



*School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences
Inspiring teachers; changing lives and building futures*

Guidance on Reflective Writing

**Recording Professional Development
in your Learning Journal**

Reflective Writing

Reflective Writing is defined as documenting and reflecting on the significance of key experiences and achievements. Student teachers will be completing a number of pieces of reflective writing on a regular basis. Student teachers will record reflective writing in a **learning journal**. The learning journal serves a number of purposes:

- As a tool for reflection it will support the many enquiries student teachers will engage in during the course, and underpin their development as 'reflective practitioners'.
- As a tool for recording development, it will also provide a major amount of evidence that student teachers have addressed and eventually met the Professional Standards.

Reflections in the learning journal may be based on any of the course components, such as: lectures, workshops, reading, conversations, tutorials, school placement lessons, school placement tutorials, etc.

Student teachers may choose to reflect on the following provided by the University:

- Pre-course subject knowledge audits
- Subject knowledge teaching
- Subject knowledge self-sustained study
- Personal research and reading
- Assignment feedback
- Tutorials
- Workshops
- Lectures
- Time at the end of each day and in sessions where appropriate.

Student teachers may choose to reflect on the following when in school:

- Professional development supported by directed tasks
- Professional development activities organised around personal needs
- Planning
- Lessons taught and impact on children's learning
- Weekly teaching reviews
- Reflections on lesson from observation tutorials
- Post lesson de-briefing

Student teachers may choose to answer the following questions

- What has been of significance this week?
- What have I learned?
- What impact will this have?
- Which Teachers' Standards have I engaged with?

Pen Portrait

The student teachers' pen portrait will form the starting point for discussions during tutorials with their personal tutor at university and with the Training Coordinator and School-based Tutor during the school placements. From this starting point, it will be the student teachers' responsibility to record where progress has been made and provide any relevant supporting evidence.

Professional Development

During each school-based week of the course student teachers should have time for professional development. It is vital that the Partnership recognises and uses the expertise in schools in an appropriate way and is therefore essential that teachers in schools are involved in the training of student teachers.

Professional Development may include any of the following:

- reading and research;
- discussing teaching and learning with school based tutors, training coordinators, subject leaders;
- observing teaching and learning;
- attending staff meetings or formal training, e.g. INSET events;
- assignment preparation

Each time student teachers engage in professional development they should record details in their learning journal.

Weekly lesson evaluations

During each school-based week of the course, student teachers will write **an in-depth evaluation of a lesson that they have taught in their learning journal**. The evaluation should always involve analysis of an aspect of the teaching situation. This could relate to a number of things e.g.

- Personal professional next steps set by the student teacher and/or School based Tutor/Training Coordinator;
- The approach to, and development of, differentiation;
- Pupils' learning and their work;
- Relationships;
- Achievement of learning outcomes;
- Organisation and management of the whole lesson;
- Organisation and management of a particular phase within the lesson;
- Use and effectiveness of resources;
- Use of teaching methods;
- Discipline and control of class or groups;
- Management of or behaviour of individual pupils;
- Aspects of delivery, such as pace of lesson;
- Aspects of the lesson, such as the appropriateness of the content and its match with the pupils' needs;
- Introductions and conclusions to teaching episodes;
- Work with teachers, with and within teams;
- Work and relationships with other adults in the classroom / in the school;
- Use of questioning, explaining, discussion, instruction;
- Awareness and use of the learning environment;
- The use of time - the student teacher's and the pupils'.

Evaluations are:

- expected to eventually help the student teacher do justice to herself/himself and to the associated thinking;
- are expected to cover one lesson in a different subject each week;
- not expected to cover every aspect of every lesson every day;
- expected to be specific rather than general;
- expected to include analysis of positive issues as well as negative issues;
- expected to refer back to previous evaluations in that, for example, they are relevant for demonstrating progression;
- expected to look forward and plan for future action for both self and pupils;
- expected to draw on a number of sources of evidence - on observations, on pupils' work, on teacher / tutor / child comments etc. and, importantly, the student teacher's own professional sense and judgement;
- expected to focus on issues that are significant to the training;
- not expected to include value judgements or blame of pupils for shortcomings

It is essential that when a student teacher presents reflective writing as evidence of meeting a Teachers' Standard, it is cross-referenced to the relevant Teachers' Standard. For example, student teachers may reflect on the assessment procedures they employed with a particular class and how they intend to alter

their approach in the future. In this instance, the content of the reflection can be related to particular Teachers' Standards and might also be referenced/ recorded as evidence.

The Training Coordinator or School-based Tutor will monitor and annotate the student teachers' evidence of meeting a Teachers' Standards, signing and dating relevant items.

How do I write reflectively?

