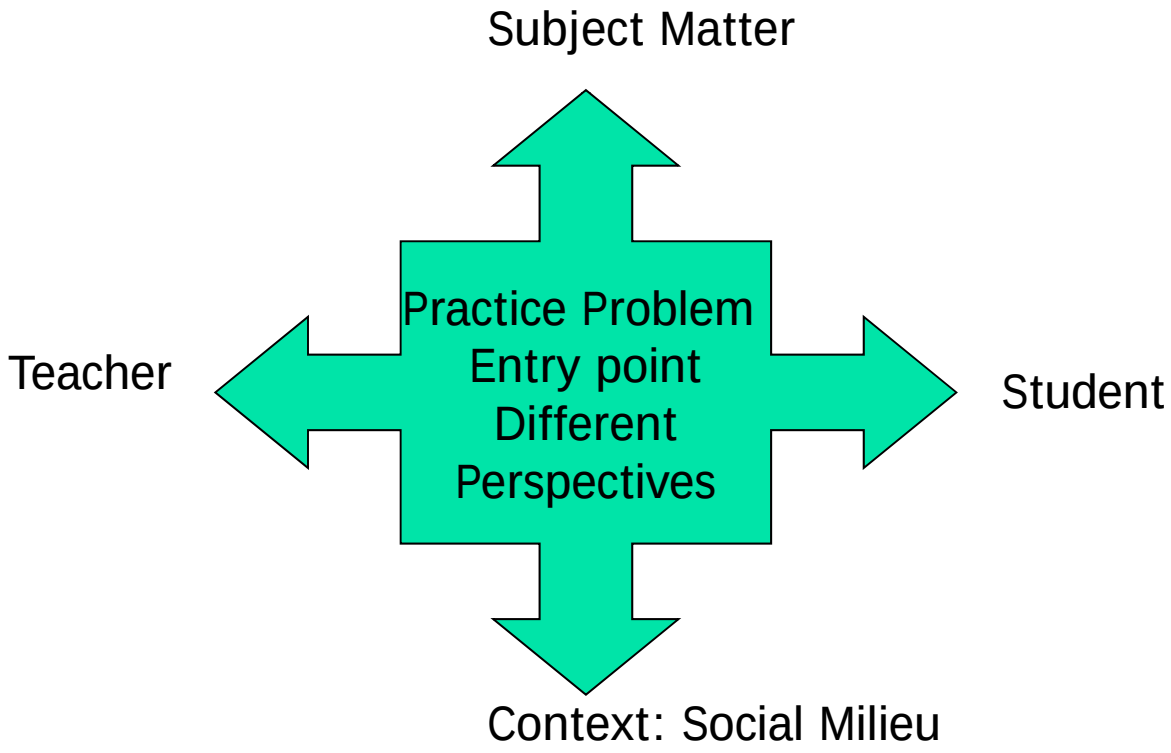
Reflection is: intentional, deliberate inquiry to construct meaning

- “Reflection is an intentional act of mind, engaging a person alone or especially in collaboration with others in interrogating one’s teaching, especially a compelling or puzzling situation of teaching and learning to construct some understanding of it. It is likely cast as a narrative for it is a story of meaning and it can raise ethical issues for those involved” (Lyons, 2002)

