Reflective Teaching: A Literature Review

Niki Tsangaridou and Daryl Siedentop

Recent attention has focused on the development of reflective teachers. Teacher educators have developed and used several reflective strategies, programs, and models to enhance preservice and in-service teachers' reflective abilities. The purpose of this article is to describe and comment on the different perspectives regarding theory and research on reflective teaching. This paper focused on three dimensions: (a) an account of the conceptual alternatives and theoretical traditions of reflection, (b) an overview of practical and empirical efforts on reflection in classroom and physical education settings, and (c) methodological issues and recommendations for future research.

Advocacies for the value of reflection in teaching and the need for preparing more reflective teachers are not new to the education literature (Calderhead, 1989; Cruickshank, 1987; Dewey, 1933; Smith, 1980; Van Manen, 1977; Zeichner, 1987). That reflection has recently been foregrounded in discussions of both preservice and in-service education (Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Gore, 1993; Richert, 1991) is attributable to a number of factors, including general concern for the thoughtfulness of teachers in recent reform agendas (Holmes Group Report, 1990), the changing demographics of those entering teaching (Lanier & Little, 1986), and a nearly quarter-century research focus on effective teaching research that has emphasized technical skills (Doyle, 1986; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986).

Teaching has become increasingly complex. Reflection is advocated not only because of the complex pedagogical decisions teachers make each day (Calderhead, 1987; McNamara, 1990; Shulman, 1987) but also because of an increasing concern about the moral and political dimensions of teaching (Gore, 1987; Griffin, 1986). Henderson (1989) represented the general view well: "Teaching in a pluralistic, modern, democratic society is a complex affair requiring interpretive sophistication. 'Teaching' is more than a technical activity. In its most versatile forms, it is a dynamic, reflective juggling of historically significant, content-specific, and personally relevant discourse" (p. 13).

Niki Tsangaridou and Daryl Siedentop are with the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at The Ohio State University, 309 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210-1221.
There is general agreement that because teacher education programs cannot prepare teachers for every situation they may encounter it is preferable to help them become thoughtful decision makers (Calderhead, 1987; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Hellison & Templin, 1991; McNamara, 1990; Shulman, 1987; Siedentop, 1991; Zeichner, 1987). Despite this agreement, however, reflective teaching has different meanings, different approaches towards implementation, and little consensus on what ought to be the object of reflection (Adler, 1991; Calderhead, 1989; Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Gore, 1987; Tom, 1985; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991).

The purpose of this article is to describe and examine different perspectives regarding related theory and research on reflective teaching. The paper is divided into three sections. The first section provides an account of the conceptual alternatives and theoretical traditions of reflection. An overview of practical and empirical efforts on reflection in classroom and physical education settings is provided in the second section. The final section discusses methodological issues and recommendations for future research.

Conceptual Alternatives and Theoretical Traditions of Reflection

Definitions about "reflection," "reflective teaching," and "reflective teachers" abound in the literature. Most of these definitions have their roots in key concepts advanced by Dewey (1933), Van Manen (1977), and Schon (1983, 1987). Dewey (1933) distinguished between two types of teacher action: the "routine" and the "reflective" action. Routine action is guided by impulse, tradition, and authority, whereas reflective action aims at "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1933, p. 9). Dewey (1933) further described three attitudes he considered prerequisites for reflective action: open-mindedness to alternative possibilities, responsible consideration of consequences, and the whole-heartedness to put ideals into practice.

Van Manen’s (1977) discussion of reflection has also been influential in the reflective teaching literature. Van Manen (1977) suggested that reflection can take three different forms. The first level of reflectivity focuses on technical means to reach a given end/goal. The second level of reflectivity is the process of analyzing meanings, assumptions, and perceptions underlying practical actions. The third and highest level of reflection incorporates critical questions related to moral, ethical, and political aspects of teaching and schooling. Van Manen (1977) argued that this level of reflectivity is the most desirable, noting that "universal consensus, free from delusions or distortions, is the ideal of a deliberative rationality that pursues worthwhile educational ends in self-determination, community, and on the basis of justice, equality, and freedom" (p. 227).

Schon (1983) introduced the concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action refers to the process of interpreting, analyzing, and providing solutions to complex and situational problems during an action, "the period of time in which we remain in the same situation" (p. 278). Reflection-on-action takes place when the practitioner has left the arena of endeavor and mentally reconstructs that arena to analyze actions and events. Schon (1987) summarized his "reflective practitioner" theory as follows:
Design professionals such as architects and urban designers, along with practitioners of such professions as law, management, teaching, and engineering, deal often with uncertainty, uniqueness, and conflict. The nonroutine situations of practice are at least partly indeterminate and must somehow be made coherent. Skilful practitioners learn to conduct and frame experiments in which they impose a kind of coherence on messy situations and thereby discover consequences and implications of their chosen frames. From time to time, their efforts to give order to a situation provoke unexpected outcomes—‘back talk’ that gives the situation a new meaning. They listen and reframe the problem. It is this ensemble of problem framing, on-the-spot experiment, detection of consequences and implications, back talk and response to back talk, that constitutes a reflective conversation with the materials of a situation—the design like artistry of professional practice. (pp. 157-158)

Hellison (1993) pointed out that reflective teaching (RT) has become a buzzword in the educational community. Gore (1993) also emphasized that ‘the term ‘reflective teaching’ has been widely adopted across contemporary traditions in teacher education. In itself, this phenomenon provides an interesting case of the politics of truth” (p. 149). That is, although associated with different theoretical traditions, many scholars who advocate contemporary versions of reflective teaching
draw on John Dewey’s (1933) distinction between routine and reflective action to make their cases. In this instance the ‘will to truth’ functions in such a way that the same language is used to make vastly different claims about the ‘truth’ of reflective teaching. (Gore, 1993, p. 149)

Zeichner and Tabachnick (1991) outlined four major theoretical traditions in the reflective teaching literature. Educational traditions “consist of intergenerational bodies of thought and practices that are concerned with and are connected to particular educational aims and values” (Liston & Zeichner, 1991, p. 45). Even though these traditions of reflective teaching view the ‘world’ differently, and certain priorities about schooling and society are established, the traditions are not mutually exclusive. In practice the four traditions overlap in many ways:

Each one attends in some manner to all of the issues that are raised by the tradition as a group. The differences among the traditions of reflection are defined in terms of the emphasis and priority that is given to particular factors within traditions. (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991, p. 4)

The four traditions of reflective teaching are the academic, social efficiency, developmentalist, and social reconstructionist tradition.

