

Impediments to Reflection in Teacher Education: A UK Case

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Reflection is an important teacher education concept. There has been a plethora of research on the connotation and implementation of the concept and this has been going on. The present paper, part of a larger study, conducted during my PhD research, presents university tutors' and student teachers' perceptions about possible impediments in the way of its implementation in a one year pre-service postgraduate teacher education programme at university in the United Kingdom. Main findings from this qualitative case study reveal that a diverse range of factors hinder the way of proper conceptualisation and implementation of reflection. Lack of time and the amount of work to be covered during the programme came out as main impediments to the proper development of reflection among student teachers. Other hindrances pointed out by participants included issues such as rigid and centralised structures of practicum schools, student teachers' tendency to focus on learning tips, particular pre-conceptions and attitudes of student teachers, tutors, co-tutors and course co-ordinators, particular cultures of school departments, and lack of coordination between school and university tutors. Interestingly, theoretical and/or definitional issues were rarely pointed out as possible hindrance with regard to reflection either by university tutors or student teachers. This has important implications for the conceptualisation and implementation of the concept in this and similar programmes.

Keywords: Teacher education, reflective practice, reflection, teacher training, PGCE

Researchers have variously identified issues ranging from the theoretical and definitional complexities associated with reflection to its practical implications and applications which make it difficult to understand and implement. Markham (1999, p.60) has identified three categories of impediments to reflection: (1) the seductive simplicity of the *metaphor of reflection*, (2) *resistance to reflection* on the part of teachers themselves, and (3) the blocks to ethico-political reflection that teaching *environments and institutions* erect. The first refers to the simplistic way in which reflection is taken as an *individual* and *plain* process of looking back and examining one's actions without taking into consideration the external and environmental influences on this process. Literature reviewed for this study indicates the occurrence of this view regarding the common-sense or simple understanding of reflection in many educational programmes. The second is the resistance to reflection among some teachers and student teachers. According to this view every teacher does not have the necessary reflective dispositions and hence their resistance to reflection. This individual dispositional impediment to reflection has also previously been pointed out by Zeichner and Liston (1987) who reported that the teacher education programme they studied did not bring considerable change in the level of reflection of student teachers over the duration of the programme. This, however, more than pointing out the dependence of reflective development on individual dispositions, shows the possible inadequacy of particular educational programmes to respond to the individual needs of student teachers. This connects this 'individual' dispositional impediment to the third category of 'institutional' factors that Markham identifies. These include priorities in the institutions, time and resources available for reflective practices, environment prevailing in educational institutions such as orientation towards risk taking and openness versus playing safe and competitiveness in terms of league tables and market oriented performance of educational institutions. Absence of institutional support for a reflective environment, therefore, is likely to stand in the way of reflection on the individual level due to a sense of vulnerability on the part of student teachers (Hatton and Smith, 1995). Cole (1997, cited in Markham, 1999, p.61) identifies impeding factors on a more practical level such as 'large class sizes, unreasonable curricular and other professional demands, lack of resources and support, and numerous and persistent outside interferences' as

Khan

hindrances that make it very difficult for teachers to apply themselves to reflection on their practice (see also Olson, 1997).

Hatton and Smith (1995) identify a number of barriers to the development of a reflective environment. These include student teachers' preconceptions about teaching and learning and the issues of survival as new entrants into the teaching profession which can make them focus more on learning the technicalities of teaching to deliver in the classroom rather than reflect on issues of broader significance associated with reflection. In other words the argument is that student teachers are more interested in learning the *how* of teaching rather than the *what* and *why* of it at this initial stage. Teaching, they argue is traditionally associated more with practical performance and delivery rather than with developing reflection and deeper thinking about issues of academic import. This practical emphasis of teaching, they argue, is visible in initial teacher training programmes too, which result in the lack of time and opportunities for reflection in the usually hectic schedules of the training programmes; a lack of identification with the profession at the early stages and a suitable knowledge base are other factors identified by Hatton and Smith (1995) as possible hindrances. Hatton and Smith also identify different modes of reflection such as individual versus collaborative reflection and their impact on the learning styles of individual students. For instance the issue that some student teachers are better at reflection in a collaborative environment than when they are required to do so as individuals where they can fall prey to feelings of vulnerability. In identifying issues related to student teachers, as barriers in the way of reflection, Hatton and Smith thus present a more detailed list of issues than what Markham (1999) suggests, such as the simplistic understanding of reflection, on the part of student teachers. With respect to the individual capabilities and aptitudes and the aims of various teacher education programmes, Hatton and Smith (1995, p.37) point out the difficulty in the 'identification of a suitable knowledge base as starting point' for student teachers to understand the concept before its practical application'. Further, and on a broader level, Hatton and Smith (1995, pp. 35-36) identify the diverse range of interpretations of reflection across programmes as they argue that, 'the theoretical framework for reflection adopted by a particular program will depend upon its purposes and focus, and, therefore, in turn upon the assumptions about teaching and teacher education upon which these are based'.