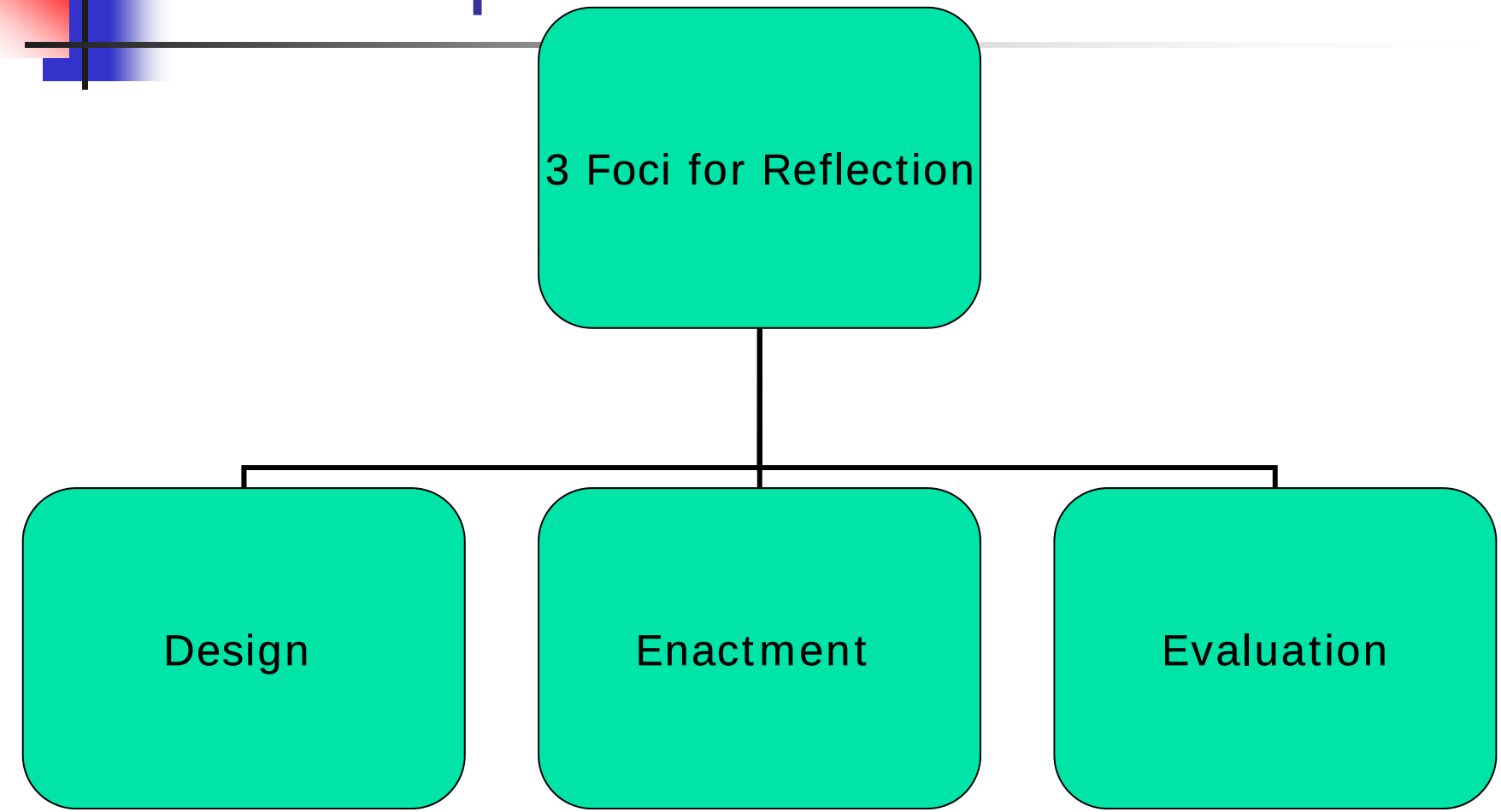
Looking at Practice: Possible lenses: Brookfield (1995)