It is essential to reflect critically on your practice; the process of writing your reflections down often encourages you to explore your practice in depth. As a result of this, you may learn even more about your practice: "We reflect in the process of learning, in order to learn or in order to generate more considerations upon which we will reflect more" (Moon, 1999: p23).

You will begin to learn further and improve your own reflection by thinking about and developing the process of your thinking (i.e. metacognition) through writing. Consequently, you may then be able to consider and refine your action planning and practice more successfully.

Schon (1987) explores 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action'; eventually, once you have learned to reflect more fully, you will be able to not only reflect by writing on your practice OUT of the classroom but also adopt, apply and develop your learning from the latter when IN the classroom.

In assuming this approach in your writing, it is necessary for you to examine in writing your own experiences in the classroom. As such, your reader should gain a sense of your own 'voice' and it follows that using 'I' or 'first person' is perfectly acceptable.

Levels of Reflective Writing (Hatton and Smith, 1995)

These levels are developmental and each may be appropriate for a particular context. One is not necessarily 'better' than another, but provides a different level of discourse about a situation or critique.

<p>Descriptive writing: Not reflective – an 'account of' or witness statement of events that occurred or report of literature.</p>	<p>No attempt to provide reasons/justifications for events. (May be used as evidence from a classroom observation report as a basis for reflective dialogue).</p>
<p>Descriptive reflection: Is concerned with the efficiency or effectiveness of means to achieve certain ends, which themselves are not open to criticism or modification. (Van Manen, 1997)</p>	<p>'Accounting for' events. Not only a description, but some attempt to provide a reasoned justification in a descriptive way. 'I did this because I believe....' Recognition of alternate viewpoints in the research and literature reported. Could be a recognition of multiple factors or perspectives.</p>
<p>Dialogic reflection: Allows for open examination not only of means, but also of goals, the assumptions upon which these are based, and the actual outcomes. (Van Manen, 1977)</p>	<p>Writing which represents a 'stepping back' from the situation or actions or argument under consideration and attempts to integrate possible alternatives for explaining and hypothesising. "Such reflection ...may recognise inconsistencies in attempting to provide rationales and critique." (Hatton and Smith, 1995 p49)</p>
<p>Critical reflection: Calls for considerations involving ethical and moral criteria and wider contexts. Takes into account a wider historical or socio-political perspective. (Habermas, 1973)</p>	<p>"Demonstrates awareness that actions and events are not only located in, and explicable by, reference to multiple perspectives but are located in, and influenced by multiple historical, and socio-political contexts". (Hatton and Smith, 1995, p49)</p>

References

- Habermas, J. 1973. *Knowledge and human interests*. London, Heinemann.;
 Hatton, N. & Smith, D., 1995. Reflection in Teacher Education: Towards Definition and Implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11:1, pp. 33 - 49.
 Van Manen, M. 1977. Linking ways of knowing with ways of being practical. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 6, pp 205-228

Case Study

Mark, a BA Year 2 trainee, engaged with journal writing on a fairly regular basis, using the space to write about his sessions.

October 5th

In today's session, we learned about the different ways that we can respond to diversity. One of these was to ignore differences, another was to treat difference as a problem and another was to celebrate difference and treat diversity as an asset. We also learned about how diversity can come in many different forms and that there are hidden and surface differences in any classroom. In the follow-up seminar we discussed how these issues were relevant to our school experience.

Mark brought his journal writing to me, unsure as to where it was taking him. While recording notes like this may be a useful record of learning, it wasn't allowing Mark to really grapple with any of these issues or to add his own thoughts or ideas. As such, the writing felt empty and lacking in any reflective activity or 'wonderings'. I encouraged him to revisit what we had discussed in the session. Had this reminded him of any examples from his own practice during school-based training or of observations he had made? Did any particular children come to mind or had any peer discussions about this issue got him thinking? Mark admitted that journal writing about his own thoughts and feelings made him feel quite at sea, but agreed to give it a go.

October 12th

Piotr, though originally from Poland, seemed to fit in well with class but was as capable as any other child. My instinct had been to leave him to it and not make a fuss. My discussions in the session last week have made me wonder a bit more about this experience. Using the framework introduced in the lecture, I was trying to avoid seeing Piotr as a problem. However, now I wonder whether simply ignoring hidden differences can be seen as problematic as making an issue out of them. By ignoring Piotr's 'Polishness' was I also denying a part of him that was important to his identity?

What are your impressions of these two pieces of writing? How would you encourage Mark to take his ideas even further?

Mark's second journal entry feels far more 'useful' in terms of where this might take him forward with his thinking and practice. There are a number of avenues that open up here, relating to how Mark might begin to reframe his approach, together with pursuing theoretical ideas that have helped to shape his ideas.