Akbari (2007) provides a perceptive critique of reflection/reflective practices as a teacher education concept. Akbari critiques reflection on two levels: one, in terms of 'conceptual problems' associated with it and two, in terms of 'practical problems' linked to it. On a conceptual level one problem with reflection, according to Akbari (2007, p.192), is the overemphasis on the rational aspect of the term which he argues comes at the cost of its 'critical dimension' (see also Zeichner, 1994). Tracing reflection to two important sources; Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983, 1987), Akbari (2007, p.196) with reference to Fendler (2003) points out the conceptual difference between the two by arguing that while Dewey associates reflection with scientific professionalism and systematic rational actions as against those that are 'repetitive, blind and impulsive'. Schön in contrast considers reflection as an 'intuitive, personal [and] non rational activity'. This is an interesting observation keeping in view the contemporary understanding and adoption of reflection more in the Schönian rather than the Deweyan conception of it, that is reflection more as a practical skill rather than a theoretical disposition (Lawes, 2003). As a skill, reflection, Akbari argues, tends to have a retrospective focus which comes at the cost of its futuristic and creative value. With reference to Conway (2001) and Freese (2006), Akbari argues that the emphasis in such retrospective reflection is on memory with little attention to anticipatory reflection and imagination. This according to Akbari focuses reflection around practical/technical classroom-based teaching learning issues and skills-enhancement while its 'moral, emancipatory and ethical' (Birmingham, 2004 in Akbari, 2007, p.197) aspects are not taken into consideration.

On a 'practical level' and in terms of the outcomes of reflective practice, Akbari argues that 'there is no evidence' regarding improvement in either teachers' or students' performance. Also in a top-down model of implementation of reflection, he argues, teachers'/practitioners' personalities and individualities are not acknowledged. Associating the current concept of reflective practice with teachers' practical knowledge, Akbari suggests that too much emphasis on the concept might lead to negligence regarding research-based theoretical and propositional knowledge (see also Lawes, 2003). He further

IMPEDIMENTS TO REFLECTION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

argues that exclusion of theoretical knowledge in the discussion of reflective practice will 'limit teacher development to matters of techniques and procedures' Akbari (2007, p.204). With reference to Fendler (2003), Akbari's (2007, p. 201) view is that this is likely to lead to 'the real loss of reflective spirit...' as such reflection no more remains, 'a high order cognitive/affective/socially conscious activity'. One more problem identified by Akbari (2007) as also by Stanley (1999) is the neglect of the 'self', the 'affective domain' and emotions and the emphasis on the 'how' of reflection rather than the 'what' of it. This, it is argued, is problematic as 'teachers may be fearful of reflecting on their teaching if they experience blame, guilt or anger at themselves for not having taught well or for having adversely affected the students' learning' (Stanley, 1999 in Akbari, 2007, p.202).

Taken as a whole, researchers associate a number of problems with reflection as an educational concept. These include problems both on the conceptual and on implementation levels. On the conceptual level problems are associated with the complexity involved in the different conceptualisations of the term which range from its common sense meaning to its more intricate, theoretical understanding and the possible lack of awareness of such a complexity among practitioners. The implementation level issues appear mainly to be an outcome of the diversity in meaning on the conceptual level and thus reflective practices might vary according to the level of understanding of the concept and in response to the aims and objectives of particular educational programmes.