The academic tradition emphasizes the teacher’s role as a scholar and subject matter specialist, addressing reflection on subject matter and its transformation to students. Shulman’s (1987) model of pedagogical reasoning and action is a contemporary version of reflective teaching that emphasizes reflection about content to be taught and how it is to be taught (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991). For Shulman (1987) reflection is made up of the following:
What a teacher does when he or she looks back at the teaching and learning that has occurred, and reconstructs, reenacts, and/or recaptures the events, the emotions, and the accomplishments. It is that set of processes through which a professional learns from experience. . . . Central to this process will be a review of the teaching in comparison to the ends that were sought. (p. 19)

Even though the academic tradition of reflective teaching does not disregard pedagogical principles, students' characteristics and developmental stages, and issues of social justice and equity, "the standards for assessing the adequacy of teaching evolve primarily from the academic disciplines" (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991, p. 5).

The social efficiency tradition emphasizes that the knowledge base derived from the scientific study of teaching should be incorporated into the teacher education curriculum. Cruickshank's (1987) preservice reflective teaching model is within this tradition, emphasizing the application of pedagogical principles to particular situations and thoughtful analysis of the teaching episodes. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1991) suggested that the work of Dorene Ross and her colleagues is also an example of this orientation of reflective teaching. Ross (1989) defined reflection "as a way of thinking about educational matters that involves the ability to make rational choices and to assume responsibility for those choices" (p. 22). While this version of reflective teaching does not ignore the social context of schooling, equity and social issues, student understanding and developmental characteristics, or subject matter content, "the emphasis is clearly on the intelligent use of 'generic' teaching skills and strategies that have been suggested by research" (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991, p. 6).

A central characteristic of the developmentalist tradition is the assumption that the learner's natural development provides the basis for deciding what should be taught to students and how it should be taught. This tradition of reflective teaching puts an emphasis on engaging learners with phenomena and then working to understand the sense they are making from their engagement (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991). Developmentalist reflective teaching places emphasis on reflecting about students without neglecting subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge (which derives from research on teaching), and political, social, or equity issues.

In the social reconstructionist tradition, schooling and teacher education are viewed as agencies for the creation of a more just and humane society. Reflective teaching in this tradition has three central characteristics (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991). First, reflection focuses on the social conditions in which teaching practices are situated. Second, reflective teaching is democratic and emancipatory in that the focus of reflection is on inequality and injustice issues within schooling and society. Third, reflective teaching is committed to reflection as a communal activity. Teacher educators from the social reconstructionists orientation "seek to create 'communities of learning' where teachers can support and sustain each other" (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991, p. 9).

Common to the four traditions are the emphases on maintaining thoughtfulness, considering alternatives, and assessing the consequences of actions, as well as building and sustaining a more collaborative, professional teaching profession. The traditions differ particularly on what should be the main focus for
reflection, and one suspects that different epistemologies inform the traditions. For example, the developmentalist tradition draws heavily on Enlightenment philosophies and pedagogies, whereas the social reconstructionist tradition draws on 20th-century movements in sociology and philosophy that were strongly reactionary to the Enlightenment traditions.

Practical and Empirical Efforts in Reflection

Despite the emphasis placed on the concept of reflection, the reflective teaching literature remains mostly theoretical (Calderhead, 1989; McNamara, 1990) and much of the empirical work on reflective teaching is still in its infancy (Calderhead, 1989; Richert, 1990; Ross, 1990; Zeichner, 1987). Elbaz (1988) observed,

It cannot be said that we have hard evidence of the benefits of teacher reflectiveness; rather, those who are working to foster teacher reflection are doing so because they share a vision of education in which reflection is an essential characteristic of teaching and learning. (p. 171)

Recently, however, some practical and empirical reports have been added to the literature. The main focus of these efforts has been on promoting and/or enhancing teacher reflection. Several models and instructional strategies have been used in preservice and in-service programs in an effort to prepare reflective teachers and promote reflective practices (Adler, 1991; McNamara, 1990; Smyth, 1992; Valli, 1992). The review of these practical and empirical efforts that follows is classified into three categories:

1. Reflection at the preservice level, studies and reports focusing on specific reflective strategies and studies and reports focusing on teacher education programs
2. Reflection at the in-service level
3. Reflection in physical education

Reflection at the Preservice Level

Studies and Reports on Specific Reflective Strategies

A variety of specific reflective strategies have been used by teacher educators to develop the reflective capabilities of preservice teachers. In general, these strategies can be classified into six categories: (a) writings, (b) curriculum inquiry, (c) supervisory approaches, (d) action research, (e) ethnography, and (f) reflective teaching (Zeichner, 1987). A brief description and account of the effects of these reflective strategies on the preservice level follow.

Writings. To encourage introspection about their own classroom practice, preservice teachers are asked to keep journals, logs, or portfolios during professional studies courses. These different forms of writing are designed to assist prospective teachers in focusing their attention on specific aspects of teaching and schooling. Stover (1986) argued that writing "encourages future teachers to
synthesize the contents of their professional preparation programs’’ (p. 20) and ‘‘provides a place in which students can test out ideas, can wrestle with solutions, and can feel safe about risking failure as they struggle to form structures and schemes for their future classroom performance’’ (p. 21). Using the writings approach with her own students, Stover (1986) reported the strategy to be powerful. Maas (1991) described how he used different forms of writing, such as journals and papers, with student teachers in helping them to reflect on all aspects of their teaching, noting that this reflective strategy had a positive impact on students. Similarly, Oberg (1990) stated that the ‘‘action research journal’’ had positive effects on students. Bolin (1988) reported that student journals and university supervisor reports agreed that reflective journals had helped teacher candidates become more deliberate about their teaching.

Richert (1990) investigated the effects of four conditions designed to promote reflection in the practice of preservice teachers: journal writing, a teaching portfolio, peer observation/discussion, and a portfolio-peer partner combination. Participants in the study were 12 preservice teachers enrolled in the Stanford Teacher Education Program. Data were gathered from self-report interviews about the processes of reflection under the four conditions. Findings indicated that the novice teachers perceived two of the four conditions, partner reflection and portfolio reflection, as being particularly helpful for their reflection.

Curriculum Inquiry. Some teacher educators provide opportunities for preservice teachers to analyze and design curriculum projects in the hope of empowering and giving voice to preservice teachers as future decision makers of school curriculum (Zeichner, 1987). The most common pattern of the curriculum inquiry approach is as follows: First, preservice teachers receive theoretical knowledge about curriculum; then they learn how to analyze actual curriculum materials and actual curriculum in classrooms; and finally they develop their own classroom curriculum. Even though educators have noted that the curriculum inquiry approach helped prospective teachers to be more reflective teachers (Adler & Goodman, 1986; Beyer, 1984; Goodman, 1991; Zeichner & Liston, 1987), these claims are based solely on the instructors’ and students’ comments.

