



Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives

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Reflective practice in initial teacher training: critiques and perspectives

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Although reflective practice is now a key competency in many teacher training programs, the theoretical grounding remains problematic and the empirical approaches diverse. With the aim of advancing our understanding of the limitations of reflective practice in initial teacher training, this article draws a critical portrait of reflective practice in terms of theory, practice and methodology based on a review of the literature. We conclude by underscoring the need for a shared terminology and definition for reflective practice in initial training programs; currently, the lack of a clear concept hinders its operationalization in teacher training and its development in empirical research.

Keywords: reflective practice; initial teacher training programs; critiques

Introduction

Since the 1980s, reflective practice (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983) has been included in initial teacher training programs as part of the international movement to reform teaching and improve the quality of education (OCDE, 1989). It is currently a mandatory competency in many university teacher training programs (Richardson, 1990), and it constitutes a dominant education paradigm (Paquay, 1994; Zeichner, 1983). The strong interest in incorporating reflective practice into teacher training is not without questions, however, especially as the very concept remains ambiguous and contentious (Beauchamp, 2006; Fendler, 2003).

With the aim of advancing our understanding of limitations of reflective practice in initial teacher training, this article draws a critical portrait of reflective practice in terms of theory, practice and methodology based on a review of the literature. We begin by establishing the background for reflective practice in initial teacher training programs. We then present the conceptual framework for our study. This is followed by theoretical and then practical critiques of the operationalization of reflective practice in initial teacher training programs. We then outline the methodological limitations of the empirical research on reflective practice in pre-service teachers. In light of these critiques, we conclude by offering some recommendations for future research on reflective practice into teacher training. Note that this is not an

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exhaustive study, the aim being to situate and relate a number of critiques that are salient to the research question.

The rise of reflective practice in initial teacher training

Reflective practice is now a key competency in Western initial teacher training programs (Richardson, 1990). Beyond its enshrinement as a professional competency (or competency component), reflective practice has become an increasingly dominant paradigm in education (Paquay, 1994; Zeichner, 1983). So-called 'reflective' education programs (Desjardins, 2000) have proliferated in the last two decades, and 'Many teacher education programs include as a major goal the preparation of reflective teachers' (Richardson, 1990, p. 3). We concur here with Desjardins (2000), who noted that this new direction has brought with it heavy expectations (p. 10), despite the lack of theoretical grounding. In fact, the concept of reflective practice is unclear, as the literature continues to demonstrate (Beauchamp, 2006). Somehow, it appears to have crept into the field of teacher training before its effectiveness could be accurately appraised, and it stands in danger of becoming another catchword for education reform (Fendler, 2003; Richardson, 1990; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Against this background, we aimed to draw a critical portrait of reflective practice in terms of theory, practice and methodology in the aim of clarifying its limitations in initial teacher training. Because reflective practice has been interpreted variously by authors and educators (Beauchamp, 2006; Desjardins, 2000; Russell, 2005), our first task is to define our position on reflective practice.

Conceptual framework

We propose a two-layered conceptual framework for reflective practice. The first layer is a definition of reflective practice according to the theoretical perspective of Beauchamp (2006), to which we add two constitutive properties. The second is an operational mapping of reflective practice applied to initial teacher training.

Toward a definition of reflective practice

To understand the concept of reflective practice, we draw mainly on the works of Beauchamp (2006), who conducted an in-depth theoretical analysis covering 55 definitions of reflective practice. To our knowledge, this is one of the most recent and more informative studies to provide an overview of the concept of reflective practice. Given the diversity of meanings attributed to reflective practice in this body of research, Beauchamp (2006) does not establish a conclusive definition of the concept. Nevertheless, she distinguishes between several types of reflective processes, objects, and rationales, as summarized in Table 1.

In her theoretical study, Beauchamp (2006) identified various definitive aspects (processes, objects, rationales) at play and their constituents. At this stage of the knowledge, reflective practice is conceived as a process (examining, thinking and understanding, problem solving, analyzing, evaluating and/or constructing, developing and transforming) concerning a particular object (practice, social knowledge, experience, information, theories, meaning, beliefs, self and/or issues of concern) and in view of achieving a particular goal, or rationale (think differently or more

Table 1. Types of processes, objects, and rationales of reflective practice identified by Beauchamp (2006).

