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Learning through student teaching: case studies of three student teachers

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1-1. Teacher education & student teaching

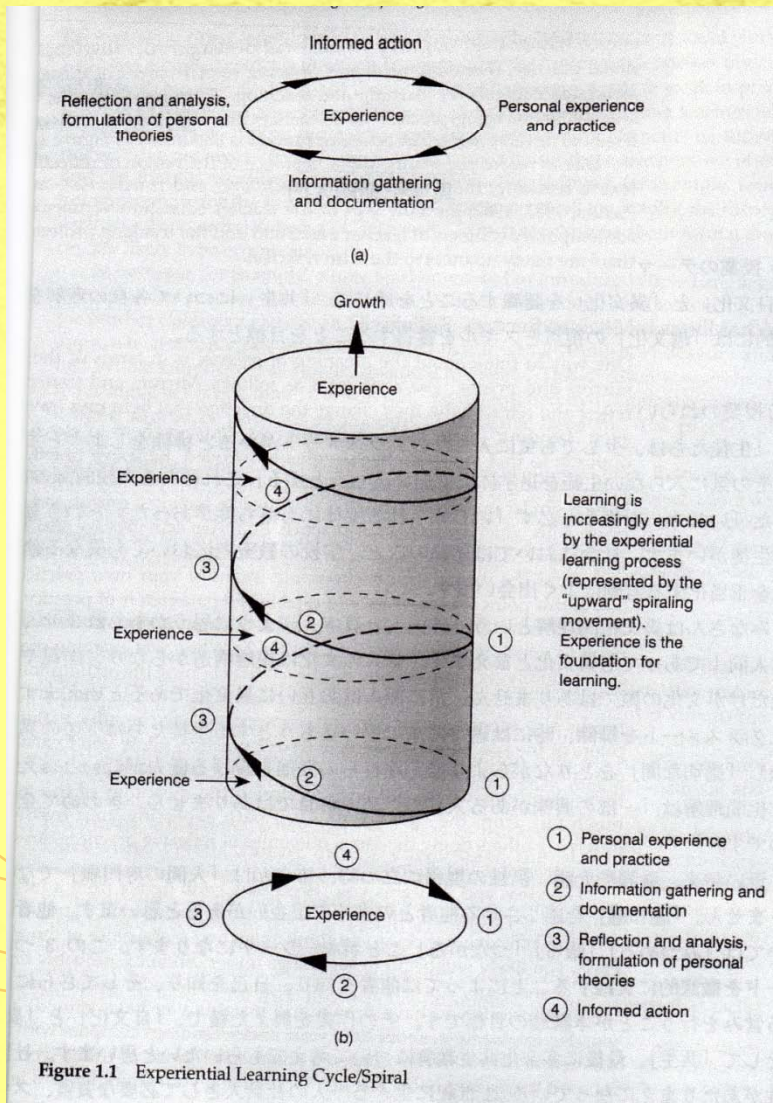
- The aim of teacher education for pre-service teachers

Providing foundations of self-learning as future professional

*Student teachers CONSCIOUSLY start constructing their perceptions of teaching based on the reality of their student teaching.

1-2.Experimental Learning Cycle/Spiral

(Knowles, Cole & Presswood, 1994)



- ① Personal experience and practice
 - ② Information gathering and documentation
 - ③ Reflection and analysis, formulation of personal theories
 - ④ Informed action
- "Learning is increasingly enriched by the experiential learning process. Experience is the foundation for learning(p.10)"

1-3-1. Why reflective practices?

- The aim of education is to develop the intellectual, moral and social dispositions that are consistent with sharing the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society. (Colton, Sparks-Langer, 1993, p.46)
- * Fostering responsible citizens is an endless process.
- Teachers are a “responsible leader” in their classroom and must have their motivation to grow.

1-3-2. Why reflective practices?

- Teachers may need ideas, perspectives and skills of individual responsive teaching, as every student is different one another.
- Teachers may need to “transform” themselves in accordance with the student in front of them.

Reflective

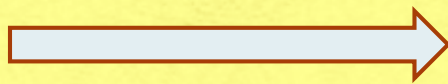
But....

It is not easy especially for novice teachers.



1-4. Three common conflicts of pre-service teachers

Early personal experiences of education (LaBosky, 1994)

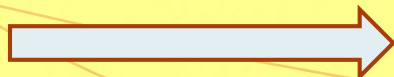


- Biases
- Snap judgment

- "Taken for granted assumption"
- Belief and practice contradictions
- Fear and uncertainty :

Mentioned in seven findings from collective case studies by Freese (2008)

fear of failure/fear of what students think of them



- Find no meaning of reflective practices
- Lack of words to look at their practices
- Even reluctance to reflective practices

1-5. Motivation of this study

How should teacher educators support pre-service teachers' reflective practices?