Supervisory Approaches. Supervisory approaches that emphasize developing reflective abilities of preservice teachers (e.g., ‘‘situational teaching,’’ ‘‘horizontal evaluation,’’ ‘‘selective supervision,’’ ‘‘inquiry-oriented supervisory model’’) have also been used by teacher educators. These approaches stress the role of supervisors in helping student teachers to reflect about the theory and practice of teaching, stimulating student teachers to analyze and see more critically their teaching performance and the classroom events. There is some anecdotal evidence suggesting that such approaches are effective. For example, Cohen (1981) reported that the ‘‘situational teaching’’ model has been successfully applied in the school-based teacher education program at Washington University. Gitlin, Ogawa, and Rose (1984) conducted a study to examine the effects of the ‘‘horizontal evaluation supervisory’’ model, comparing five cases involving supervisors who were trained in and used horizontal evaluation with five control cases in which supervisors used other forms of evaluation. The study results indicated that the horizontal evaluation supervisory model was helpful in stimulating reflection.

Zeichner and his colleagues conducted a series of studies on student teaching supervision in which critical reflection about teaching was the goal. Zeichner
and Tabachnick (1982) examined the range of supervisory belief systems of nine university supervisors who were trained in an inquiry-oriented supervisory model. Findings indicated that there were three supervisory belief systems: technical-instrumental \( (n = 3) \), personal growth-centered \( (n = 4) \), and critical \( (n = 2) \). Zeichner and Liston (1985) investigated the logic and substance of discourse between university supervisors and student teachers during supervisory conferences. Seven university supervisors who received training in the inquiry-oriented supervisory model and 14 student teachers participated in the study. Data analysis of 26 audiotapes suggested that four types of practical discourse occurred during the conferences: factual, prudential, justificatory, and critical. The results of the study showed that the factual discourse category dominated the supervisory conferences \( (63.2\%) \), followed by the prudential \( (24.9\%) \), justificatory \( (11.3\%) \), and critical \( (0.6\%) \) categories.

Zeichner, Liston, Mahlios, and Gomez (1988) examined and compared the form and substance of supervisory discourse between university supervisors and student teachers during supervisory conferences in two teacher education programs with similar organizational structures but different philosophical orientations. One program represented a traditional-craft approach to teacher education, and the other represented an inquiry-oriented approach. Subjects in the study were 26 student teachers and 13 university supervisors. Data analysis of audio tapes suggested “a great deal of similarity between the two programs with regard to the distribution of discourse among the four major logical categories. . . . Approximately two thirds of the discourse in both programs is Factual” (Zeichner et al., 1988, p. 355). More specifically, discourse in the inquiry program was 63% factual, 24.9% prudential, 11.3% justificatory, and 0.6% critical. For the traditional craft program, discourse was 61.5% factual, 33.1% prudential, 4.8% justificatory, and 0.6% critical.

Action Research. McCutcheon and Jung (1990) defined action research “as systematic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical, and undertaken by the participants of the inquiry” (p. 148). In the educational action research, participants engage in cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection of their teaching experiences (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). According to Tinning (1987),

[The] cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting is deceptively simple, but it can represent a radical shift in terms of a view of professional development. It has the potential to help teachers move beyond that which is taken for granted in the everyday practice. (p. 118)

Using action research as a vehicle in promoting critical and reflective teaching, Noffke and Brennan (1991) reported that “we have found that engaging in action research . . . continues to be useful in our efforts to enhance our understanding of teaching practices, to improve those practices and to improve the situation in which those practices take place” (p. 200). Gore (1991) described an action research project that she and her elementary student teachers conducted, reporting that the experience was positive for her as a supervisor, as well as for the student teachers, because it forced systematic reflection about teaching and schooling.

Ethnography. Ethnographic methods have also been used as vehicles in enhancing prospective teachers reflectivity. Such methods have been used for
both campus-based courses and field experiences. In both cases, preservice teachers visit different schools and critically study different aspects of teaching and schooling (Zeichner, 1987). Beyer (1984) claimed that "by seeing schools as a sort of 'cultural laboratory,' available for critique, interpretation, and discussion, students begin to understand both why schools operate the way they do, and who benefits from the method of operation" (p. 39). In a recent article, Teitelbaum and Britzman (1991) illustrated how they used ethnographic strategies in methods courses to help preservice teachers become more reflective. The authors indicated that although no longitudinal empirical evidence existed,

other data in the form of students' journals, class discussion, verbal feedback, and the like have convinced us of the efficiency of utilizing these strategies with our students, that they provide excellent opportunities for students to reflect upon, critique and discuss prevailing and altering educational goals and practices. (Teitelbaum & Britzman, 1991, p. 179)

The Reflective Teaching Strategy. The reflective teaching strategy has been designed to encourage teachers to develop their reflective abilities (Cruickshank, 1987). Cruickshank (1985) stated the following:

In essence RT [reflective teaching] is an effort to increase teacher wisdom by engaging preservice students in controlled, on-campus teaching where their behavior is observable and measurable and where their teaching can be examined and thought about in ways that will enhance subsequent performance. (p. 97)

The first study on reflective teaching was undertaken by Cruickshank, Kennedy, Williams, Holton, and Fay (1981). The purpose was to assess whether reflective teaching (a) enhances self-expression concerning teaching and learning, (b) promotes knowledge of teaching variables, and (c) improves attitude towards teaching. Data were collected using six instruments, including stem completions, responses to videos, attitude scale, belief scale, and two semantic differential scales. Analysis of the data provided partial support for the first purpose, no support for the second, and modest support for the third. The researchers concluded that reflective teaching can be used as an alternative instructional technique in teacher education.

Peters (1980) and Peters and Moore (1980) compared the effects of microteaching and reflective teaching procedures on students' views of themselves as teachers and their attitudes toward and perceptions of teaching. Four instruments were used to gather data: My-Self as a Teacher, Teaching in General, When I Think About Teaching, and Students' Reaction to Laboratory Teaching Experience. Data from both studies revealed no statistical differences between posttest scores of students who participated in either reflective teaching or microteaching. Troyer (1988) examined the effects of reflective teaching and a modified version of it on preservice teachers' reflectivity in analyzing classroom teaching situations. The method used for measuring students' reflectivity consisted of having subjects view a videotaped teaching segment, reflect on their observations of the segment, and write an essay about their reflections. Troyer (1988) concluded that "Reflective Teaching is effective in enhancing preservice teachers reflectivity in analyz-
ing classroom teaching situations’’ and that ‘‘supplementing the reflective teaching regimen with a theoretical component on the processes and outcomes of reflective thinking results in an even more effective regimen for preparing reflective teachers’’ (pp. 243-244).