Processes of reflection	Objects of the reflective process	Rationales for reflection
Examine	Practice	Think differently or more clearly
Think and understand	Social knowledge	Justify one's stance
Problem-solve	Experience	Think about actions or decisions
Analyze	Information	Change thinking or knowledge
Evaluate	Theories	Take or improve action
Construct, develop, transform	Meaning	Improve student learning
	Beliefs	Alter self or society
	Self	
	Issues of concern	

clearly, justify one's stance, think about actions or decisions, change thinking or knowledge, take or improve action, improve student learning, alter self or society).

We complete this definition of reflective practice by adding two properties inherent to this concept: *grounded* and *generic*.

The grounded property of reflective practice refers directly to what Schön (1983) called the proximity between reflection and action. Accordingly, we propose that reflection is modeled from specific events and then reinvested into professional actions in order to respond to a particular situation. This does not mean that reflection is confined to the job at hand, but that the reflection, which may encompass technical, ethical, moral, political and social aspects, arises from immediate situations, and that the end goal is to reinvest this effort into similar situations by adjusting the practice in the short, medium and long term. In other words, pre-service teachers may reflect on concrete or abstract issues, but these issues always arise from the practice. We agree with Zeichner (1994) that:

The critical is right there in front of student teachers in their classrooms and that the way to draw their attention to it is to start with student teachers' own definitions of their experience and facilitate an examination of different aspects of that experience, including how it is connected to issues of social continuity and change. (p. 14)

The grounded property of reflective practice therefore means that reflection, whether abstract or concrete, can never be disconnected from the situation that produces it.

The generic property of reflective practice refers to a more sociological approach. Reflective practice is conceived as a process that takes place in the social individual, not just the professional individual. The reflective process is not only developed in and applied to a professional life; it also operates transversally, involving personal, social and other areas of life. This is what the OCDE (2005) means by considering reflective practice as not just another competency but 'the heart of key competencies' (p. 10), which individuals in Western societies are required to have. Similarly, Molinat (2006) proposed that reflective practice has become an essential competency in today's society, where frameworks of reference (e.g. religion, male and female roles, family structure) that formerly guided social behaviours and careers have declined in importance.

In this article, we define reflective practice based on the definitive aspects identified by Beauchamp (2006), to which we add two constitutive properties. Among the merits of this general conceptual approach to reflective practice is that it is

inclusive, and by the same token, it does not settle for a partial definition over others. However, recall that the aim of this article is to not to clarify the concept of reflective practice, but instead to report on various critiques of reflective practice in terms of theory, practice and methods.

Mapping the operationalization of reflective practice in initial teacher training

In this section we complete our definition of reflective practice with an operational mapping in initial teacher training. Figure. 1 presents a simplified diagram of how the various aspects of reflective practice are operationalized in initial training. This diagram was adapted from the work of Correa Molina, Collin, Chaubet, and Gervais (2010). Reading from top to bottom, we begin with a description of reflective practice as a reflection process, defined by its grounded and generic properties. Note that the issue in initial teacher training is not so much to foster the process (assuming that students already reflect within their social, professional and personal milieus) as to define and systematize the use of reflective practice in connection with teaching actions. Initial training programs are expected not only to promote reflection, but also to support the on-going development of reflective thinking in teachers. The two processes reverberate within the individual, as they are situated ‘in the teacher’s head’, in the words of Korthagen (2001). Therefore, we cannot directly observe reflective practice or how it develops during initial training. However, it is manifest in actions (e.g. adapting teaching practices in light of teaching situations during the practicum) and discourse (talking and



Figure 1. A mapping of reflective practice in initial teacher training.

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writing about teaching practices). Accordingly, it is conceivable that actions would be more representative of Schön's (1983) reflection-in-action and discourse would be more representative of reflection-on-action. We should mention that these manifestations are unsystematic, unshaped fragments that show evidence of reflective practice. In a training program, reflective practice usually manifests when the students are provided with support tools for reflective practice. We may distinguish between two tools: pedagogical tools (e.g. portfolio, discussion group), used by university professors to assess reflective practice and its development for educational purposes; and methodological tools (e.g. individual and group interviews, classroom observation), used by researchers to examine reflective practice and its development for scientific purposes. In addition, data obtained from pedagogical tools are commonly used later in scientific studies. Thus, pedagogical and scientific tools often overlap.

An operational mapping of reflective practice in initial teacher training cannot completely account for the complexity and diversity of support tools for reflective practice. However, it reveals some common and transversal features. Having defined and mapped reflective practice, we now present the methodology we adopted to attain our research objective.