2. Reflective Practice

Dewey's idea

“Active, persistent, and careful **consideration** of any **belief** or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the **further conclusions** to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought” (Dewey, p. 6).

Belief, consideration &
improvement

Schön's idea

- **Reflection-in-action**

The thinking what they are doing while they are doing it (Schön, p.xi)

- **Reflection-on-action**

What is done after the encounter and it “enables us to spend time exploring why we acted as we did, what was happening in a group and so on” (Smith, p. 9).



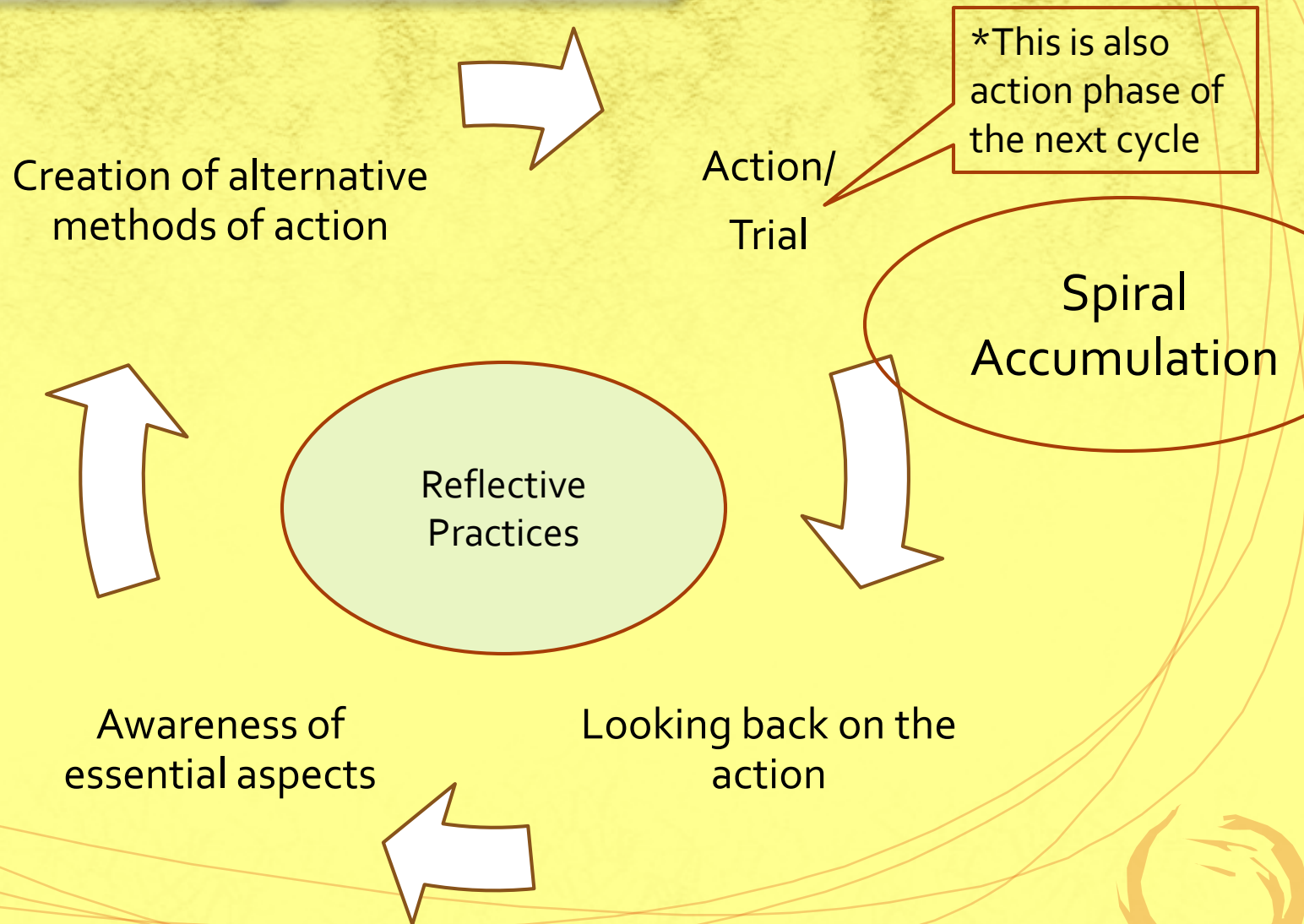
Copeland, Birmingham, De La Cruz & Lewin (pp.350-354)

Four categories of critical attributes of reflective practice in teaching

- Problem identification
- Generating solutions
- Testing solutions
- Leading to an enhancement of teacher's understanding used to give meaning to professional context.