Committing thoughts to paper, particularly if these are to be shared with peers and tutors (something that will be addressed shortly), can be unnerving. It may feel 'safer' to write a closed and descriptive piece. There are a number of frameworks and typologies that can offer you

Writing and keeping journals. A guide for educators and social practitioners

Educators are often encouraged to write journals – especially when they are training – but what does journal writing entail, what benefits can it bring, and how can we go about writing one?

The virtues of journal writing and keeping are often extolled by those concerned with creative, professional, personal and spiritual development. It is clear that many people have got a lot from journaling. This is Jennifer Moon (1999: 14-5):

A journal is a friend that is always there and is always a comfort. In bad moments I write, and usually end up feeling better. It reflects back to me things that I can learn about my world and myself. It represents a private space in my life, a beautiful solitude, the moments before I go to sleep just to stop and note what 'there' is about the day or about my life at the time. I think that it has enabled me to feel deeper and more established as a person, more in control and more trusting of life. On a less introverted note, I think that it contributes to my ability to write in general, and it underlies an interest in poetry and creative writing which awaits a quieter time in my life for fulfilment. In addition, I consider that journal writing is closely associated with the extensive counselling and hypnotherapy work that I have been doing over the years. It has been a support and a resource and a means of exploration, though I cannot say whether journal writing led to counselling or whether they both emerged as a result of particular traits in my personality.

However, it is also easy to see why many resist writing and keeping journals. We might not see ourselves as the sort of person who writes about our lives and experiences in the way that Jennifer Moon describes. We may not know how to start, or where we can find the time to engage in such writing. It might be that we resist journaling because it is something that others require or expect of us – such as when undertaking a course or working in particular fields. In this short piece we explore the benefits of writing and keeping journals – especially 'learning journals'; why it is an important discipline for those called to educate; and some of the practical issues involved.

What is a journal?

To begin it is worth reflecting on what might constitute a journal. Physically, it could be a bound note book, a ring binder full of papers, a collection of electrical particles on computer disk or an audio tape. People journal in different ways. At heart, though, a journal is a day book. As Ron Klug (2002: 1) has put it – 'a place to record daily happenings'. However, as he also says it is far more than that:

A journal is also a tool for self-discovery, an aid to concentration, a mirror for the soul, a place to generate and capture ideas, a safety valve for the emotions, a training ground for the writer, and a good friend and confidant. (op. cit.)

It shares some qualities with things like logs and diaries – it records experiences and events over a period of time. However, writing and keeping journals also entails conscious **reflection** and commentary. Mary Louise Holly (1989: 20) makes this point well:

It is a reconstruction of experience and, like the diary, has both objective and subjective dimensions, but unlike diaries, the writer is (or becomes) aware of the difference. The journal as a 'service book' is implicitly a book that someone returns to. It serves purposes beyond recording events and pouring out thoughts and feelings... Like the diary, the journal is a place

to 'let it all out'. But the journal is also a place for making sense of what *is* out... The journal is a working document.

All journal writing must involve learning at some level. Our interest here is to highlight the processes of reflection and deepening understanding involved when learning becomes a specific focus – as is the case in 'learning journals'. For Jennifer Moon (1999: 4) such a journal is 'an accumulation of material that is mainly based on the writer's processes of reflection. It is written over a period of time, not in "one go"'. Putting 'learning' in front of 'journal' implies 'that there is an overall intention by the writer (or those who have set the task) that learning should be enhanced' (*op. cit.*).

Such journal-keeping and writing has a long history. Explorative diaries were kept by 'ladies of the royal court' in Japan during the tenth century, for example (Rainer 2004: 5). In addition, journal writing has been a significant feature, for many centuries, of the search for religious and spiritual enlightenment (see, for example Brinton 1972). However, in the second half of the twentieth century, there was a growing interest in journal writing also as a means of enhancing creativity and deepening the capacities of practitioners (especially within psychotherapy, counselling and some areas of education). Various approaches to writing and keeping journals emerged. These included approaches emphasizing structured and detailed exploration such as the 'Intensive Journals' advocated and explored by Ira Progoff (1975) and the more free and organic forms examined under the heading of 'new diaries' by Tristine Rainer (1978, 2004). Rainer (2004: 2) talks about keeping a 'natural diary', 'an active purposeful communication with the self'. People who do this:

write, sketch, doodle and play with their imaginations. They record whatever their immediate feelings, thoughts, interests, and intuitions dictate. They write whenever they wish – for pleasure and for self-guidance.

