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Another challenge in learning to reflect on your own is finding your voice (Canning, 1991; Costa & Kallick, 2000b). We can fall into routine ways of doing things. We can also become accustomed to others telling us directly or implying indirectly what we should do. The busier we are, the more likely these things are to happen. Our hierarchical orientation in education supports expertness and can diminish recognizing and valuing our own wisdom. "Self-knowledge involves *what* and *how* you are thinking, even unconsciously. Many people are not used to engaging in the 'self-talk' that is necessary for hearing their inner voice" (Costa & Kallick, 2000b, p. 60).

Finally, like every other set of skills and dispositions, reflection capacities develop and become more integrated into how we think and who we are over time. Reflecting on your own is a good place to begin developing the individual capacities identified in Chapter 2: Be present, be open, listen without judgment and with empathy, seek understanding, assume mutuality in learning, honor the person, question, respond, and create dialogue. You can practice all of these capacities on your own, then carry them with you into learning conversations with others.

### *Reflecting on Our Own: Examples From Practice*

In this section, we offer several frameworks (i.e., mental models) that have been used to prompt reflection at the individual level. They may be especially helpful in guiding early, intentional reflection experiences. Eventually, all of us develop our own way of prompting inquiry and reflection about our practice. The first two examples (A 4-Step Reflection Process and Letting Your Reflections Flow) were formatted on single pages and placed in faculty mailboxes in a school that was beginning a reflective practice initiative. These mailbox prompts, as they were called, served as gentle reminders to take a time-out for reflection and offered a structure for engaging in reflection.

#### A 4-Step Reflection Process

The 4-step reflection process outlined in Table 3.1 guides reflection-*on*-action and reflection-*for*-action, both focused around a specific event or circumstance. It brings the reflector through a sequenced process of thinking: description (what?), analysis and interpretation (why?), overall determination of meaning (so what?), and projections about future actions (now what?). This sequence of thinking is easily embedded into a personal reflection repertoire.

**TABLE 3.1** A 4-Step Process for Guiding Reflection

Think about a significant event or interaction or lesson that occurred in your classroom or school—with students or adults—that you feel is worth further reflection. You might choose to examine a positive and encouraging experience, or you might choose a more unsettling and challenging experience.

Now consider the following series of questions to prompt your thinking about the experience. You may wish to write down your thoughts. You may even want to share your thoughts aloud with another person.

1. What happened? (Description)

- What did I do? What did others (e.g., students, adults) do?
- What was my affect at the time? What was their affect?
- What was going on around us? Where were we? When during the day did it occur? Was there anything unusual happening?

2. Why? (Analysis, interpretation)

- Why do I think things happened in this way?
- How come I chose to act the way I did? What can I surmise about why the other person acted as she or he did? What was going on for each of us?
- What was I thinking and feeling? Or was I thinking at the time? How might this have affected my choice of behavior?
- How might the context have influenced the experience? Was there something about the activities? Something about the timing or location of events?
- Are there other potential contributing factors? Something about what was said or done by others that triggered my response? Are there past experiences—mine or the school's—that may have contributed to the response?
- What are my hunches about why things happened in the way they did?

3. So what? (Overall meaning and application)

- Why did this seem like a significant event to reflect on?
- What have I learned from this? How could I improve?
- How might this change my future thinking, behaving, interactions?
- What questions remain?

4. Now what? (Implications for action)

- Are there other people I should actively include in reflecting on this event? If so, who and what would we interact about?
- Next time a situation like this presents itself, what do I want to remember to think about? How do I want to behave?
- How could I set up conditions to increase the likelihood of productive interactions and learning?

