The Power of Reflection in Teacher Education and Professional Development

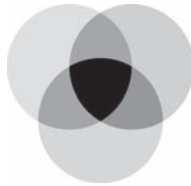
Based on years of extensive research on teacher development, this book offers a practical introduction to the concept of teacher reflection, demonstrating how student teachers can engage with reflective learning from their teaching and classroom experiences in a systematic and inspiring way.

Providing practical models and guidelines for use in the classroom, renowned teacher educators Fred Korthagen and Ellen Nuijten outline various strategies for promoting reflection and illustrate how a deeper form of reflection – 'core reflection' – enhances awareness of professional identity and supports the dismantling of inner obstacles, therefore enhancing social justice and empowering diverse student populations. The authors demonstrate how a trajectory for learning can be designed to develop key competencies, as well as the role played by university- and school-based teacher educators in supporting teachers' self-directed reflection.

Featuring a variety of tools that support professional growth, this unique text demystifies the area of teacher reflection, helping to provide concrete and inspiring examples for how to strengthen professional identity based on everyday challenges faced by practitioners. *The Power of Reflection in Teacher Education and Professional Development* is therefore an essential guide for students, in-service teachers, and teacher educators alike, as well as for anyone in the helping professions.

Fred Korthagen is Professor Emeritus at Utrecht University and director of the Korthagen Institute for Professional Development in the Netherlands. He has received several awards for his research on teacher education and inspired educationalists worldwide.

Ellen Nuijten has a master's degree in human and organizational behavior. She is a senior personal coach, team coach, and trainer, specializing in strength-based reflection and the psychological capital of individuals and teams.



The Power of Reflection in Teacher Education and Professional Development

Strategies for In-Depth Teacher Learning

FRED KORTHAGEN AND
ELLEN NUIJTEN

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About the authors

Fred Korthagen is a professor emeritus at Utrecht University and director of the Korthagen Institute for Professional Development in the Netherlands, which provides courses and workshops for teachers, teacher educators, and other practitioners in the helping professions. His academic fields are professional development, the pedagogy of teacher education, and more particularly, (core) reflection and coaching.

Fred Korthagen has published numerous articles and books on these topics in eight languages and he has given keynotes and workshops all over the world. He has extensive experience as a mathematics teacher and as a teacher educator. He has been the chair of two teacher education programs in the Netherlands, at the University of Amsterdam and Utrecht University. He has also been trained in a variety of therapeutic approaches.

Fred Korthagen's work on realistic teacher education and reflection has influenced educators and researchers all over the world. He is one of the developers of the core reflection approach.

As a leading scholar, he has received several awards for his work, most notably from the *American Educational Research Association* (AERA), the *Association of Teacher Educators* (ATE), and the *International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching* (ISATT). In 2015, he became *Fellow of AERA*, as an acknowledgment for the quality of his research and its impact on practice in teaching and teacher education.

For more information: www.korthagen.nl/en

Ellen Nuijten has a master's degree in Human and Organizational Behavior. She is a senior personal coach and team coach, specializing in strength-based reflection and the psychological capital of individuals and teams. She is also an experienced trainer of coaches, teachers, and organizational leaders, especially in the areas of education and social work.

Ellen Nuijten has extensive experience with various therapeutic approaches, such as systemic work (Hellinger), contextual therapy (Nagy), psychosynthesis, body-oriented therapy, and gestalt therapy. Based on her academic training and her work in a variety of organizations, she is an expert in organizational development and co-authored three books on reflection and coaching. She has been certified as a Master Coach by the NOBCO, the Dutch organization of professional coaches.

Preface

During their work, teachers experience a wealth of multi-faceted situations. By reflecting on these experiences, they can become stronger professionals. Reflection helps to better understand what is happening in teaching situations and to develop effective courses of action. It also enables professionals to direct their own growth and become autonomous learners. Specialized approaches, such as core reflection, make this process more personal and strengthen the development of one's professional identity.