The possibilities of journal writing and keeping as an aid to the professional development of formal and informal educators was recognized by a number of academics and trainers. There was an emphasis on the use of explorative recordings by youth workers in the UK from the 1960s on (in significant part based on their use within psychotherapy) (see Goetschius and Tash 1967, for example). Mainstream teacher educators also began to pick up on the potential of personal-professional journal writing (see Holly 1989 in particular). In part this grew from the influence of Schön (1983) and others around reflection and the significance of reflective practice. To mix there was also growing attention to the role journal writing in personal growth. As a result, by the end of the century there was a significant 'journaling industry' with a range of books, websites, training programmes and retreats, and even specialist software. Journaling has also been firmly located within reflective practice (see, in particular, Bolton 2005).

The benefits of writing and keeping a journal

The first and obvious use of writing a journal is that helps us to remember something later; it is a record to look back on (Holly 1989: 8). It may be that we do not have time to work out what is going on right at this minute – keeping a note in a journal helps us to recapture the moment later so that we may look at it more deeply. It may also be that we need to remember to do something e.g. write a letter on behalf of someone we are working with. We jot the task down – and then when we have time we can look back at our journal or organizer and pick out the tasks we are left with.

Second, the act of putting pen to paper (or finger to keyboard) engages our brains. To write we have to think. Mary Louise Holly argues that when we 'capture our stories while the action is fresh', we are

often provoked to wonder ‘Why do I do this?’ or ‘Why did this happen?’ (1989: xi). Patsie Little makes a similar point about recording:

By keeping records, I am able to monitor my practice. The act of writing something down often crystallises a particular problem or issue or enables me to see where a particular piece of work has not achieved its objective... Through this process I can identify my strengths and weakness’, and areas in which I could benefit from further training. (1995: 36)

Journal writing encourages engagement and reflection.

Third, it isn’t just that writing a journal stimulates thought – it allows us to look at ourselves, our feelings, and our actions in a different way. By writing things down in a journal the words are now ‘outside’ of us. They are there in black and white on the paper or on the screen. We can almost come to look at them as strangers – ‘Did I really think that?’, ‘How does this fit with that?’ In other words, our words may become more concrete – and in this way we can play with them, look at them in another light. (See Wood 2012: 13-15).

Fourth, if we allow ourselves freedom (freedom from judgements, and freedom to write as we wish) then the words we form can take us in new directions.

Without restrictions or censorship your mind can race—or slow down. It can step outside boxes or turn them sideways. It can make utterly fresh connections or simply pause, allowing you to see what is familiar with new eyes. It can train you to observe with subtlety all kinds of situations. And it can help you to learn something of value even from the unwelcome ones. (Dowrick 2009: 3)

Fifth, writing things down in a journal also allows us to ‘clear our minds’. Having made a note of something we can put them on one side for consideration or action at a later point. We can only handle so much at any one moment. Trying remember this or that, and deal with current situations, can sometimes mean that we are not focusing on what we need to. As Mary Louise Holly (1989: 9) again puts it, ‘The journal offers a way to sort out the multitude of demands and interactions and to highlight the most important ones’.

Last, and certainly not least, making journal writing part of our routine means that we do actually take time out to reflect on what might be happening in our practice and in our lives generally (Rainer 2004).

From this we can see that writing and keeping a journal holds the possibility of deepening our self-understanding, and to making added sense of our lives and what we believe. It can also help us to entertain, contain and channel troubling emotions and gain perspective. We may also develop a greater awareness of daily life; become more alive to what is happening to, and around, us in the daily round. At a practical level, writing and keeping a journal can both help us with administrative tasks (like reporting what happened, when and why) and with the process of setting goals and managing our time and priorities.

Starting to write and keep a journal

One of the first decisions to make concerns the form that our journal will take. For most people the choice seems to be between three main forms – notebooks, loose leaf paper within ring binders, or digitally via a word processor or note taker. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. The first two forms of journal have the benefit of not being dependent on high levels of technology and so can be

quickly and easily used. However, they do not have the same powers with regard to search and to organization (and reorganization). The loose leaf journal can be reordered and added to – but things can also be taken away, and this can mean we lose important material. The notebook journal is less flexible – but does have more a feeling of permanence. It is worth taking a little time over making a decision (but not too long) as we have to live with the consequences for a time.

One of the next questions concerns when and where journal writing takes place? Is there somewhere where we will be relatively undisturbed? Is there a good time to write? For many practitioners, the answer is to grab time when it presents itself. In many respects there are distinct advantages to writing as close to the time of the experience as possible (Holly 1989: 92). Using something like a notebook or loose-leaf paper does mean that we can sometimes jot things down as we are working with an individual or a group as an aide-mémoire. We can then ‘fill-in’ details, feelings etc. after the encounter. One of the keys here is not to be too precious about journal writing – just do it. Ron Klug (2002: 34) talks about a college professor who gave the following salient advice to a student: ‘Go through the *motions*, and you’ll get the *emotions*’.