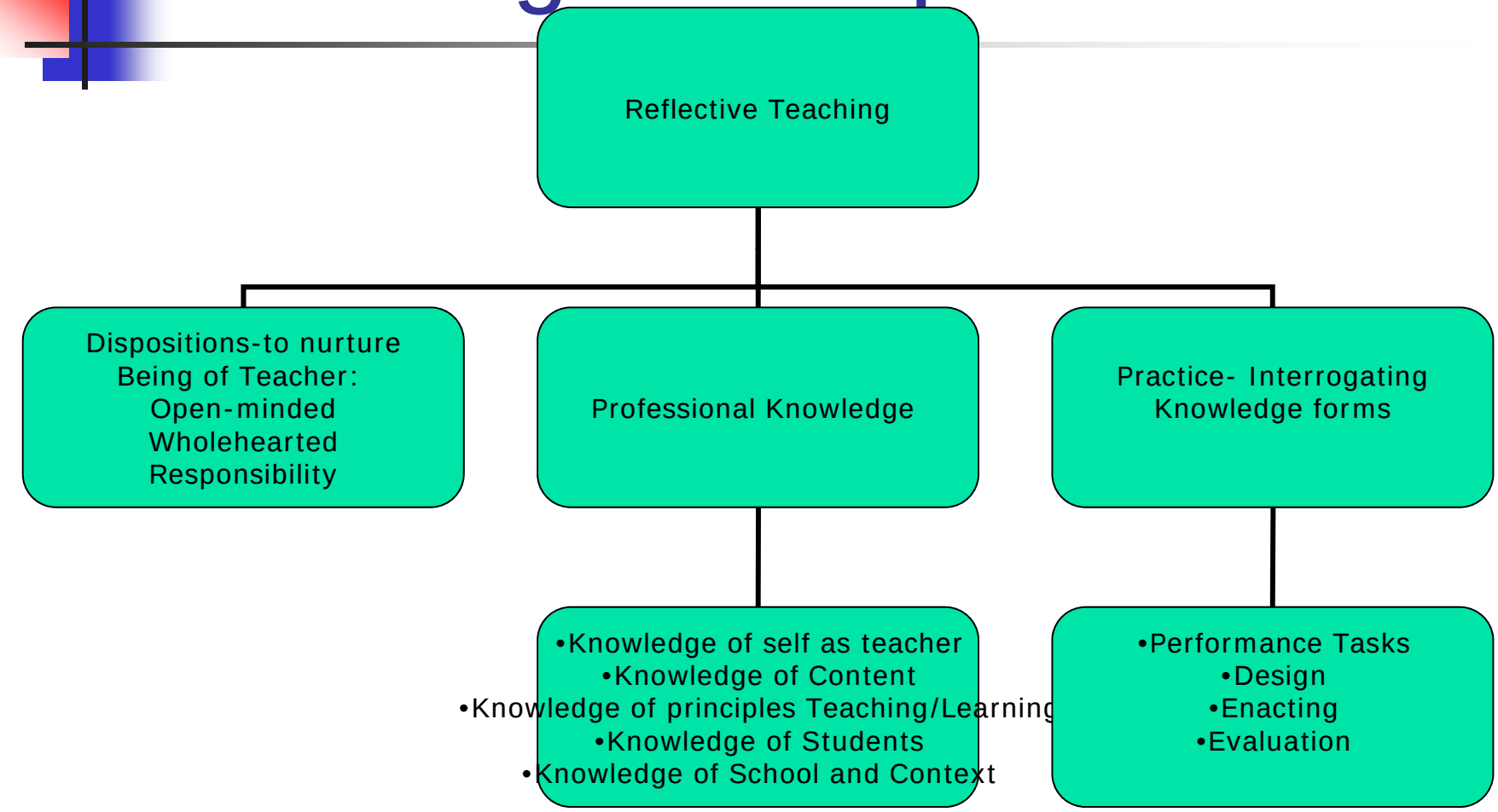
Looking at Practice: Possible lenses 4 Commonplaces (Schwab, 1970)



The portfolio is a scaffolding tool that requires student to reflect.



Teaching: A complex Domain



Professional Knowledge: All are powerful entry points to develop identity of teacher – and part of portfolio process

- **Self**: Knowledge of self as learner/teacher is a very important part of learning to be a teacher – identity of the teacher is being formed
- **Students:** Often overlooked – a generic student rather than really looking at the individual make-up of students – socially, culturally, emotionally etc
- **Content** – How to translate content knowledge into a social just pedagogy – difficult transition takes in skills/competencies and confidence of teacher.
- **Teaching and Learning:** New theories of learning put social learning in the foreground – where do students see this modelled in our teacher ed programme? Many have no formal experience of group work, portfolio assessment, reflective learning.
- **School and Context**: Class, Culture, Gender, Ethos, History of school, neighbourhood, etc

Understanding why Johnny is not engaged!