**Studies and Reports in Specific Teacher Education Programs**

Many teacher educators claim they foster reflective inquiry in their programs. As Zeichner (1991) observed, ‘‘the recent literature on teacher education is filled with descriptions of proposals and programs that seek to engage teachers with one another in thinking about the purposes and consequences of their work’’ (pp. 8-9). Few, however, have explained how they do that, and fewer have empirically evaluated their efforts (Calderhead, 1989; McNamara, 1990; Zeichner, 1991). Representative programs at the preservice level that have reported their efforts in helping future teachers develop reflective capabilities are briefly reviewed here.

Ross (1990) described how the teacher education program at The University of Florida has been designed to foster reflection. The faculty members of the program defined reflection as ‘‘a way of thinking about educational matters that involves the ability to make rational choices and to assume responsibility for those choices’’ (p. 98). In helping preservice teachers to become reflective practitioners the following strategies are used: the reflective teaching approach, inquiry activities (action research, ethnography, curriculum analysis), reflective writing, supervisory approaches, faculty modeling, and questioning and dialogue. Ross (1990) argued that the goal of preparing reflective teachers is very difficult but not impossible to achieve. No empirical evidence was presented to validate program effects.

Noordhoff and Kleinfeld (1990) described how the Teacher for Rural Alaska Program (TRA) at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks strives to prepare reflective practitioners who will be able to deal with complex multicultural settings. The faculty members of this program used the term design inquiry instead of reflective inquiry. According to Noordhoff and Kleinfeld (1990), design inquiry encompasses four types of activities: naming and framing situations and issues; identifying goals and appraising their worth; sorting images, selecting strategies, and spinning out consequences; and reflecting on effects and redesigning one’s practice. Future teachers practiced the process of design through case studies.

To examine the effects of the TRA program Noordhoff and Kleinfeld (1990) had the program’s first two student groups (N = 24) teach three 10- to 15-minute lessons, suitable to village high school students, at three points: (a) program entry, (b) at the end of the fall academic/practicum experience, and (c) at the end of the rural student teaching experience. All lessons were videotaped. After each of the lessons, the students were asked to respond to questions. The analysis of students’ lesson performance and responses indicated that the program’s first two groups extended their understanding of the scope of problematic issues in teaching. Noordhoff and Kleinfeld (1990) concluded as follows:

[Prospective teachers] began to take more account of a primary facet of the teaching context—their students—in preparing and implementing lessons. They shifted from seeing instruction as a center task under their control
Zeichner and Liston (1987) illustrated how the elementary teacher education program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has been designed to promote "critical reflection" (i.e., reflection on social, political, and pedagogical issues of teaching and schooling). The student teaching program incorporates five components: teaching, inquiry (action research projects, ethnography, curriculum analysis), seminar, writing, and the supervisory component. Programmatic studies suggested that the program has been partially successful. In summarizing findings from eight studies, Zeichner and Liston (1987) stated that "we can conclude that some of our goals are achieved rather well, others are only partially achieved, and still others appear to be neglected in practice." (p. 45) Sparks-Langer, Colton, Pasch, and Starko (1991) described the Collaboration for the Improvement of Teacher Education (CITE) program at Eastern Michigan University. The program's aim is to help preservice teachers to reflect on technical, educational, and social aspects of teaching and schooling. Reflective activities such as writings, classroom observations, microteaching, and classroom teaching are used in the foundational and method courses to provide opportunities for prospective teachers to learn and practice reflection. Synthesizing the findings of four studies designed to evaluate the CITE program's efforts, Sparks-Langer et al. (1991) concluded as follows:

Guided field experiences with writing, thought, discussion, and a coherent view of reflective thinking can help future teachers analyze and interpret their classroom experiences... We feel fairly successful in promoting the cognitive/micro/technical aspects of teacher thinking. It is harder, however, to develop the critical reflection crucial for responsible professional practice. (pp. 13-14)

Reflection at the In-Service Level

Interest in reflective practice is not limited to the preservice teacher education level. In-service education and professional development programs are also designed to promote reflection and encourage teachers to engage in reflective practices. Osterman (1990) indicated the following:

During the last few years, there has been a growing interest in reflective practice as a means of professional development. In the field of education, teachers and administrators have seen a rapid growth in the number of preservice and inservice programs that incorporate the reflective practice—programs which use experience and reflection to develop professional skills. (pp. 133-134)

Several reflective programs and reflective strategies have been used to help experienced teachers become reflective practitioners (Shrock & Byrd, 1987; Smyth, 1991; Sparks-Langer et al. 1991; Wildman & Niles, 1987). According
to Shrock and Byrd (1987), those supporting reflective practice at the in-service level "advocate encouraging and/or teaching teachers to think about teaching, i.e., to become reflective practitioners and to discover their goals and objectives during the act of teaching" (p. 50). Representative studies and reports of reflective strategies and reflective in-service programs or models at the in-service level follow.

Cruickshank's reflective teaching strategy has been used in staff development programs "to give experienced teachers the opportunity to practice different instructional styles in a non-judgmental, non-evaluative environment and receive feedback from colleagues" (Applegate, 1981, p. 1). Applegate (1981) provided a personal account of how the reflective teaching strategy has been used with experienced teachers in enhancing their thoughtful consideration of teaching. She reported that these teachers responded well to the reflective teaching strategy.

A modified version of the Cruickshank's reflective teaching strategy has been used in the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) teacher education programs at Newcastle College of Advanced Education in Australia (McKee, 1986). McKee (1986) reported that reflective teaching was perceived by teachers as more effective than microteaching. McKee also argued that the reflective teaching strategy had been the most useful instructional strategy in the TAFE teacher education programs.

Holly (1989) suggested that "writing facilitates consciousness of consciousness, what Dewey described as awareness" (p. 76). She stated that such techniques allow teachers to explore their practice, describe classroom life, and reflect on experiences. Reflective writing strategies also helped to develop awareness and insights that enriched professional judgment. Holly (1989) argued that "writing 'works' because it enables us to come to know ourselves through the multiple voices our experiences take, to describe the contexts and histories as they shape the many minds and selves who define us and others" (p. 78). Summarizing findings from four studies that aimed to enhance reflection using different reflective strategies in the in-service level, Nolan and Huber (1989) concluded that "with the appropriate conditions veteran teachers can indeed become more reflective about teaching. Furthermore, teachers' personal accounts indicate that increased reflectivity powerfully affects their beliefs about teaching" (p. 138).