A further decision is the form that the journal should initially take. Some people like to begin with the sort of free-writing advocated by Tristine Rainer. Here they just write about what comes into their mind for a certain period of time. This can get things flowing, and bring out thoughts and experiences that were not at the forefront of our minds. Others start by writing an autobiographical piece. However, for those of us starting a learning journal some sort of basic framework is probably useful. A good starting point is to use four basic elements:

- **Description** of the situation/encounter/experience that includes some attention to feelings at the time.
- **Additional material** – information that come to our notice or into our minds after the event.
- **Reflection** – going back to the experiences, attending to feelings and evaluating experience (Boud *et. al.* 1985: 26-31). (See the page on [reflection](#))
- **Things to do** – the process of reflection may well lead to the need to look again at a situation or to explore some further area. It may highlight the need to take some concrete actions. In this ‘section’ of the entry we can make notes to pick-up later.

There is, however, no ‘right’ way. The test is whether it works for the writer.

Some people mix the sort of explorative journal we have been looking at here with other material. One approach is to include notes from meetings, and jottings from reading and reflection alongside more personal and developmental writing. This mixing can be annoying for some. One response is to write and keep a number of separate notebooks. However, there can be some advantages in mixing writing. The movement between can both set off new trains of thought, and provide a more holistic picture of our activities. C. Wright Mills captured the use to which such ‘mixed’ journals can be put. As practitioners we are, to extend his words, ‘intellectual craftsmen and craftswomen’. Our work demands systematic reflection – and such writing and keeping journals are a key means to achieving this. In them:

there is joined personal experience and professional activities, studies under way and studies planned. In this file, you as an intellectual craftsman, will try to get together what you are doing intellectually and what you are experiencing as a person. Here you will not be afraid to use your experience and relate it directly to various work in progress. By serving as a check on

repetitious work, your file also enables you to conserve your energy. It also encourages you to capture 'fringe thoughts': various ideas which may be by-products of everyday life, snatches of conversation overheard on the street, or for that matter, dreams. Once noted, these may lead to more systematic thinking, as well as lend intellectual relevance to more directed experience. (Mills 1959: 196)

A further consideration concerns what we are to write about in our journals? Here Ron Klug (2002: 54) has come up with a helpful set of starter questions for an 'end of the day' type of journal. We have amended these here slightly – they can be further amended so that they can be used at any point in the day:

- As I look back on the day, what were the most significant events?
- In what ways was this day unique, different from other days?
- Did I have any particularly meaningful conversations?
- Did I do any reading? What were my reactions to it?
- How did I feel during the day? What were the emotional highs and lows? Why did I feel as I did? Is God or my spirit trying to tell me anything about these feelings?
- Did I find myself worrying about anything today?
- What were the chief joys of the day? What did I accomplish?
- Did I fail at anything? What can I learn from this?
- What did I learn today? When did I feel most alive?

Last, it is important to be honest when writing journals. 'Write how you really feel and not how you think you *should* feel. Record what you really think, not what you believe you *ought* to think' (Klug 2002: 56).

'Harvesting' your journal

The real benefits of learning and other journals flow from their sustained use over a period of time. It is, thus, important to work at making journal writing part of the everyday round. There can be obvious and immediate payoffs – especially with the sort of 'mixed' journal we have looked at. We can bring together ideas, pick-up tasks that we need to do, and use the notes we made of sessions, meetings and encounters to plan and report our work. We can also keep track of things that we want to discuss with colleagues or mentors.

In addition, the reflection and exploration that journal writing brings with it can open up new avenues of thought with regard to how we handle different situations or work with particular individuals or groups. There can be an immediate impact. These sorts of pay-off help to keep us journaling in the short term.

To gain real benefit over the longer term we have to, as Ron Klug (2002: 121-8) has put it, 'harvest' our journals. The most basic way of doing this is to read them. Here we might focus on troubling times and incidents, or read through the whole thing perhaps gaining some insights into the way we have developed or how our practice and those we work with changed. We may also begin to see some patterns.

It is also probably helpful to index the contents of the journal. Some people leave the first few pages of their notebooks empty just for this purpose.

Making sense of our journals takes time. It might well be, as Ken Plummer (2001: 152) has put it in the context of researching 'life stories', such analysis is the 'truly creative part of the work'. He continues,

... it entails brooding and reflecting upon mounds of data for long periods of time until it 'makes sense' and 'feels right', and key ideas and themes flow from it. It is also the hardest process to describe: the standard technique is to read and make notes, leave and ponder, re-read without notes, make new notes, match notes up, ponder, re-read and so on.