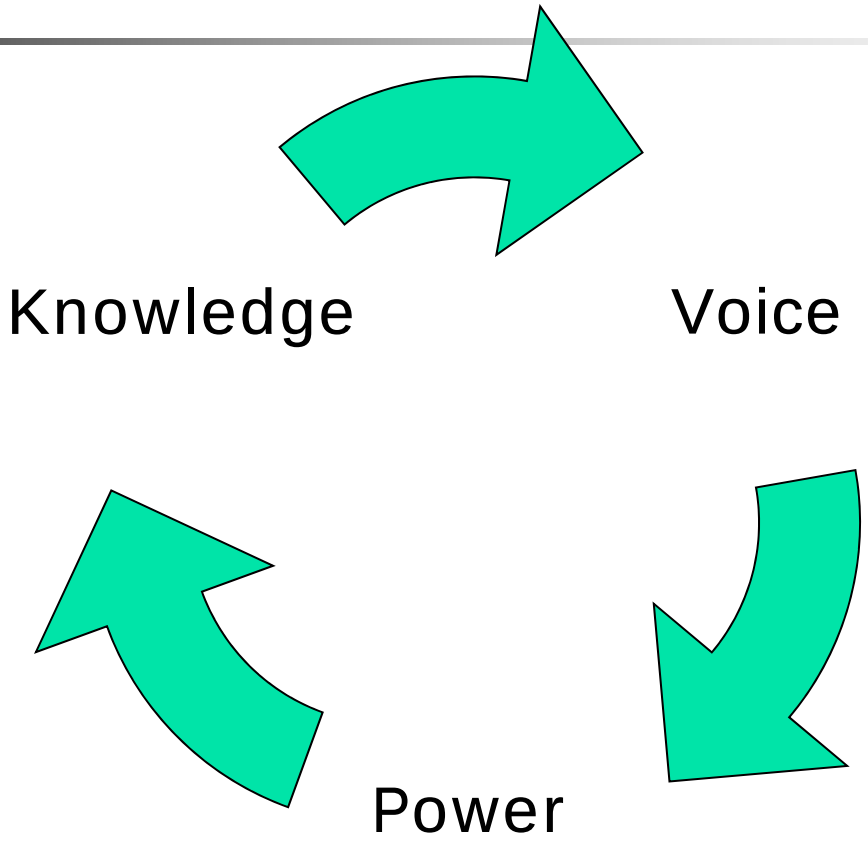
- Advice from other teachers- Johnny likes to draw – I can't read or write
- Using MI as an entry point into designing new tasks for Johnny – using drawing as an assessment tool and presentation of work to larger group
- Engaging in AR to document Johnny's engagement
- Talking to other professsionals in school – learning support teacher, Art teacher etc. – Inquiry 'what reading age has Johnny'.
- Reframe to different plane – why is Johnny not given learning support – teacher becomes advocate for Johnny.

- Inquiry into 'who is Johnny'. Interview with Johnny.
- Johnny is a Traveller – movement to new plane – issues of equity, culture, racism and social justice come into frame. Education Act, Equal Status Act, critical readings, Traveller culture. The use of oral work as key tool to engage Johnny.

Scaffolding the porfolio as a learning process entering into a student's knowledge and awareness about self, teaching, learning etc.

- "Midwife teachers encourage students to speak in their own voices...they contribute when needed, but it is always clear that the baby is not theirs but the student's .. The cycle is one of confirmation- evocation-confirmation. Midwife teachers help students to deliver their words to the world, and they use their own knowledge to put the students into conversations with other voices – past and present – in the culture (p. 218-219)

A new epistemology: Who asks the questions? Who answers the questions?