Several in-service programs and models have been used to promote reflection. Wildman and Niles (1987), for instance, described a project that was designed to help 20 experienced teachers to become reflective practitioners. The project's activities included discussions of teaching events from transcripts and tapes, observational training, and analysis of teachers' own audiotaped lessons. The authors indicated that over time teachers learned to distinguish between descriptive statements and judgmental statements, and their utilitarian understanding of classroom events changed to a critical and analytical one. Wildman and Niles (1987) suggested that systematic reflection requires "substantial training, additional resources, and large doses of patience and trust" (p. 26).

Killion and Todnem (1991) used a specific reflective model in an in-service workshop to engage teachers in reflective activities. The authors used examples of teachers' comments and anecdotal observations to support their conclusion that the process of reflection is a vehicle of continued personal and professional development. Sparks-Langer et al. (1991) examined the effects of an in-service program that had a major goal to help teachers reflect on teaching actions,
consequences, and moral/political outcomes. Findings of the study showed that teachers’ reflection was enhanced to a level where more principles and context factors were taken into consideration when interpreting instructional events. The investigators stated that little evidence, however, was seen of the critical reflection (e.g., explanation with consideration of ethical, moral, and political issues). Elbaz (1988) used the work of Paulo Freire as a frame of reference to enhance teachers’ reflection while working with practicing teachers who attended a university seminar. She reported that by examining their own knowledge of teaching, teachers learned how to engage in the process of reflection.

Smyth (1991) proposed a reflective practice model that calls for professional transformation and empowerment. His notion for reflective practice and empowerment addresses more directly the social, political, and cultural context of teaching. Smyth (1992) pointed out that “if teachers are going to uncover the nature of the forces that inhibit and constrain them, and work at changing those conditions, they need to engage in four forms of action with respect to their teaching” (p. 295). His model includes four phases. Each phase is sequential and cyclical and poses the following critical questions: Describe—what do I do? Inform—what does this description mean? Conform—how did I come to be like this? And Reconstruct—how may I do this thing differently? Smyth (1991) discussed how he and a group of primary and secondary teachers implemented his model of reflection. Smyth argued that the model helped teachers “to use their own capacities to formulate and implement agendas for change” (p. 135). Canning (1991) also claimed that teachers who participated in workshops where reflection was taught and practiced became more reflective teachers, reporting that “teachers found that reflection was an intrapersonal experience leading to insight about themselves as actors in their worlds” (p. 21). Canning (1991) argued that reflection can help teachers develop their own educational visions and improve their self-confidence.

Nolan and Hillkirk (1991) assessed the effects of a year-long reflective coaching project on actual changes in teaching behavior and changes in thinking about teaching. Participants in the study were 25 experienced teachers. Data sources included teachers’ writing responses (e.g., self-reported changes in teaching behaviors), anecdotal records, audiotaped comments, journals, and observations. Findings of the study indicated that 23 of the 25 teachers perceived that their teaching behaviors and thinking about teaching changed as a result of the project. Observational evidence supported some but not all of the self-reported evidence. More specifically, observational data supported all four reported changes in questioning behavior, two of the four reported changes in classroom management, two of the five reported techniques to increase student understanding, and none of the four reported elements of lesson design.

Reflection in Physical Education

Scholars in physical education have also called for attention to reflective teaching as a component of professional preparation and professional development, suggesting both how to prepare reflective physical education teachers and what the focus of their reflection should be. In this section the literature on reflection in physical education is summarized and studies and reports on reflection are reviewed.
Dodds (1989) suggested that the process of reflection and making choices should be programmatic themes in teacher education. She stated that “all aspects of the program should consistently reinforce the two processes of reflection and choosing that are characteristics of teaching professionals” (p. 101). Dodds (1989) concluded that continuous practice in making conscious choices about teaching and schooling and reflecting about the consequences of such choices provides teachers opportunities to become students of their own teaching, which is “the ultimate goal of effective teacher-training programs” (p. 101). Tinning (1988) argued that “teachers and student teachers have their own theories-of-action and that meaningful change in educational practice will only be achieved when these theories are brought to the surface and tested through a process of critical reflection” (p. 87). Gore (1990) emphasized that the process of reflection needs to go beyond the technical aspects of teaching. To promote the reflective abilities of teachers, she proposed the use of pedagogical strategies that stimulate teachers to discuss their assumptions or biases, to discuss how these assumptions affect teaching, and to think about possible alternatives in dealing with specific educational issues or problems.

McKay, Gore, and Kirk (1990) emphasized the following:

Critical and reflective teachers have the ability to step outside of concerns with purely technical issues; to see how they are influenced by political, economic, and bureaucratic forces; and to face up to the fact that, like it or not, they contribute to both the reproduction and transformation of structures of domination in the educational system. (p. 65)

In developing the reflective capacities of teachers, McKay et al. (1990) suggested that teacher educators need to get teachers to ask critical questions about teaching physical education. Tinning (1991) also proposed that physical education teacher educators ought to prepare teachers who value the social, moral, and political aspects of their work:

[By] accepting the discourses of performance pedagogy as the foundation of our teacher education, we will be in danger of continuing to prepare teachers who remain ignorant of the ways in which physical education itself is implicated in producing many of the unjust social practices that characterize much contemporary educational experience. (pp. 17-18)

Hellison and Templin (1991) also argued the following:

Teaching is a complex, personal process, and physical education subject matter offers little guidance about how to teach it best. Despite the subjectivity of the process, there is no substitute for learning to reflect upon one’s teaching—upon the larger social and ethical issues, upon one’s beliefs and values, upon the act of teaching itself. (p. 9)

Graham (1991) suggested that the debate in the literature about the aspects of teaching that teachers ought to reflect on, needs to come to an end:
The questions should not be one of the promotion of reflection on the technical aspects of teaching versus reflection on such issues as social justice in the gymnasium or one's beliefs about teaching. To the contrary, the nature of the subject matter and the learning environment in physical education suggest that each of these focuses is not only a desirable focus of PETE students' reflection but also a critical focus. (p. 14)

Little practical and empirical evidence currently exists in the physical education reflective literature. The common element of all the available empirical studies or reports, except one, is the attempt to find ways to enhance reflection among preservice teachers. Tinning (1987) described how he used the action research strategy with his own students to facilitate reflection during student teaching experiences. The student teachers were asked to identify an issue of concern from their teaching and to work through the action research cycles with their peers, as well as with their cooperating and university supervisors. Tinning (1987) reported that student teachers improved the aspects of their teaching which they considered important, and they also improved their understanding of different issues involved in their own teaching.