Korthagen's idea (1985, p.13)



Korthagen's idea

two modes of reflection(1993, p.319)

- non-rational / right-hemisphere

The principal of the integration of experience is dominant.

- rational / left-hemisphere

The principal of logical ordering is dominant.



My definition of reflective practice

through the process of problem solving, to structure and restructure oneself and their teaching with multiple perspectives, organically connecting between their past experiences, current environment, theories and insights, based on professional identity in the duality of human consciousness.

Not just a technique

How to support reflective practices of student teachers: strategy of gradualness

Two aspects: “structure” and “safety” (Korthagen, 1985, p. 13).

Structure

Student teachers should...

- ① Experience their failures
- ② Encounter transition shock
- ③ Reflect on simple and short experiences
- ④ Pick up their choice and carry it out
- ⑤ Do self-evaluation



Safety

The aspect of safety consists of:

- ① Acceptance
- ② Empathy
- ③ Encouraging

*“Safety” depends on the personal relationship between student teachers and university teachers.

*Feeling that their actions and trials are always criticized, student teachers will not learn to take responsibilities and grow their passive attitudes.

3-1. Methodology

1. Seminar for future teachers

① An inquiry-oriented approach:

reflective journals, group seminars, reflective interviews, and peer observation conferences

② Schedule of seminar for future teachers:

the first half of the school year

mainly cultivating their perception of teaching

the second half

observing the lessons and practice their own 5 to 20 minutes of teaching (once a week during school term)

3-2. Methodology

2. Mandatory student teaching

Student A, and C had their 3 week mandatory student teaching.

*Generally speaking, in Japan preservice teachers have to take their mandatory student teaching when they are a senior. Student B is taking it next school year. So, this study is still ongoing.



4-1. Cognitive growth of student teachers from reflective practices

Number of entries of reflective practices

Student A : 135 reflective practices

Student B : 18 reflective practices

Student C : 64 reflective practices

- No student showed all five phases in the cycle of reflective practice, as suggested by Korthagen (1985).
 - * I isolated all of the accounts of their reflective practices in their journal.
 - * All the student teachers are taking their teaching certificate of social studies of secondary school.

4-2. Recognizing their fear of the students

Student A

When she entered the classroom, some students quickly glanced at her and then apparently started to chat about her looks.(June 2nd 2006)

Student B

While teaching geography, the students gave no response to whatever she said.(Dec.19th 2008)

Student C

He wanted to ask the students, but he suddenly became nervous and could not.(Oct.31st 2007)



Outcomes of reflective practices

Students A and C overcame their fear of the students.

Student A

(The students) were testing me, which was fun. (Feb. 13th 2009)

Student C

How his reflective practices led him to overcome his fear of students was not clear.

*Student B could not get her fear of students. She gave up becoming a teacher



An example of reflective practice of Student A(Jun.6th 2008)

Looking back

She felt an insurmountable wall between students and her and “could not do anything to students”

Creating alternative methods of action

To say “hello” to students

After trial

Her communication with students became active.



4-3. Transforming their perspectives of lessons

1 .Case of student A

- Before her practical training started Teaching social studies was just to lead students to memorize subject matter knowledge and pass exams.(May 1st. 2007)
- * She gradually came to think of her own teaching perception.



- After observation of a lesson by her advisory teacher

Interactive teaching (July 6th 2007)

(Her advisory teacher led students to respond actively and naturally.) “Amazing! There are such lessons.”

- In the end of session of student teaching
Teaching MUST be MEANINGFUL to students.

* “Meaningful teaching” was “teaching through which students develop themselves.” (Jan. 14th 2009)



An example of reflective practice of student A (Feb. 12th 2008)

Action

The content she had prepared was too shallow, although she thought she had gained more subject matter knowledge than before

Looking back

Students looked exhausted after her lesson.

Awareness of essential aspects

She admitted that she was not familiar to the subject matter knowledge and worried about how to teach the unit.

2. Case of student B

- Before her practical training started

Leading students to obtain more subject matter knowledge than others (July 22nd 2008)

- After student teaching

“Teaching is to continue my challenge to students” (Feb. 26th 2009)



An example of reflective practices of student B (Dec.19th 2008)

Looking back

On the whole, students neither showed reaction nor interest.