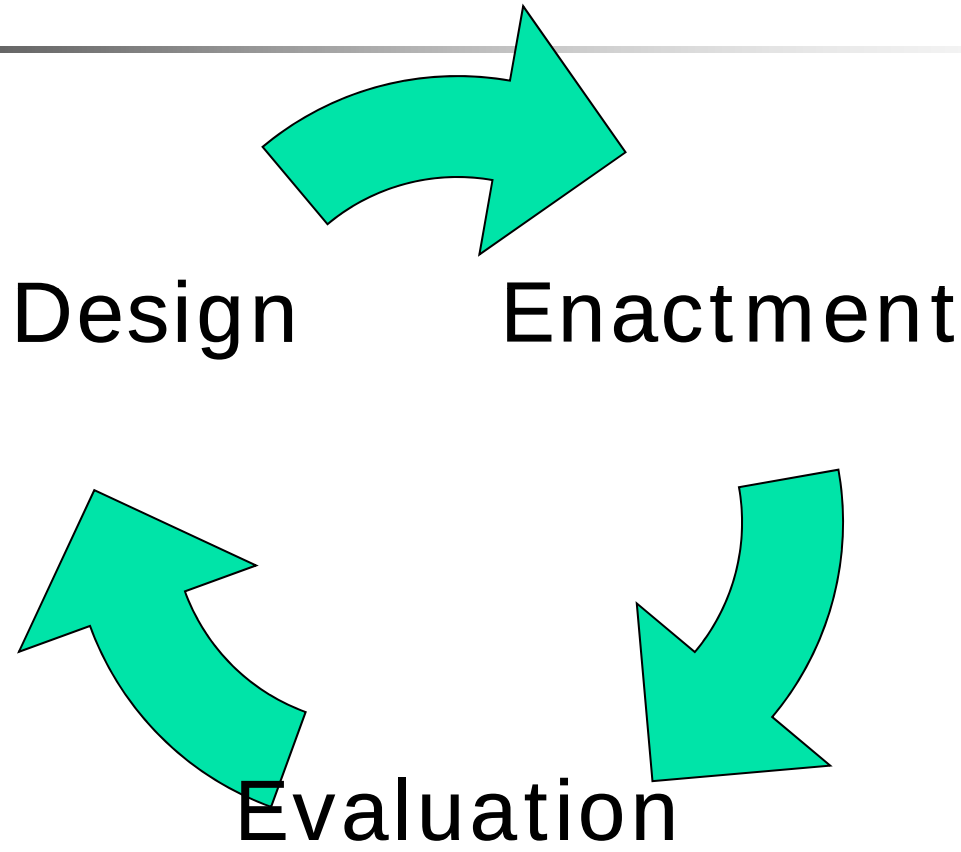
Reflection as ‘naming’ or reflection as ‘reading’ the world.

- “In my experience in teaching, **naming** is exraordinarily important – the ability to give a name, not take a name or accept it from someone else, but give a name. And I find that my students, one of the hardest things for them to do, is to be willing to give their own name to the phenomenon which they have seen. It’s as though they believe that if any thought goes through my head it must be automatically wrong”... (D.Schon, Presidential Address to American Educational Research Association, 1987).

PGDE students naming the world of teaching and learning

- “I was never given an opportunity to **personalize** my learning or understanding. Looking back I can remember learning off reams of material none of which I remember to-day. I remember asking one teacher how a formula for calculating interest was derived and her reply was “You don’t have to know that, all you have to do is learn it”. At the time I remember thinking that I would never ask another question again”
- “Largely I saw the teacher as narrator, basically I had a body of knowledge I wanted to communicate and once communicated I believed it was learned”

Reflecting on Practice: Entry Points



A new disposition: responsibilty for student learning

- It showed me that teaching needs to be under constant self-evaluation. In considering why Colette had missed the point in her project I had to bring myself into the equation. I realized I had not given enough information in my assignment. While the majority of students picked up on what I said I failed to realize then that when I say something each student interprets it in different ways. I should consider this when I am giving instructions. I am not talking to a class. I am talking to individuals”

Professionalizing teaching practice: safeguarding against ‘ad hoc’ measures.