Methodology

We drew our critical portrait of reflective practice in initial training programs from a literature review based on the methodology proposed by Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996). Accordingly, we began by formulating a research question on which to base the literature review: what are the limitations, challenges and criticisms of reflective practice in initial teacher training programs? We then determined the key words (in French) and their English equivalents to target relevant documents. The following key words were retained: criticisms, critiques, limitations, challenges + reflective practice, reflexivity, reflection, reflective analysis + initial teacher training, and pre-service teachers.

We searched for combinations of these key words in general online databases (e.g. Google, Google Scholar) and specialized databases (e.g. ERIC, Francis, the journal of *Reflective Practice*). As the search proceeded, we made an initial selection of documents based on the abstracts to ensure relevance to the research question. From this body of documents, we selected secondary sources (e.g. Beauchamp, 2006; Desjardins, 2000) to broaden our overview of the topic, as recommended by Gall et al. (1996). We then selected first-source documents according to the relevance and quality of content with respect to our research question. We ended up with 57 documents. The critiques drawn from these documents are presented below. Note that these critiques are organized in terms of themes, and not chronologically, in order to present a systematic portrait.

Reflective practice in initial teacher training: a critical portrait

We drew a critical portrait of reflective practice at three levels: theoretical (conceptualization of reflective practice), practical (operationalization of reflective practice in initial teacher training) and methodological (the empirical research on reflective practice in initial teacher training), as follows.

A critical portrait at the theoretical level

The critiques in the first set are theoretical, beginning with the repeatedly raised point that there is a lack of clarity and consensus on what reflective practice means in teacher training.

Reflective practice: a fuzzy concept

The lack of clarity and consensus is the most frequently raised critique about reflective practice. In 1990, just seven years after Schön (1983) published *The Reflective Practitioner*, Grimmert, Erickson, Mackinnon, and Riecken (1990) concluded that, 'A close examination of this rapidly accumulating body of literature on the nature of reflective teaching reveals a diversity of meanings that are attached to this and similar terms' (p. 20). Six years later, Ecclestone (1996) made almost the same comment, that 'Completely different models of knowledge and learning can underpin ideas about reflective practice' (p. 153). Today the situation does not seem to be any clearer, according to Beauchamp (2006), who raised 'the problem of the variety of ways in which reflection is perceived' (p. 59).

This lack of clarity is not simply terminological. It affects the very notion of reflective practice (Beauchamp, 2006). In short, there is no agreement on what reflective practice is. Fendler (2003) complained that:

Today's discourse of reflection incorporates an array of meanings: a demonstration of self consciousness, a scientific approach to planning for the future, a tacit and intuitive understanding of practice, a discipline to become more professional, a way to tap into one's authentic inner voice, a means to become a more effective teacher, and a strategy to redress injustices in society. It is no wonder then that current research and practices relating to reflection tend to embody mixed messages and confusing agendas. (p. 20)

To put it another way, in the present article we refer to 'reflective practice', whereas other authors prefer 'reflexivity', 'reflection', 'reflective analysis' and so on. On the other hand, some authors use the same term but refer to considerably different concepts of reflective practice. To date, there is no consistent correspondence between the terms used and the meanings implied.

Aside from the definitions and terminologies for reflective practice, its relationships with action and emotion have also been debated in the literature. Critiques of how reflective practice is related to action generally target Schön's (1983) theory. His distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action appears to be contradictory (Eraut, 1995; Moon, 1999). For Schön (1983), reflection-in-action

is bounded by the 'action-present', the zone of time in which action can still make a difference to the situation. The action-present may stretch over minutes, hours, days, or even weeks or months, depending on the pace of activity and the situational boundaries that are characteristics of practice. (p. 62)

Reflection-in-action may therefore be retrospective, which blurs the distinction from reflection-on-action. Here we concur with Moon (1999), who suggested that 'reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action are part of a continuum, the same processes being involved that act quickly and usually unconsciously during action or, further along the continuum, act more slowly and probably more consciously' (p. 44).