I should think how to raise their interest (in the content of the lesson). (Her impression)

“To say honestly, because of last time, I felt students wouldn’t give me any response if I had given it my best efforts. So I supposed only to finish telling the coverage of today’s lesson was enough.”(Feb. 13th 2009)



3. Case of student C

- Before his practical training started

Students would follow teachers if they have rich subject matter knowledge and the capability to control students. (April 21st 2007)

- After his mandatory student teaching

Two aims of his lessons:

- to give subject matter knowledge
- to provide skills to think logically

(Jun 18th 2008)

An example of reflective practices of Student C (Nov. 23rd 2007)

Action

He showed his students two pictures

Looking back

The students only looked at the pictures and showed no interest".

Creating alternative method of action

"I should have asked students something like 'What picture is this?'" to draw students' interest.



4-4. Puzzlement, reluctance, and resistance to reflective practices

- Student A showed her puzzlement in the beginning.
- Students B and C showed their reluctance and resistance to reflective practices.



Student A's puzzlement

Causes

A lack of study skills

A lack of teaching perception

"I haven't been able to consider my task as a student teacher and the meaning of practical training"(Dec. 5th 2007)



Student A's harder conflict

Many of those around her, including her academic advisor, seminar classmates, parents, and elder sister, were cynical about her being a teacher

Student A told the university teacher: "Without doing my best, I do not want to give up."

(Feb. 7th 2008)



Her motivation for reflective practices

Student B's reluctance and resistance

Causes

- The university teacher seemed more demanding than she had expected. (e.g. correcting her misspelling in her journal)
- She gradually felt that what she was doing in the seminar course was meaningless.

"I have thought why I am doing this. (I wondered) if it would bring me some benefits." (Feb. 27th 2009)



Student C's reluctance and resistance

Cause

- Extremely competitive environment for attaining a secondary school level teaching position for social studies
 - *the hurdle of acceptance ratio of Hokkaido Public School employment exam (2008)
 - 1 in 20.8 for a junior high school social studies teacher
 - 1 in 83.8 for a high school social studies teacher
 - * He couldn't help feeling reflective practices were meaningless if he should not get his teaching position.



5. Discussions

- Reflective practices are useful and meaningful for the professional cognitive growth of student teachers.

But.....

- Student teachers felt uneasy and resisted to reflective practices. Like student B & C, it is possible for student teachers to lose their motivation to be a teacher.



- The teaching policy of the university teacher did not work, especially before student teachers had overcome their transition shocks.
- Their transition shocks were varied in accordance with individuals.

Student A: cynicism about her becoming a teacher from those around her

Student B: fear of students

Student C: the pressure to reach his success in the extremely competitive employment exam

- Overcoming their transition shocks takes long time.



The teaching policy of the university teacher

- The university teacher was aware of the importance of the sense of efficacy.
 - The university teacher tried “strategy of gradualness.” His primary policy on his instruction was, “Sparing no efforts, experiencing failures and you should learn from them through reflective practices.”
- *He was ready at any time to provide his support for these students with face to face and e-mail consultation.

6. Implications

- Overcoming these transition shocks is extremely time-consuming for the three student teachers and beyond the university teacher's individual efforts.
- It was very difficult to meet the needs of the individual student teachers and the cooperating schools.
- How to establish bilateral relationships with elementary and secondary schools, especially such a small private university, should be further researched and discussed.

7-1. Note

- Democratic Party of Japan(DPJ) is now seeking to shift 4 year teaching certificate program **to 6 year teaching certificate program**(All the teachers would be required to have Master's degree).



7-2. Positive aspects

- More time-consuming but effective course curriculum (e.g. the seminar for future teachers) could be available.
- Students without self-motivation would leave the program.
- Student teachers would be fostered in the real classroom.
- Student teachers would get more opportunities to face themselves and go beyond their prior experiences.



7-3-1. Negative aspects

- Fewer students because of longer period of studying and higher tuition.
- Lack of number of teachers
- *the best way to reform education is to increase the number of teachers
- Schools can't accept 1yr mandatory student teaching.



7-3-2. Negative aspects (2)

- Only large universities will afford a 6 year program.
- *contradiction to open teacher education policies employed for over 60 years, and providing diversity among teaching forces.
- Education is “the supreme liberal arts” for all university students. Only prospective teachers could learn education comprehensively, which would undermine the quality of home/local/school education.

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THANK YOU ALL!!