- **“**I found the reflective process invaluable in helping me understand myself as a teacher. It has helped me examine the beliefs underpinning my teaching, the methodologies used to reflect those beliefs. Reflection in this mode guards against the dangers of ad hoc or ‘common sense’ measures which, when examined for their underlying assumptions may prove less than compelling.. In a culture where traditionally education has been content-driven and passively received, I cannot but see the value of reflection as a move toward theorising and further professionalising teaching practice”

Key assumptions underpinning reflective practices:

- Reflecting on experience is key to understanding experience – reflection is necessary for meaningful learning
- Meaningful learning is social and active- talking, writing, presenting are major tools for deepening understanding/reflection;
- Developing a reflective mind occurs over time: - reflection transforms naïve understanding into more complex understanding;
- Differences in power have resulted in monopolies on knowledge production- therefore all teaching decisions are political to some extent. Historically academic knowledge has been validated over practice knowledge.

Constructing a portfolio

- Identity work
- Nurturing a pedagogy of engagement as an integral part of learning
- Social Justice framework is explicitly mentored
- Learning in ITE is characterised by intellectual effort and engagement
- Requires collaboration and community building with peers, expert teachers, teacher educators, theory
- Personally and professionally challenging work;
- Committed to ask ‘why’ and imagine new spaces and new discourses;
- ITE programme should be characterized by the conditions of learning that prospective trs are expected to enact for their students

Dimensions of multicultural education framework

- Content integration
- Knowledge Construction Process is made explicit
- Prejudice reduction an explicit value
- An equity pedagogy
- Empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 2004

A new pedagogy

- Teaching as ‘inquiry’
- Teaching as ‘learning’
- A focus on ‘evidence’ of student learning
- A ‘work in progress’ model where reflections, designs, evidence is shared
- An action oriented inquiry model
- Peer and self evaluations
- A community of practitioners committed to improve teaching and question the ‘status quo’
- Justifying decisions and ‘hunting assumptions’ underpinning them.

Teacher Educator – a new role – to pull the student toward their own questions: Scaffolding Tools/Protocols

- **Self-Study:** Starting with self: Who am I and what do I bring to teaching – writing self as a way to enter into epistemology of student as learner - assumptions, beliefs, goals, experiences that are key to orienting the student toward teaching/learning. (Reflective exercise done a number of times during the year)
- **The reflective journal** – documenting my own questions, insights, critical incidents. The reflective journal becomes a key document in understanding the development of self in relation to teaching. Frequent presenting of journal in tutorial.

- Snapshot Exercise: Documenting teaching archetypes

  Ideal classroom exercise: Done at beginning/end of year –

Step 1 Draw your ideal classroom. Write 4/5 sentences explaining the drawing.

Step 2: Teaching strategy Think-Pair-Share . Pair up and share your drawing with partner. What do you notice? What have you learned from this about yourself, about teaching and learning.

- **Classroom Artefact presentation (Design, Enactment, Eval)**

Step 1: Describe the incident that this artefact represents

Step 2: What did I learn from this experience?

Step 3: What are the implications of this learning for my work with students?

Step 4: How has this learning been shaped by my educational vision/values/stance?

Step 5: How does this connect with broader issues of equity, participation, social justice?

- **Evidence Protocol** (adapted from Harvard Project Zero)

Step 1: What did you bring?

Step 2 Why did you bring this?