### Letting Your Reflections Flow

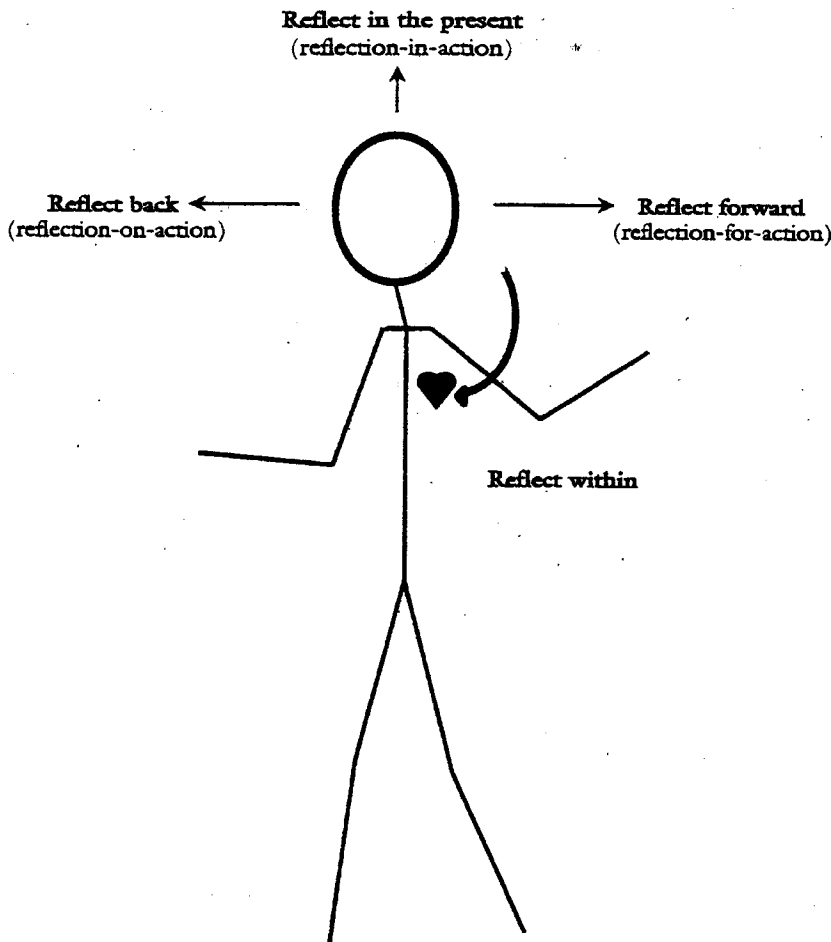
David Bohm (1989) refers to dialogue as “a stream of meaning flowing among us and through us and between us” (p. 1). Although dialogue is often used to refer to interactions between people, it can also refer to a person’s internal exploration of various viewpoints and assumptions—an inner dialogue. Most of us must learn how to dialogue with ourselves. It is not an intrinsic skill to any of us, although we each have the potential. Following are several different prompts for engaging in dialogue with yourself. Before you begin, you may wish to review the introductory description on dialogue located in Chapter 2 (pages 30-33). A recommended mode for dialogue with yourself is writing. However, be careful not to pressure yourself to write in technically correct ways. The purpose is expression of thought, not coherent and carefully sequenced articulation. The third prompt below poses an opportunity for freewriting, which is a way of brainstorming on paper. This form of writing is good practice for just letting thoughts flow onto paper. Select a prompt, and let the dialogue begin.

*Have a written dialogue with yourself about what it means to be a teacher.* When did you first think about being a teacher? What influenced your thinking in this way? Did particular teachers or other people influence your thoughts about becoming a teacher? How do you want to contribute to the lives of children? What are your hopes and visions? What do you want students to learn from you and with you? What do you need to continue learning from them? What are the underlying beliefs and values that guide your teaching? Where do you struggle with alignment between beliefs and values and actual behavior? Why? Explore potential reasons for this. How do you want to be as a teacher? What do you want to learn more about that will enhance your teaching? How can you remain true to these desires?

*Identify a specific event or experience and write about it from as many perspectives as possible.* What happened from my viewpoint? What happened from the viewpoint of others? How might someone in the balcony look down on and interpret the event? How can I make sense of what happened without turning the other person into the bad guy? Is there a way I can step into others’ shoes? How can I view this as understandable difference instead of trying to identify winners and losers? Does there have to be a right way and wrong way?

*Select any topic and do some freewriting.* You may want to think metaphorically. Learning to reflect is like planting a seed, patiently watching it, and hoeing away the competing and unwanted weeds. For example, Bohm’s depiction of dialogue as a stream of meaning could be envisioned as a river. Dialogue is like a river. Or teaching is like planting and tending a garden. Write down your thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and observations about the selected topic. Write about connections between your topic and other things. Do a quick spilling out of anything that

Figure 3.2. Reflection Directions



comes to your mind. Don't evaluate or judge thoughts as they pour out. Just let them flow! Later, look back at all your thoughts and connections. Ask yourself, "I wonder what this means? What are the connections between this and that? Are there new insights or perspectives I hadn't really thought about before? How did this experience of freeing up my mind expand my thinking? What additional questions are raised?"

### Reflection Directions

Reflection has direction. Figure 3.2 depicts four different directions that guide reflection. As you begin or extend your process of individual reflection, practice

these different ways of reflecting. You can reflect within to inquire about personal purpose and why you are the way you are. Why are you a teacher? How did you come to be here? What are your intentions? How do you stay centered? What nurtures your creativity and zest for teaching? How do you want to be with your students and colleagues?

You can reflect back on circumstances or events that have already occurred, referred to as reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983; Webb, 1995). This is one of the most frequently employed forms of reflection. It occurs after an event, when you are removed from it, and the doing is done (temporarily). The mind is then freed up to reflect on the *doing*.

During [reflection-on-action], personal experiences are reflected on, a re-evaluation occurs. . . . During this activity, new data are linked to what is already known, relationships within the data are established, ideas and feelings are tested for their authenticity, and thus new personal practical knowledge and understanding are established. The outcome of this is the state for the design of future action; in other words, it is the input for reflection to action. (Butler, 1996, p. 274)

You can reflect in the present as events are occurring, referred to as reflection-in-action (Butler, 1996; Schon, 1983). This is one of the most difficult but potentially powerful forms of reflection. It is difficult because of the hot-action nature of teaching (see Eraut, 1985, quotation in Chapter 1). It is powerful because it is the means for making adjustments in the process of teaching, based on a keen awareness of what is going on in the present.