There are some basic questions for us to be asking for starters:

- Are there experiences, situations or understandings that stand out for us? What is it about them that is catching our attention?
- Does what we have written in our journals still 'ring true'? Have we been fully honest and do the interpretations we made at the time still stand up. From our present standpoint and understanding are there things to question in our writing?
- What is missing? Has there been evasion?
- Does what we are writing in our journals relate to what we know of other practitioners? Can we see any connection with any broader theories we have been exploring?

Some may well want to treat their journals as a full-blown research project and seek to code their contents and to develop theories out of the data (much like the grounded research of Glaser and Strauss 1967) – but for most of us it is the process of reading, pondering and re-reading that we rely on. Ideas and glimmerings of understandings emerge. We can deepen these in conversation with others or through reading relevant texts.

Conclusion – evaluating writing and keeping journals

Education involves more than gaining and exercising technical knowledge and skills. It depends on us also cultivating a kind of artistry. In this sense, educators are not engineers applying their skills to carry out a plan or drawing, they are artists who are able to improvise and devise new ways of looking at things. For Donald Schön (1987: 13) such artistry is an exercise of intelligence, a kind of knowing. Through engaging with our experiences we are able to develop maxims about, for example, group work or working with an individual. In other words, we learn to appreciate – to be aware and to understand – what we have experienced. We become what Elliot W. Eisner (1985; 1998) describes as 'connoisseurs'.

Connoisseurship is the art of appreciation. It can be displayed in any realm in which the character, import, or value of objects, situations, and performances is distributed and variable, including educational practice. (Eisner 1998: 63)

Connoisseurship involves the ability to see, not merely to look (Eisner 1998: 6). To do this we have to develop the ability to name and appreciate the different dimensions of situations and experiences, and the way they relate one to another. We have to be able to draw upon, and make use of, a wide array of information. We also have to be able to place our experiences and understandings in a wider

context, and connect them with our values and commitments. It is into this context that writing and keeping journals comes. Connoisseurship is something that needs to be worked at.

However, educators need to become something more than connoisseurs. We need to become **critics**.

If connoisseurship is the art of appreciation, criticism is the art of disclosure. Criticism, as Dewey pointed out in *Art as Experience*, has at its end the re-education of perception... The task of the critic is to help us to see.

Thus... connoisseurship provides criticism with its subject matter. Connoisseurship is private, but criticism is public. Connoisseurs simply need to appreciate what they encounter. Critics, however, must render these qualities vivid by the artful use of critical disclosure. (Eisner 1985: 92-93)

Criticism can be approached as the process of enabling others to see the qualities of something. As Eisner (1998: 6) puts it, 'effective criticism functions as the midwife to perception. It helps it come into being, then later refines it and helps it to become more acute'.

In the light of this perhaps the most fundamental question we can ask when **evaluating** writing and keeping journals is whether they have allowed us to develop as connoisseurs and critics. A further question relates to the work we do with different individuals and groups. Has writing and keeping a journal had an impact on the direction that work has taken and on the appropriateness of our actions?

Further reading and references

Bolton, G. (2005) *Reflective Practice. Writing and professional development*. 2e. London: Sage. Popular text that explores how practitioners can critically engage with their actions and feelings.

Boud, David et al (eds.) (1985) *Reflection. Turning experience into learning*, London: Kogan Page. 170 pages. Good collection of readings which examine the nature of reflection. The early chapters make particular use of Dewey and Kolb.

Dowrick, S. (2009). *Creative journal writing: The art and heart of reflection*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin. 259 pages. Rightly popular book that invites people to explore journal writing. Practical, easy to read and helpful. It includes exercises, stories and sound advice.

Holly, Mary Louise (1989) *Writing to Grow. Keeping a personal-professional journal*, Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann. One of the best guide to journaling for professional growth. Written initially for teachers it explores reflective writing, understanding experience, gives practical suggestions for writing about experience and examines different dimensions of personal and professional inquiry.

Klug, Ron (2002) *How to Keep a Spiritual Journal. A guide to journal keeping for inner growth and personal discovery* (rev. edn.), Minneapolis: Augsburg. Now in its fourth edition, this rightly popular book is a good starting point for journaling as a spiritual practice.

Moon, Jennifer (1999) *Learning Journals. A handbook for academics, students and professional development*, London: Kogan Page. A helpful introduction to learning journals that not only looks at their possibilities and how they may be kept, but also reflects on their use within education and training programmes.