Method

Qualitative naturalistic case study design was adopted for this study. According to Cohen et al. (2007) naturalistic case studies are included in the interpretative paradigm of social research. The salient features of research conducted in the interpretive paradigm include context boundedness of reality, subjectivity of meaning, the multi-facetedness of reality, the significance of the views of data sources (participants), the flexible nature of the inquiry and the inductive analysis of data. With a belief in these qualities, the present study adopted a flexible design, with an inductive analytical approach to explore the participants' views regarding the issue under research. The main data sources included 14 university tutors and 21 student teachers involved in a one year postgraduate teacher education programme (PGCE) at a university in the UK. Data were collected from the 14 university tutors, using standardised-open-ended (Patton, 1980) and semi-structured interviews (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), and 21 student teachers using semi-structured emailed questionnaires (Kitto and Barnett, 2007), followed by semi-structured interviews with selected number of student teachers. Qualitative sampling techniques (opportunity sampling and purposive sampling) were used to select participants for the study. These are familiar qualitative research sampling techniques where the researcher selects the sample in accordance with the need of the study and in line the emergent themes coming out of initial data analysis (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Miles and Huberman, 1994) was then used to analyse the data so obtained in detail. The study was conducted after ethical approval was granted by the relevant institutional ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained and participants have been kept anonymous as per the terms of the consent forms.

Results and discussion

A variety of hindrances to reflection was pointed out by participants, the most significant ones seemed to be the amount of work and tasks that had to be accomplished in the presumably insufficient time, that is, finding the balance between preparation for and actual teaching, reflecting on practices and meeting university and school-based requirements such as directed tasks.

Insufficient time in the programme

Lack of time was mentioned by most university tutors as a big barrier in the way of useful involvement in reflection. A number of them argued for more sessions overall in the programme to make it more useful.

I think the amount of content that we have to get through. There is so much content in the National Curriculum and we only have them [the student teachers] for a relatively short time. It's only really 9 months that they are here for. And during that time obviously we are not in contact constantly with them...~ A university tutor

Khan

We are on the run. We are definitely, you know, it's an assault course. We are just climbing every barrier, running through woods and we say to them, when they come in the first week, this is a marathon; you are running a marathon now so make sure you are healthy and fit because these are very difficult few months...~ A university tutor

Another university tutor, referring to a TES (Times Education Supplement) article, argued:

[Q]uite a few people believe that it should be eighteen months or even two years in order for students to become completely conversant with the skills and attitudes and behaviours and also the mental and intellectual view of teaching which I think is really interesting and certainly the longer I had been a teacher, the more important that level of reflection has become to me...

This lack of time and the amount of work to be covered in the limited time available for teacher education programmes have been identified by many researchers as possible barriers to the development reflection (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Moore, 2004; Akbari, 2007). Citing McNamara (1990) and Noffke and Brennan (1988), Hatton and Smith (1995, p.37) argue that for effective reflection to occur, '...what is needed is time and opportunity for development, so that the required essential meta-teaching and meta-cognitive skills can be acquired' (See also Markham, 1999). This (availability of enough time and opportunities) does not seem to have been the case in the programme under study as both university tutors and student teachers identified lack of time and the consequent strain due to the amount of work they had to complete in the limited time at their disposal, as a big hindrance.

Student teachers too, expressly, pointed out their difficulty in trying to balance the amount of work that had to be done in the time available during the PGCE and the time they needed for reflection. This was highlighted by 13 out of the 21 participants as a hindrance.

Because it is both important to learn how to teach, and how to reflect, it is difficult to balance times. Sometimes I have no time to reflect on a lesson, and, therefore, have to wait until I am next free to reflect; this can cause problems as I may not remember some aspects of the lesson which are important.~ A student teacher

Although most university tutors and student teachers associated the development of reflection more with practical teaching in the schools, the latter also found it difficult to find time for reflection in the school due to the amount of work they had to do there. The amount of work in the form of Directed Tasks was mentioned by most student teachers as a considerable hindrance to reflection. It was presented as a significant drain on their time and energy and without having much value in terms of their usefulness:

Directed tasks are more mundane and cost more time than they are actually useful. Directed Tasks could be like an absolute nightmare. Loads of really mundane tasks: Plan lessons, give lessons, evaluate lessons, plan resources and you got a whole time table, give you Directed Tasks [DT's] and university assignments. You have to come to meetings in schools... We are given another project to do a Phase B3 project which is contributing something to Phase B schools or scheme of work or some resources or something like that. So not only we have done all the DT's, done the assignments, they still want us to do Phase B 3 project as well as they want us to organise a day journey for the students and to take them out and so it's just too much. We have got to do the skills test and the QTS test. Which are uncalled for when we have already done GCSE and degrees.~ A student teacher

Thus, though reflection was more likely to take place during action (Schön, 1983, 1987), yet it seems, the student teachers wanted to have the breathing space needed for subsequent reflection. Further, there is the possibility that if the amount of work to be done exceeds beyond a reasonable level, the outcome might be anxiety around it which is unlikely to result in productive, organized and positive reflection about practices. More than that, in such a case those very practices that are deemed to be developing reflection might very well be done as a routine obligation something that is the very opposite of the very purpose of reflection (Dewey, 1933).