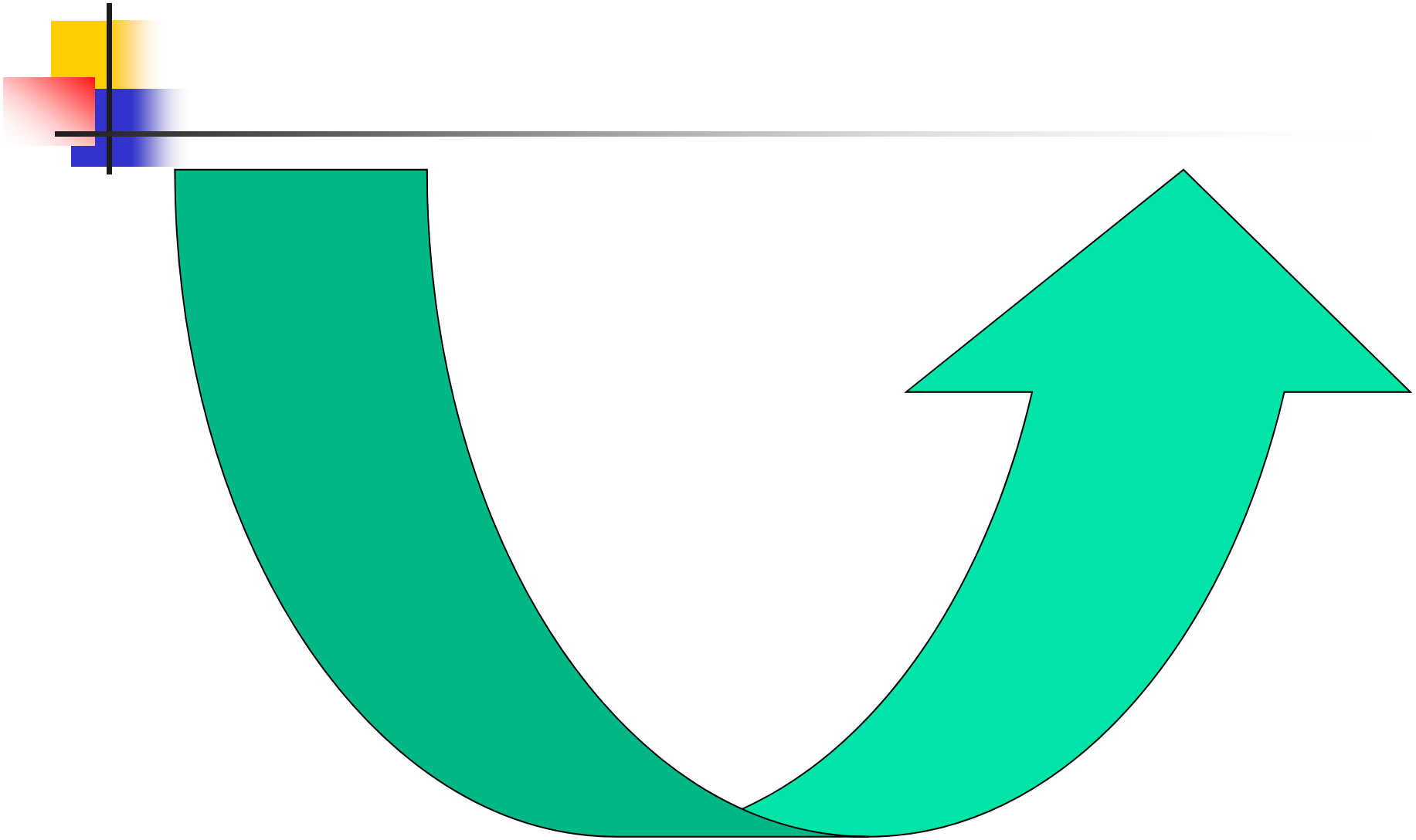
Step 3: How does this speak to your larger vision for yourself as a beginning teacher – link to broader issues in education.

- **3-2-1 portfolio exercise**
- Step (1) 3 artefacts/critical incidents I have collected so far are....Step (2) 2 emerging concepts or patterns are....

  Step 3: 1 theory I am connecting to these incidents are...

  1 question I am still confused by..

  Next Action step is.....

- **Mapping the portfolio exercise**
- Write a title, an abstract (5/6 sentences) and possible supportive evidence for the following:
- Teaching statement:
- Portfolio Entry 1, 2, 3.
- Conclusion
- Patterns are....
- A possible metaphor or title is....

- “Dialogue belongs to the nature of human beings, as beings of communication. Dialogue seals the act of knowing, which is never individual, even though it has its individual dimension.” (Freire in Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 3)