Cutforth and Hellison (1992) provided a firsthand account of an alternative approach to teaching a physical education curriculum methods course. The goal of the course was to provide preservice teachers the opportunity to implement, compare, and make judgments about different curriculum models in physical education. Participants in the course were eight physical education preservice teachers and two instructors. Cutforth and Hellison (1992) noted that throughout the course the instructors worked with the preservice teachers rather than "on" them. The authors concluded that reflective teaching "needs to be both conceptualized and experienced if it is to become more than another trend without substance in physical education teacher education programs" (Cutforth & Hellison, 1992, p. 135).

Gore (1990) conducted a case study to describe prospective teachers' experiences and development of reflective practices during a physical education pedagogy course designed to foster reflectivity. Data were collected through journals and interviews. Based on the preservice teachers' responses, three broad groups were identified: the "recalcitrant," "acquiescent," and "commitment" groups. Findings showed that the recalcitrant preservice teachers "reject the need to reflect on teaching and fail to see the relevance of keeping a journal. Reflecting was seen as at best peripheral, and at worst irrelevant, to the task of teaching" (Gore, 1990, p. 119). The acquiescent students would prefer to resist the task of reflection, but they were afraid that it might mean failure in the course. For those students, thinking about teaching and schooling was essentially viewed as a means to the end of how to get through the course. Finally, the committed students saw the value of the act of reflection about teaching and schooling. Based on the findings, Gore (1991) concluded the following:

Any attempt to promote reflective teaching is likely to meet with a heterogeneity of responses. Students could be expected to, and in fact did, differ in terms of their general orientation to course-related reflection and the focus of that reflection. In other words, they differed in terms of how they reflected and on what they reflected. (p. 119)
Another study designed to enhance reflection in physical education was conducted by Sebren (1992). The focus of the study was to describe the reflections and development of prospective teachers during an elementary methods course. The research questions involved what the preservice teachers learned, how that learning changed over time, and how reflection changed the preservice teachers’ development during the methods course. Participants in the study were seven prospective physical education teachers. Data were collected through field notes, documents, interviews, and audiotaped reflection sessions. Data analysis showed that participants divided into two groups. The first group started the semester with an orientation towards teaching as control and shifted to an orientation towards teaching for learning by the end of the study. The second group started the semester with an orientation focused on teaching for learning and continued to grow within that orientation during the semester.

Rovengo (1992) argued that teachers’ perspectives of knowledge (i.e., beliefs about the nature of knowledge and learning) may mediate reflection. Based on this assumption, Rovengo (1992) conducted a study to describe one physical education preservice teacher’s perspective of knowing during an elementary methods course where opportunities for reflection were provided. Data sources included field notes, documents, and interviews. Findings of the study indicated that the preservice teacher preferred received knowledge such as coming to know by listening to others during the course’s reflective experiences. Despite continuous attempts by both the preservice teacher and teacher educator, only slight changes occurred in the preservice teacher’s reflective abilities. Rovengo (1992) concluded that “the desire to foster reflection does not carry with it any easy answer” (p. 509).

Tsangaridou and O’Sullivan (1994) designed a study to describe how specific reflective pedagogical strategies influence preservice physical education teachers to reflect on practice. Participants in the study were six preservice teachers. The participants were assigned to one of two groups. One of the groups was assigned to the Level 1 reflective group (LI-RG), and the other was assigned to the Level 2 reflective group (LII-RG). Participants in the LI-RG completed new reflective assignments, whereas the three participants in the LII-RG completed the regular course’s reflective assignments. Data were generated from journals, video commentaries, and interviews. Findings of the study supported the positive influence of new pedagogical reflective strategies in enhancing the reflective abilities of preservice teachers.

Tsangaridou (1993) took a more pragmatic approach towards teacher reflection by identifying the need for description before prescriptions about reflection are offered. The study was designed to provide a detailed account of how physical education teachers reflect on classroom and school realities in authentic experiences. The focus of the study was twofold in that it attempted to describe teachers’ reflection within the actual teaching and learning environment and the role of reflection in their professional development. The research questions involved in the study were: (a) What do teachers reflect on during their day-to-day teaching and how is this reflection related to their practice and educational values (microreflection)? and (b) To what degree have teachers’ reflection, educational values, and practices changed over the years (macroreflection)? In this study microreflection was defined as reflection which gives meaning to or informs day-to-day practice, and macroreflection as reflection which gives meaning to or informs
practice over the years. Participants in the study were four experienced elementary and secondary physical education teachers from urban and suburban school districts. Data collection consisted of interviews, vignettes, journals, and observations.

Findings indicated that the focus of the participants' microreflection, the type of reflection that informs the teachers' day-to-day practices, included pedagogical, content, ethical, moral, and social issues. The participants' reflection was situationally driven and contextually bound. The repertoire of the dimensions and the specific issues these teachers reflected upon appeared to be consistent with their espoused values and theories of teaching and schooling, as well as their actual practices. Macroreflection, the type of reflection that informs teachers' practices over time, was influential for changes in classroom practice and the teachers' professional development. Findings also revealed that students' history, continuous education, and school context were agents in stimulating the participants' reflection, values, and practices to change over the years.

Methodological Issues and Recommendations for Future Research

The concept of reflection has taken different conceptual, theoretical, empirical, and practical forms in education. After reviewing the classroom and physical education literature at both the preservice and the in-service levels, evidence suggests that, despite the emphasis placed on the concept of reflection, the empirical and practical work on the subject is not extensive. The vast majority of the empirical and practical work on reflective practice accepts the value of reflection a priori and tends to focus on strategies and/or programs that can be used in promoting teachers' reflective practices and abilities.

Since the evidentiary base supporting reflection is limited, we chose to include in this review representative examples of empirical studies, as well as practical reports. Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (1987) emphasized the following:

[Empirical studies] must embody a plan for the careful and systematic observation of events. The methods selected for such observations determine the quality of data obtained. . . . Correspondingly, the presentation of methodology requires great attention to detail. The discussion of method must include sources of data, the collection of data, and the analysis of data. (p. 31)

In this review, we defined empirical studies as those that have identified and precisely described the methods used in the study. Practical reports were defined as those that described attempts to promote reflection but did not meet the standards of empirical research (i.e., precise descriptions of methods). This does not suggest that practical efforts are not useful or that anecdotal evidence can be ignored. It serves only to categorize the evidentiary basis for reflection.