Pragmatism about time-work tension

Although participants were cognisant of this time-work tension and the consequent stressed nature of the course, and while some also expressed their wish for an increase in the duration of the PGCE, there was little optimism about the feasibility of this with regard to the availability of limited resources and the increasing emphasis on a more school-centred initial teacher training. As a justification and counter-argument to the student teachers' views regarding work-load in the PGCE, some university tutors argued that learning to manage the demands of the current model would prepare trainees for the far more challenging timetable of a practicing teacher.

If they can't cope with this amount of work here, they won't [be able to] cope with when they go into schools because teachers work twice as much as the student teachers. So they need to hit the ground really hard. So it's a really pressured job. There is a very high drop out among teachers.... ~ A university tutor

Extending the course beyond the one year, it was argued, could also pose problems such as the loss of talented people who are otherwise qualified to teach but would not want to spend more than a year in initial teacher training for becoming eligible to teach:

If you make it too academic I am worried that you lose teachers who are fantastic teachers but not very academic or not academic in the way that we see academic. They might be actually academically very good but because of the way we look at it and its all written work and then they might not just be good at written work and then they lose out ...if you make it too long a course, because they would not be interested and also ... they don't earn any money because they have already been studying for a long time, they want to start earning money. ~ A university tutor

This view seems to be a response to the current tendency in England towards a more practice-oriented and skill-based initial teacher training as a result of government policies. Another angle to this argument against an increase in the duration of the PGCE was explained by one participant in terms of the very aims of reflection. According to this participant the main aim in an initial teacher training could only be an initiation into reflection and not an expectation to develop it at a higher level as that is beyond the scope of the PGCE. This pragmatism of the possible longer term professional benefit of a packed training programme, however, needs to be counter-balanced against the viewpoint of the student teachers (who find it difficult to find time for reflection) as important stake-holders in the issue.

The School factor

Other hindrances identified included lack of resources to train co-tutors in schools, particular ways, rigidity and inflexibility of some school departments, and fixed ideas of some school co-tutors regarding teaching and learning. This is likely to be the case particularly when there is a gap of communication between the university and the school, a lack of consensus on the nature of the training requirements of the student teachers or a pre-occupation and consequently a possible lack of concern on the part of the school co-tutors with what the university tutors considered useful for developing student teachers as reflective practitioners. In any case the issue seems to revolve around the possibly low level of interaction between the two sides of the partnership. Ways and means, therefore, need to be found to enhance this interaction and collaboration. The statutory work that had to be done was also mentioned as a hindrance in the way of reflection. This seems to have to do with the increasingly centralised management of the initial teacher education programmes and hence the receding independence of the university tutors in devising and implementing university courses. One further reason pointed out was some student teachers' exposure to a previous educational process of 'spoon-feeding' in schools and colleges, which, it was argued would have them need direction in making decisions. The argument, therefore, was that student teachers with such background had the inclination to learn the tricks and techniques of teaching rather than putting their own thinking into doing things independently and reflectively. This might have restrictive influences on their thinking regarding the teaching-learning process and in terms of their role as teachers (Hatton and Smith, 1996; Akbari, 2007).

Khan

To counter this, the suggestion was for an extension of the reflective discourse to elementary and secondary education. This is an important suggestion which indicates an understanding of the philosophy of reflection at the critical level. Further, an intervention at that level would mean fundamental changes in the education system at the elementary level. Maths/science students' possible deficiency in the form of written reflection was another hindrance pointed out by one university tutor with the argument that such student teachers did not have exposure to reflective academic writing in the way student teachers with a social science background would have in their previous educational career. This, again, is an interesting point which implies that student teachers with social science backgrounds are likely to be more reflective than those with pure science backgrounds. The idea, though being put forward by one participant, carries promise for further exploration.

An attitude of aloofness and lack of empathy on the part of some staff members in some departments/schools was also mentioned as a hindrance to reflection:

I had a tutor whose method of teaching was very robotic and not much interaction with the classroom; I felt this would be a hindrance to my learning development as I observed at times in class.