At present, there is a renewed interest in strategies to promote reflection in teacher education. An important reason is that the promotion of reflection is not without its challenges. The concept is often unclear to (student) teachers and many find writing reflection reports useless or annoying. Although teacher educators often find their student teachers' reflections superficial or biased, they tend to struggle with guiding their student teachers towards more effective forms of reflection. As a result, to many, both educators and students, reflection remains a vague, somewhat philosophical concept.

Based on years of research, the main aim of the book is to show how these serious problems can be avoided: many insights and approaches have been developed that can help to make reflection concrete and inspiring. By applying this knowledge to practice, reflection becomes a powerful instrument for professional development.

Building on a large number of research studies and many years of practical experiences, the book outlines much needed strategies and instruments that can make people enthusiastic about reflective learning and help them become stronger professionals. Additionally, the book aims to develop various levels of reflection, which helps to promote a deeper form of reflection, named 'core reflection'. Research has shown that this is a fruitful approach for developing one's personal professional identity. An important aim of core reflection is also to enhance awareness of individual biases or limiting beliefs, and to overcome inner obstacles, such as negative thoughts and ineffective behavioral patterns. As such, core reflection is a crucial instrument in counteracting racism and discrimination and enhancing social justice and empowerment, giving every child the opportunity to expand choice and the capacity to realize their personal potential.

In sum, this book fills a gap by connecting theory and practice and bringing clarity into an area where many practitioners are struggling to enact the promises of professional reflection. The book inspires a fresh look at reflection,

opening doors to challenging and fruitful ways of working and learning, and showing new directions for teacher education. It is a handbook written for students in teacher education, beginning and experienced teachers, teacher educators, and practitioners collaborating in professional learning communities. Increasingly the borders between these groups are fading: student teachers will sometimes get a position as a teacher in a school (in particular second-career teachers), many teachers work as mentor teachers and school-based teacher educators, and close cooperation between teacher educators and teachers in schools has become regular practice in many places in the world. The central aim of this book is to offer all these target groups one coherent framework and a language for supporting their work and their learning. Therefore, we discuss not only the theory and practice of reflection, but also how reflection can be supported through the coaching of individual teachers and in peer groups, and how teacher educators can design an effective trajectory for developing the reflection competence.

The book is also relevant for educators in other fields, for example in health care, social work, or human resource development, as reflection is central to everyone working in helping professions. The approaches, structures, exercises, and instruments described in the book are thus widely applicable, also outside education.

Each chapter begins with practical examples and everyday challenges that practitioners encounter, as several studies have shown that such an approach enhances teacher learning. Next, we identify important principles from the concrete practices we described. At the end of each chapter these principles are linked to important insights from research. This approach is characteristic for the pedagogy of 'realistic teacher education' (discussed at the end of Chapter 6 and in Chapter 7). We thus wrote the book in accordance with this pedagogical approach: the theory is gradually built on practice. This means that we postpone conceptual abstraction and academic terminology as much as possible until the final section of each chapter.

The book is applicable to rather different contexts, as it is based on the work of numerous colleagues in teacher education worldwide and researchers from many countries and several continents. We feel unable to list them all, but we want to mention a few people by name, because we are grateful for the important feedback they gave us during the process of writing of this book: Corrinne Dekker, Carrie Birmingham, Alaster Douglas, Chris Hazelebach, Julian Kitchen, Stefinee Pinnegar, Godelief Riddersma, Lumanda Snoek, Minna Uitto, Marissa Westveer, Heleen Wientjes, and Tiemen Zijlstra.

Our thanks also go to our (former) students and coachees. Working with them has enabled us to develop the approaches we describe and develop trust in their effectiveness. We thank Simon Jacobs and AnnaMary Goodall from Taylor and Francis for their trust in our work and for their support. Special thanks go to Mischa Korthagen who helped us translate this book into English and gave many helpful suggestions for strengthening the manuscript. He also designed the cover image and improved and redesigned several figures.

We hope that this book will inspire a fresh look at reflection and that it will open doors to challenging and fruitful ways of working and learning.

Fred Korthagen and Ellen Nuijten, September 2021.