Reflection-in-action . . . is possible if and only if there is mental processing capacity available to get outside the act of generation of the performance and to watch its effects and evaluate them. This means being able to accumulate and evaluate immediate feedback within the performance context . . . it allows modification of the performance plan to make it more efficacious. (Butler, 1996, p. 273)

The abilities to reflect in action and to make adjustments accordingly are readily apparent in master teachers. The mind of the master teacher is not totally consumed with delivering instruction and keeping students engaged. The mind of the master teacher is freed up to observe student responses, to notice subtle indicators of confusion, to identify unusual responses. Reflection-in-action requires a high level of consciousness. High-performing athletes also offer salient examples of reflection-in-action, making minor adjustments as they perform. Teachers consider, How are students responding? Who is not responding? When did student engagement trail off? Why?

You can reflect forward, referred to as reflection-*for*-action or reflection-*to*-action (Butler, 1996). In this type of reflection, you envision the effect of specific

actions or interventions on a group of students, the classroom as a whole, a group of colleagues, the learning environment, and the school as a community. Reflection-for-action has the potential to identify future ways of thinking or behaving that are likely to produce desirable results. As mentioned above, reflection-on-action is the major input source for considering reflection-for-action.

### Five States of Mind

The five states of mind described by Costa and Garmston (1994) offer another framework or mental model for guiding reflection on your own. Briefly described below are each of the five states of mind, with related questions that prompt reflection:

- *Efficacy* involves having an internal locus of control and knowing that you can make a difference. "Am I thinking efficaciously in this situation? How am I assuming responsibility for my role in this situation?"
- *Flexibility* involves thinking outside the box, choosing to look at things from a different perspective. "Am I thinking flexibly, or am I limited to only one way of thinking?"
- *Craftsmanship* is a focus on continuous improvement, a desire to always get better at what you do. "Is this better than what we or I used to do? How can it be improved?"
- *Consciousness* is being aware of your own process of thinking; the contexts or environments around you; and the relationships among various thoughts, actions, and circumstances. "What am I aware of? What is not here that needs to be? What don't I know?"
- *Interdependence* recognizes that you are never working alone, because you are always involved in an interdependent relationship whether you want to be or not. "Who else might help? Who else is or might be involved? What would my friend Diane do?"

Thinking through this framework prompts internal reflection that can assist getting unstuck when what we are doing isn't working. Thinking through the situation and considering each of the states of mind usually results in a pathway opening up. One of the authors of this book has the five states of mind posted on the wall in his office. When stuck, he looks at the posted states of mind and goes down the list, one by one, thinking about the problem, his actions so far, and what he may have forgotten to try. Sometimes, it is important to look for what is not there as much as what is there. Thinking about the questions posed above prompt reflection-on-action and reflection-for-action.

### *Reflecting on Our Own: More Ideas to Consider*

There are many creative ways to reflect that people have discovered for themselves. Not everyone benefits from prompts or prescribed processes, such as those described above. Some find that meditation and prayer open their minds and hearts to different ways of thinking. For others, exercise or music has the effect of creating space for new thoughts and insights to emerge. Still others listen to audiotaped books as a way to both ground and expand thinking about practice. We even know of individuals who simply go to sleep and let their unconscious minds take over the processing of problems or complexities of practice, later resulting in more conscious insights or understandings. Oftentimes, they wake up in the middle of the night with clear minds and new ideas. Undoubtedly, we are on the front end of discovering myriad ways to enrich and expand our thinking capacities, which will unleash exponentially our ways of doing. Below is a menu of ideas for reflecting on your own that may spark an interest for you.

#### Journaling

Journaling makes the invisible thoughts visible. It provides a means of describing practice as well as identifying and clarifying beliefs, perspectives, challenges, and hopes for practice. It is a way to put your thoughts down on paper. It offers a private place for honest accounting and review. You can go back and read entries many times. It sometimes helps to recall thoughts and different times in your life. If you have journaled about past problems, when you face another, you may be able to find references, analogies, and solving strategies that have worked previously. Journaling is quiet, reflective time alone. A middle school principal once explained that journaling was a way to dump thoughts and feelings, which helped him get rid of old problems. He was able to write about an issue, to think about it, and then to let it go. He also used his journal as a way to document events.

Some people use a carefully chosen, beautiful journal. Some use Post-it notes. Others use whatever loose sheets of paper might be available, then deposit the written-on papers in a place in which the writing can be reviewed at a later time. "[M]aking entries in confidential journals can help us as teachers see where we divert from our lesson plans, what procedures seem to work well for students, which activities are less successful, and so on" (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 1998, p. 549). Entries in journals can include various items, such as date and time, a short description of what happened (with greater detail given about important aspects of an event), and an analysis (Posner, 1996). The significance and implications may be included as well. Benefits of journaling have been identified as expanding awareness, understanding, and insights about teaching practice; making connections be-