Some ideas not supported by other staff members, opinion about students of other teachers...~ A student teacher

To deal with this, the participant tried to:

Start fresh and try not to listen to opinions of other teachers and make my own mind up about students after I have taught them for a couple of lessons.

Infrequent meetings with people was also identified as a possible barrier to reflection as in such a case:

... assumptions can set in about how to do something that if not corrected, will subsequently make it harder to change...~ A student teacher

Two participants mentioned the frequency and one the format of lesson evaluations as impediments to reflection. It was suggested that with structured forms of evaluation, student teachers would have a better idea of exactly what is required of them and that this would also be useful in saving student teachers' time. Some of the participants mentioned particular attitudes of co-tutors such as treating the standards agendas as a kind of 'tick-box', as a possible hindrance in the way of reflective development of student teachers. This, it was argued, leads to non-conducive environment for the development of reflection in schools:

The attitude of departments and co-tutors at schools if it is not a department that is given to a really constructive reflection, then that's a bit of kind of arid atmosphere for students to be working in who are trying to think deeply about things that they are doing...~ A student teacher

Elaborating the phenomenon this participant argued:

I mean we do have one school which has a very, very detailed scheme of work for each year and it's broken down into lessons and on a number of occasions we said the students must have a little bit opportunity to plan their own lessons and in cases like this one it's definitely a restriction on becoming reflective...

The above quote indicates environment in schools with more centralised systems of governance and curriculum formulation might be very not conducive to the reflective development of student teachers. Unreflective and inflexible attitude on the part of some co-tutors was also identified as a possible hindrance. Such co-tutors, one participant argued, needed to be provided opportunities for continuous professional development and training but that was not possible due to financial constraints.

Student teachers' unhelpful attitudes

A number of tutors mentioned particular student teachers' attitudes such as their pre-occupation with 'getting tips' to survive; their nature and personality, their previous educational background and their subject of study as possible factors impeding the process of proper reflective development. Students keen on getting tips, it was argued, did not see the point of reflecting on issues and because of their pre-occupation with 'getting the standards right' they want to be told what to do and how to do it. Besides, certain personality traits in some student teachers such as shyness, nervousness, and lack of initiative and confidence were also mentioned as possible impediments to their reflective development. Such student teachers, it was argued, were difficult to initiate into the process of reflection as that is something that needs the urge to show independence of thought and action and the will to take responsibility. Interestingly all hindrances identified seem to be concerned with the 'how' of reflection i.e. factors outside reflection that influence its implementation.

Theory, the missing link

Interestingly, no theoretical and/or definitional issues were pointed out as possible hindrances with regard to reflection either by university tutors or student teachers. Both groups of participants predominantly mentioned more practical issues such as shortage of time and the great amount of work that has to be covered during the course, lack of university-school co-ordination, particular pre-conceptions and attitudes of student teachers or if we consider student teachers' views in particular, attitude of certain tutors, co-tutors and course co-ordinators; and particular cultures of school departments. A number of researchers have noted theoretical and definitional issues (issues to deal with the nature, types and levels of reflection and its aims and goals). A case in point is Dewey's (1933) 'rational' conception of reflection versus Schön's (1983) 'intuitive model', the former refers to reflection as a rational and systematic process of experimentation while the latter considers it as '... intuitive, personal [and] non rational activity'(Akbari, 2007, p.196). This kind of theoretical diversity in terms of reflection has been noted as a barrier in the way of implementing and promoting it in educational settings (Calderhead, 1989; Hatton and Smith, 1995; Brookfield, 1995; Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Akbari, 2007). This diversity of its interpretation, however, could be turned into strength if the concept is incorporated with reference to the multiplicity of its connotation which will enhance awareness about the concept as something more than common sense thinking about practices. The case, therefore, is for an appreciation of the theoretically diverse understanding and inclusion of reflection in educational programmes. In the absence of overt and elaborate inclusion of reflection, the concept is likely to be taken in its common-sense meaning as some kind of thinking about teaching. This is what Zeichner and Liston (1996) caution against, a phenomenon where reflection and what it stands for is taken as any sort of thinking about teaching. Markham (1999, p.60) calls this the seductive simplicity of the *metaphor of reflection*. This phenomenon was revealed during a number of interviews where the tutors admitted that they had not thought about the concept in this way before and that the interview was itself a 'self-reflective' process. Another interesting feature that came to the fore was the understanding of reflection in terms of its 'retrospective' in contrast to prospective/ anticipatory reflection (Akbari, 2007). Most tutors and student teachers associated reflection with 'looking back' at action or 'reflection-on-action' (Schön, 1983). This phenomenon according to Akbari (2007) reduces the value of reflection to an emphasis on 'memory' while at the same time ignoring its role in developing 'imagination'. This is an interesting observation and has important implications regarding the role and value of reflection and the way(s) it is interpreted in particular educational programmes.