A total of 20 practical reports and 19 empirical studies were reviewed. Practical report conclusions were based on authors' personal accounts, comments provided by participants or instructors in course evaluation, informal assessment strategies, general claims, or anecdotal observations. In some cases, the conclu-
sions sounded very much like testimonials. In some cases, the methods used for promoting reflection were not fully described, and in nearly all cases there was no evidence presented that the pedagogical strategies used to foster reflection were indeed implemented in the manner described, what is typically referred to as fidelity of treatment indicators. Although there is much to be learned from practical efforts, conclusions or assertions derived from this work need to be interpreted with caution.

The emerging empirical work on reflection has sensitized us to both the possibilities and the difficulties involved in the study of reflection. Several important methodological issues need careful reconsideration. A major gap in research on reflective teaching is the lack of firm evidence as to whether reflective teaching training affects subsequent practice. For example, some of the existing empirical evidence supports the value of attempts to promote reflection but stops short of describing its role and/or assessing its value in operational settings for both the long term professional development of teachers, as well as for day-to-day teacher functioning and thinking. Educators seem to assume that reflective thinking learned via reflective practice would be retained, generalized, and/or transferred in ordinary settings. No evidence exists to support this assumption. Evidence does suggest that teachers learn to think and talk about teaching events and enjoy and value the reflective teaching practices. It is not known, however, whether these reflective practices actually change their teaching. In this review, only four studies were found that examined the effects of reflective practice on teachers’ actions in natural settings, but none of them examined the effects of reflective practice on teachers’ actions over long periods of time. It is important to empirically assess whether reflective thinking would be retained in the teachers’ repertoire and for how long beyond the implementation of the ‘‘treatment.’’ In other words, evidence is needed regarding the long-term effects of reflective practice.

Another concern relates to the methods and design of studies as well as the assessment of teachers’ reflection. McNamara (1990) observed that ‘‘the research tends to assume that there is a ‘ghost in the machine.’’ This notion carries with it the presumption that thought is a process which can be separated off as a prior activity which initiates action’’ (p. 157). Often investigators measure the quality of teachers’ reflection by detaching it from direct experience or action (e.g., teachers are asked to comment on a video excerpt of a lesson, or to write a journal). In reality, however, teachers teach ‘‘within the contexts and constraints of the busy and social setting of classroom and that there is no easy distinction between thought and action’’ (McNamara, 1990, p. 158). In a review article, Clandinin and Connelly (1987) also pointed out that researchers tend to separate teachers’ thoughts and actions. The authors noted that a functional separation occurs when thought is studied directly outside the context of a classroom or other practice setting. Those who study either thought or action might, of course, argue that the other is assumed within the work. For example, those who pursue classroom interaction studies might claim that they assume that people are thinking when they interact; and those pursuing thinking studies might claim that they assume that actions flow from thought. The point we are making, however, is that in these studies the two are not simultaneously
subject to inquiry. Rather, the study of one assumes something about the other. There is a difference between inquiries which assume a relationship and those where the relationship is subjected to inquiry. (pp. 496-497)

A major concern in the reflective teaching literature has been the emphasis on prescription rather than description. Such prescriptions are often based on the philosophical and/or political orientations of the scholar. For example, Tinning (1988) claimed that “meaningful change in educational practice will only be achieved when these theories [theories-of-action] are brought to the surface and tested through a process of critical reflection” (p. 87). Tinning’s claim demonstrates a pervasive assumption of the social reconstructionist group who seem to assert that there is only “one way” to produce meaningful change (e.g., through critical reflection). Implicit in their work is the notion that engagement in critical reflection will necessarily lead teachers to adopt a particular political worldview. This tacit assumption is foregrounded in the social reconstructionist scholars’ calls that teacher educators ought to prepare teachers who value and think about the social, moral, and political aspects of their work (e.g., Mckay et al., 1990; Tinning, 1991).

These scholars, however, seem to ignore the possibility that many teachers may reflect on the social, moral, and political aspects of their work but do not hold critical political views. For example, what if a teacher is a thoughtful political conservative? This teacher values the ethics of a political democracy, through a republican form of government with multiple checks and balances, and an economic meritocracy, which the teacher believes a regulated capitalism represents. Moreover, this teacher might be a devout Christian and is “moral” from that perspective. She or he clearly values the social, moral, and political aspects of her or his work. Is this teacher unreflective in social reconstructionist scholars’ sense? If this teacher reflected more or differently would she or he have a different political, moral, economic, and social philosophy? Is such a person mystified?

As noted earlier, in the literature there is an abundance of prescriptions describing what aspects of teaching teachers ought to reflect. These prescriptions range from pedagogical to ethical, moral, and political issues (Adler, 1991; Gore, 1990; McNamara, 1990; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991). There has been a tendency to prioritize the content of teachers’ reflection. For example many educators have used Van Manen’s (1977) hierarchy of reflection. According to Van Manen (1977), the focus of teachers’ reflection can be classified in three levels: (a) technical issues, (b) educational issues, and (c) critical issues (i.e., ethical, moral, political). Van Manen’s (1977) hierarchical framework implies a “prescriptive” approach for “evaluating” and promoting teachers’ reflection. University theoreticians and researchers have created a romantic, cognitive, and sometimes highly politicized view of reflection. If and when teachers do not conform to these views, they may be labeled unreflective. If researchers want to address teachers’ thinking and reflection, they should also do so in terms of actual problems teachers encounter in the classroom and which they nominate as significant.

Two other frequently raised concerns relate to the limited attention that has been paid to “teachers’ voices” and contextual factors that may shape and define reflective practices. McNamara (1990), for instance, emphasized that it is critical to acknowledge the “common-sense language which they [teachers]
use to describe their practice and which give meanings to their professional activities’’ (p. 155). Elbaz (1991) also suggested that teachers’ voices need to be heard from the embeddedness within the culture of the particular school, school system, and society in which teachers work. She went on to suggest the following:

Having “voice” implies that one has a language in which to give expression to one’s authentic concerns, that one is able to recognize those concerns, and further that there is an audience of significant others who will listen. . . . If it has been difficult for teachers to voice their own concerns, this is primarily because the academic and professional discourse of teaching, and of educational research generally, does not allow for the formulation of these concerns. (p. 10)

In addition, educators have emphasized that the authenticity of teachers’ activities should be recognized in the educational literature (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Calderhead, 1989; McNamara, 1990; Zeichner & Tabachnick 1991). Elbaz (1991) pointed out the following:

Teachers cannot function in a totally idiosyncratic fashion: what they do, and how they account for it, have to make sense both in the context of the practice of teaching (with its particular, if contested, base of knowledge) and in the context of the society and its tradition of what it means to teach, learn, and become educated. (p. 6)

Outlining the conditions of constructive reflective practice, Siedentop (1988) suggested that “for reflection to be useful, the teacher must be able to think about events within some context which helps to decipher the sometimes complex interrelationships between teachers and students, the events of teaching and the events of learning” (p. 17). He went on to state the following:

There has been much discussion recently in the American teacher education literature on the topic of reflection. Teachers, we were told, should be more thoughtful and reflect more carefully and considerately on what they do and why they do it. But, reflection does not take place in the abstract. Thinking about isolated or discrete events in teaching is not likely to lead to any deeper understanding. For reflection to be useful, the teacher must be able to think about events within some context. (p. 17)

The common suggestion appears to be that teachers’ voices, judgments, and interpretations of teaching experiences should be considered by researchers within the teacher’s own context. Therefore, efforts to study and describe the nature and content of teachers’ reflection, as well as judgments about reflective practices, also need to be carried out within the context where such practices occur or at least allow for contextual factors that may structure teacher’s reflection to be considered. As Doyle (1992) put it,

Researchers tend to assume that classrooms are artificial, that they are staged performances that can be changed easily by rewriting the script or
redesigning the stage. Clearly, this assumption has not served the educational community well. Prescriptions typically crash into powerful forces within classrooms. But if classrooms are believed to have their own inherent structures, then much can be learned by trying to understand events as they are constructed by students and teachers. (p. 509)

Several questions relevant to teachers' reflection are worth pursuing. Given that the reflective teaching literature provides little empirical evidence regarding the role and nature of teachers' reflection in authentic educational settings, a recommendation offered is that studies be conducted to describe teachers' reflection on their day-to-day lives in the settings they work. Such research should aim at describing what, how, and under what conditions experienced teachers, with varying degrees of experiences and working in different settings, and prospective teachers, at different stages in their program, reflect on their teaching. Knowledge from such research efforts would enhance the understanding of both the nature and status of teachers' reflection and would help formulate tentative hypotheses about the role and function of reflection in teachers' professional responsibilities. Moreover, reflective research should systematically describe and evaluate the reflective strategies adopted in preservice and in-service programs and examine the extent to which they affect teachers' practices. Through programmatic and systematic research, the "reflective teaching paradigm" can be interpreted, explained, and used to inform practice.

It has been argued that reflection is at the heart of good teaching (Elbaz, 1988; Richert, 1991). Evidence, however, to support such claims is currently nonexistent. It will be interesting not only to examine whether teachers are reflective and on what aspects they reflect but also to examine such issues in relation to effective and ineffective teaching. By investigating the relationship between teachers' reflection and effectiveness, knowledge can be generated to confirm or refute the plethora of claims regarding the properties of reflective teaching and its impact on teachers' effectiveness.

Smith (1991), in an article entitled "Where Is the Child in Physical Education Research?" questioned the ability of current researchers "to keep children in view" (p. 51). Calderhead (1989) emphasized that "our concepts of reflective teaching are at present insufficiently discriminating to take the complexities of students' learning into account" (p. 49). It would be interesting if future research on teachers' reflection incorporate students' learning and students' voice. Such studies can provide firsthand data of students' meanings and interpretations, as well as insights of their personal experiences during the learning process.

Finally, longitudinal studies to examine the role of reflection on teachers' professional development would yield observational data to provide thick descriptions and needed insights for the conceptualization of reflection. By studying the paths of teachers' development in a longitudinal form, knowledge can be generated beyond the teachers' self-reported recollections about the role of reflection in their professional development. This knowledge can benefit teacher educators in designing in-service and preservice pedagogical courses and field experiences.

Concluding Remarks

Since the publication of A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), alternative reform proposals for restructuring different aspects of the teacher education curriculum have been published. Nearly all call
for a reflective approach in teacher education (Zeichner, 1991). The notion that teachers should be reflective practitioners has flourished and become a high priority in teacher education programs. As Calderhead (1991) observed, “few terms have been so widely and readily adopted in teacher education as reflective teaching. Its use has grown rapidly during the last decade, though its meaning has become obscured by its application to various forms of training” (p. 153).

One may ask why such an interest in reflective teaching and teacher education has developed in recent years. Speculations have been offered in the literature for the popularity of the term. Calderhead (1991), for instance, wrote the following:

Reflective teaching appears to refer to distinctive elements about the processes of learning to teach, highlighting aspects of reflection and experience, which distinguishes it from other forms of academic learning. Reflective teaching also appears to promise a rationale for teacher education that it much needed during this time when teacher education is under political and media attack. Furthermore, reflective teaching seems to emphasize an analytical component of teaching that might improve the status of teacher education. (p. 153)

Siedentop (1990), using the data, analysis, and implications of the Lanier and Little (1986) review of teacher education, argued that the current foregrounding of teacher reflection in pre- and in-service education is partially a reaction of education scholars to the changing demographics of the teaching force. Lortie (1975) was typical of a tradition in educational scholarship when he suggested that “conservatism, individualism, and presentism are significant components in the ethos of American classroom teachers” (p. 212). This longstanding concern has become more acute recently as more teacher candidates come from lower middle-class backgrounds and blue-collar traditions and as more are first-generation university students. Lanier and Little (1986) presented evidence to suggest that these teacher candidates are more conservative, likely to be authoritarian, restricted in their cognitive development, less analytical, more other directed, less flexible, and conformist in their values. No wonder, then, that reflection in teaching has been so strongly emphasized by education scholars and so readily accepted teacher educators.

Three fundamental questions remain largely unanswered. First, can teacher education and staff development programs significantly change the reflective capacity of pre- and in-service teachers? Second, if the answer to the first question is yes, then how are changes in reflective capacity related over time to changes in teaching? This would lead to the third question: Is a more reflective teacher necessarily a better practitioner? McNamara (1990) has suggested that “there do not appear to be any empirical studies which demonstrate that thoughtful or reflective teachers are necessarily better practitioners” (p. 151). This review indicates that there is a long way to go in education scholarship before these questions can be answered. While this should not deter teacher educators who believe in reflective practice from preparing preservice teachers to be more reflective, it is important for education researchers and scholars to recognize that, at the moment, reflective teaching represents what Crews (1986) called theoreticism, the tendency to settle issues by theoretical degree rather than through
the accumulation of empirical evidence. We hope that a subsequent review in the near future will be able to call upon a sufficient number of studies with a variety of methodologies to assess the value of reflection from a firm evidentiary base.

References