Rainer, Tristine (1978, 2004) *The New Diary. How to use a journal for self-guidance and extended creativity*, Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher Inc. Reissued with a new introduction in 2004, this book is rightly regarded as a classic. It provides a good introduction to the writing and keeping journals and opens up different approaches.

Wood, J. (2013). *Transformation through journal writing: The art of self-reflection for the helping professions*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Specifically aimed at practitioners in the social professions, this book explores what can be gained from journaling, the different forms and approaches that can be taken – and reflection on different techniques.

References

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How to cite this article: Smith, Mark (1999, 2006, 2013), 'Keeping a learning journal. A guide for educators and social practitioners', *The encyclopedia of pedagogy and informal education*. [<https://infed.org/mobi/writing-and-keeping-journals-a-guide-for-educators-and-social-practitioners/>. Retrieved: insert date]

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EXAMPLE Learning Journal

The Learning Journal serves a number of purposes:

- As a tool for reflection it will support the many enquiries you will engage in during the course, and underpin your development as a ‘reflective practitioner’.
- As a tool for recording your development, it will also provide a major amount of evidence that you have addressed and eventually met the Teachers’ Standards

Your reflections in this diary will be based on any of the course components, such as: lectures , workshops, reading, conversations, tutorials, school placement lessons, school placement tutorials, etc.

Date	Observations/ Reflections	Questions/ what to explore next	Related Teachers’ Standards (if any - max. 3)
<p><u>Week 5</u> (On placement) 31/10/2018</p>	<p>Today was my first day on placement. After observing the class being taught today in a variety of subjects, I have seen elements in my class teacher’s teaching practice which I would like to use in my own in the future. The classroom had calm, inviting atmosphere where there was a real sense of ‘friendship’ between teacher and pupils without this being too much. The children seemed to respect the teacher, who also respected the children and used effective behaviour management techniques such as planned ignoring and use of tone and voice that I would like to adopt in my practice also.</p>	<p>Having observed the class today, I would like to research if there are any differences in effectiveness of various behaviour management techniques, such as typical negative dialogue versus American techniques such as Assertive Discipline (see Prof Studies Week 4), which focus on dialogue being more positive. In addition, I would like to investigate the benefits of sharing learning objectives and success criteria with the children at the beginning of a lesson in addition to any drawbacks.</p>	<p>SEE PD FILE/READING T7</p>
<p>8/11/18</p>	<p>Interactions between teacher and children reinforced to me the importance of explaining what is expected of the children (behaviour and work during lessons) very clearly and concisely even if this needs to involve basic repetition. During the literacy session, the children were expected to “perform” a chose poem and read/act this out in front of the whole class. Although some children were more nervous than others, I now understand how much confidence working with someone else or in a small group when performing in front of the whole class can bring, and that this is a good step towards work on a more individual level.</p> <p>Today, I also helped with a Christmas card session in the school. Parents/carers were invited into the school to decorate Christmas cards with their child, which will eventually be printed. This in addition to the school’s focus on involving parents as much as possible in children’s lives at school (e.g. morning exercise, assembly etc.) further reinforced to me</p>	<p>Although not directly linked to my observations, the literacy session highlighted my need to practise my phonic sounds including decomposing words down into their relevant sounds. I recognise this is an area which needs further work to help improve my subject knowledge.</p>	<p>T3, T8</p>

<p>9/11/18</p>	<p>how strong an influence parental input is on every aspect of a child's education. In my teaching practice, I would try to involve parents as much as possible, even just using simple strategies like going out to talk to them in a morning/after school when dropping or picking their children up to having "getting to you know" sessions.</p> <p>I learnt a lot from teaching my first maths session in a group of 4 pupils. I had planned in advance for this session, ensuring there was a mix of both theory and games with plenty of opportunities to consolidate knowledge. What I needed to remember was planning extra activities for pupils who understood the concept more quickly than the others and to ensure any games did not introduce new concepts linked to the topic which had not been taught (e.g. halving 48 mentally rather than by a written method during bingo). In addition, I myself as a teacher need to remember that although I have high expectations of the children (T1), my expectations of myself need to be realistic given this is the first time I have taught before.</p>	<p>I need to remember to focus on the positives (i.e. the fact that two children now understood halving) and not the negatives (the two others still not fully understand this topic), and that a lesson will not often go to plan.</p>	<p>T4</p>
<p>10/11/18</p>	<p>Today I taught a whole literacy session using the teacher's planning, building on outdoor activities from the previous session. I felt much more positive from the maths session, and felt the lesson ran smoothly and the children produced some good work. Things I need to work on from this are ensuring the starter last for the allocated time, and if for example the children are introduced to a new concept (e.g. shape poems in this instance) it may be more helpful to give several examples of this, rather than just one and to explain very clearly and simply what is expected of the children. In addition I need to work on smoother transitions within the classroom between e.g. going from the carpet to tables and tables to break as this is something that more formal observations will focus upon. I also need to remember that as a student teacher it is expected that after observations, there will be list of things to work on and this is both NORMAL and CORRECT.</p> <p><u>Professional Development</u> During PD, I studied several examples of children's literature suitable for</p>	<p>How do I ensure smooth transitions in the classroom? What important factors need to be taken into consideration when planning this? How to react when this does not go well?</p>	<p>SEE PD FILE/READING T7</p>