Summary

Overall, a majority of both university tutors and student teachers associated reflection and reflective practices with an examination and improvement of teaching-learning skills, classroom management skills, student behavioural issues and other such coping strategies. Generally, as is pointed out by Akbari (2007), the emphasis seemed to be more on 'perceptual' and less on the 'conceptual' and 'propositional' knowledge (Fendler, 2003). Further, the stress also seemed to have been on the technicist and behaviourist elements of the teaching process and an overemphasis on the 'how' rather than the 'what' of reflection (Stanley, 1999; Akbari, 2007). That according to a number of researchers is likely to hinder reflection at the higher, critical levels (Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Akbari, 2007).

Conclusion and implications

In terms of obstacles in the way of effective enactment of reflection in the programme, the main barriers were the amount of work and the inadequate time available for this. Both groups of participants identified time-work imbalance as a major obstacle in the way of student-teachers' reflective development. However, to deal with the issue, each group suggested slightly different courses of action. Most university tutors wanted to have a longer duration for the PGCE. The suggested increase ranged from a few weeks to one whole year, making it a full masters programme. Secondly, the university tutors wanted to have more time in the university as the school part was considered adequate. However, keeping in view the government policies in place (at the time of writing this paper) that are aimed at an increasingly practice-based and school-centred initial teacher education, university tutors were not optimistic about any such development. Some of the tutors, nevertheless, were happy with the structure of the programme. This justification was on two bases: one, their acceptance of a more practical initial teacher education as more productive that prepares student teachers for the realities of the classroom and two, their view that most student teachers were of high academic calibre and needed not any longer course than the present one. Another reason put forward was practical and pragmatic considerations such as the potential unpopularity of a longer course, the consequent possible drop out of student teachers and the economic non-viability of such a course both for the government and the student-teachers.

The student teachers too considered lack of time as a major impediment in the way of their reflection. They, however, mainly did not suggest any increase in the duration of the programme and instead focused on the amount of work that had to be covered. The suggestion, therefore, was a reduction in the amount of work in the form of various tasks and assignments that they had to do to progress through the course. Thus, there is this interesting divergence although on lack of time both groups seemed to have convergent views.

The implication is that despite lack of time the university tutors considered the amount of work, and the subject-matter included, important for the professional development of student-teachers, therefore, their focus remained on a possible increase in the duration of the programme rather than a reduction or exclusion of content from the PGCE. The student-teachers, however, seemed to think of the subject-matter they had to cover in the time available, overwhelming and hence considered things which were apparently included in the programme for developing student teachers as reflective practitioners, as barriers in the way of such development.

Suggestions for possible improvement in the programme

This research has important implications for the overall structure and purpose of the PGCE both on an immediate and internal (on the course providers' level) and broader and external (government level). On the internal level for instance, the course providers, that is the university and the schools, might want to adapt the work-time (im)balance to relax the programme, that is either to reduce the amount of work the student teachers have to do during the PGCE or to provide more time for them to usefully reflect on their experiences. This would essentially involve an overall evaluation of the content and aims of the programme.

On the broader, government level, policy makers may need to look into the possibility of funding initial teacher education programmes of longer duration. At that level the issue seems to be one of political, economic and philosophical orientations and priorities. Although findings from this study indicate the participants' overall satisfaction with the duration of the PGCE, there was also an indication that longer duration ITE would be helpful in developing reflection at a higher levels. This, however, was not regarded feasible due to politico-economic factors which were beyond the control of the practitioners. The recognition and emphasis on retrospective rather than prospective form of reflection (Akbari, 2007, Fendler, 2003) also seemed to be hindering the way of more creative and imaginative role of reflection in the programme. There is, therefore, a case for a more comprehensive and overt inclusion of the concept in the programme. The suggestion, therefore, is that student teachers need to understand

IMPEDIMENTS TO REFLECTION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

the what, how and why (that is, the intricacies) of reflection, before they are asked to actually practice reflection during their training/teaching.

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Khan

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