<p><u>Week 6</u> 14.11.18</p>	<p>Storytelling at KS2. This reinstated the usefulness of such literature as a starter for some lessons, especially literacy. For example, use a rhyming story within a simple text can help children identify key features of a text easily or provide a starting point for their own poetry writing or piece of creative writing. During the actual telling of one of these stories, this reinforced the need to read children's books with enthusiasm, creativity and a range in tone of voice to help retain children's attention, and that when appropriate to also engage the children in this process. For example, by getting them to repeat a particular recurring section of the story and asking them questions about what they think may happen next etc., which can also be used as a form of discrete continuous assessment.</p> <p><u>General</u> Even taking the register today highlighted the importance of keeping activities at a quick pace, but at the same time that children must also learn to wait patiently until the teacher is finished a particular task. In addition, that it is important to assert your authority early on with children as first impressions often last and sometimes they can easily take advantage!</p> <p><u>Professional Development</u> During PD, I was assisting in a live literacy session that was broadcast to trainees across nine schools in the Gateshead area.</p> <p><u>General</u></p>	<p>I need to explore a range of techniques which can be used to bring back a child's focus and attention on you and the lesson at hand, even if it means they have to wait patiently.</p>	<p>T4, T7</p> <p>SEE PD FILE/READING T7</p> <p>SEE PD FILE/READING T8</p>
<p>15.11.18</p>	<p>After the session had aired, I participated in a group discussion with other trainees using the SEN Observation Toolkit to analyse the lesson. Firstly, I found this resource extremely useful when observing a lesson as this shows all the related professional standards to each point. Secondly, it was useful to get a different perspective on the lesson other than just your own, which also reinforced the necessity to be open to discussing your own lesson with others, especially more experienced teachers. This session particularly drew my attention to the use of other adults the lesson. It seemed apparent that other adults are not often maximised as a resource, and it is important to brief them before the lesson as to their role for the duration of the session. In my teaching practice, I would like</p>		

	<p>to ensure each adult is fully made use of in the classroom, the children respect him/her and they are clear as to their role in the classroom for each lesson.</p> <p><u>Professional Development</u> During PD, I planned my literacy session for the following day. I have found that as well as filling in the blank lesson proforma, I also find it useful to write out each stage of the lesson in depth. This helps me think about aspects of the lesson which are crucial to successful learning, such as smooth transitions and good strategies for behaviour management.</p>		T7
16.11.18	<p><u>General</u> Again, whilst teaching both Science and Literacy today further reinforced the need for strict behaviour management that is always enforced if needed on a regular, appropriate and consistent basis. Aside from this, during Science I saw the benefit of using ICT during lessons to help enhance learning. The children really enjoyed completing the activity on teeth using the net books and seemed to get a lot from this in terms of their learning.</p> <p><u>Professional Development</u> During PD, my placement partner and I marked some literacy work from sessions we had taught which focused on using key features when writing poems. What struck me the most was the vast range in work (quality, length etc.) and also in children's handwriting where some was not very legible. From this, this has further reinforced not only that each class will likely have a wide range in ability, but also made me question what are relative benefits and drawbacks of having either mixed ability or ability groups for core subjects such as Maths and Literacy.</p>	<p>This is something I would like to ensure I use in my teaching practice in the future, however at the same time it is important to consider the practicality and behaviour management side of this, if for example the school has very limited ICT software.</p> <p>I would like to further research the debate of ability groups in primary schools to help give me a better understanding of the relative benefits and weaknesses. I intend that these findings will help improve my future teaching practice.</p>	T3, T4 SEE PD FILE/READING T4
17.11.18	<p><u>General</u> After taking my maths group today for my assignment, I used a visual aid (number square) to try and help the group understand subtracting two digit numbers on a number line. I was pleased that this worked well for the majority, if not all, of the children and their understanding at the end of the session seemed greater than their understanding at the beginning.</p>	<p>What I need to work on is explaining any more 'abstract' links i.e. from this session links between multiples of tens and deriving these known facts to work out sums on a number line. On the other hand, I recognise the importance of needing to be flexible when the lesson is not going to plan, which is something I experienced today successfully.</p>	T4