Concerning the relationship between reflective practice and emotion, the critiques are generally levelled at Dewey's (1933) model, which is essentially rational, a quality that is contested by some authors such as Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) and Valli (1997). However, Dewey's (1933) concept does not appear to be wholly rational insofar as it is guided by an attitude of 'wholeheartedness', 'open-mindedness' and 'responsibility' (Dewey, 1933, pp. 28–31). Without questioning the rationality of Dewey's (1933) approach, the complete absence of emotion in his model must be interpreted with caution. We agree with Moon (1999) that 'the role of emotion in reflection is not clear' (p. 29), an obscurity that inspired Beauchamp (2006) to call for more light to be shed on this particular aspect of reflective practice.

Aside from the lack of clarity and consensus, there are certain theoretical approaches to reflective practice that appear somewhat questionable, such as hierarchical levels of reflection. We look at these next.

Reflective practice according to levels of reflection

As one of the various conceptions, Van Manen (1977) proposed levels of reflection, generally extending from immediate to broader teaching perspectives. The broadest level is thought to be superior, as it encompasses far-reaching notions such as the social, ethical and moral dimensions of education, values such as equality and fairness, and so on. This axiological grading of reflection appears debatable for two reasons. First, grading reflective practice into various levels inevitably requires distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' reflective practices, and by the same token, between 'good' and 'bad' reflective practitioners. This risks ending up with a standardization of values in reflective practice, an unfortunate consequence insofar as it does not take into account the situation that produces reflective thought. Second, in addition, a hierarchy of reflection levels would elevate certain domains of reflection above others. Zeichner (1994) warned us that:

The idea of level of reflection implies that technical reflection at the level of action must somehow be transcended so that teachers can enter the nirvana of critical reflection. This position devalues technical skill and the everyday world of teachers which is of necessity dominated by reflection at the level of action. (p. 14)

It would appear unjustified to limit the reflective process to particular domains. We argue instead that reflective practice can be exercised in any situation, for example, to reflect on methods (e.g. managing a student's behaviour in order to teach a class). From a pragmatic standpoint, it would seem that all levels of reflective practice are useful for teachers, and that the use of one or the other would depend more on the pedagogical circumstances than on the teacher's capacity to reflect. We are therefore opposed to any hierarchical organization of reflective practice. This is in line with Zeichner (1994), for whom 'all of the domains of reflection are important and necessary' (p. 14). The quality of reflection should not be measured by the 'level' that the teacher attains, but rather by the number of 'levels' that the teacher uses in practice.

A domain-centered approach to reflective practice?

A critique that is rarely raised in the literature concerns the almost exclusive reference to the works of Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983) to conceptualize reflective

practice in teacher training. Beauchamp (2006) noted that ‘The current focus on reflective practice in education stems largely from the work of John Dewey and Donald Schön’ (p. 34), and went on to present these works. Similarly, Fendler (2003) pointed out that ‘These days, the meaning of reflective practice is riddled with tensions between Schön’s notion of practitioner-based intuition, on the one hand, and Dewey’s notion of rational and scientific thinking on the other hand’ (p. 19), which partly explains the lack of theoretical consensus in the field (see section Reflective practice: a fuzzy concept). Without denigrating the contributions of Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983) to the concept of reflective practice, we should recognize that other approaches deriving from traditional fields such as philosophy and sociology have also addressed reflection in relation to action, and that they may have something to contribute to theories in the education sciences. It is therefore regrettable that reflective practice in teacher training has been viewed almost entirely through the lenses of Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983). This is regrettable, not because their thoughts are irrelevant, but because other theories could well and truly enrich the current concept of reflective practice in the education sciences. Therefore, this critique of a domain-centered approach does not dispute the considerable input by Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983), but instead deplores the wilful neglect of researchers to consider other research streams that appear equally relevant.¹

The inadequacy of the concept of reflective practice for teacher training

Some authors, including Houston and Clift (1990), have argued that ‘Current definitions of reflection are strongly influenced by the Western cultural heritage, which emphasizes analysis and problem solving’ (p. 211). In other words, although it is supposed to free the practitioner from technical methods (Schön, 1983), in the end, reflective practice is no more than a product of them. Tremmel (1993) proposed that we go beyond this pure Western logic and adopt a more Eastern perspective on reflective practice, something closer to Zen philosophy. Opting for a more multifaceted approach, McLaughlin (1999) invited us ‘to go beyond the concept itself to acknowledge its incompleteness and its need to be supplemented by, and situated within, a richer account of the nature and requirements of teaching and teacher training’ (p. 9).

A critical portrait at the practical level

Given the diversity of theoretical approaches to reflective practice, it is unsurprising to find that ‘*the literature on teaching reflection reveals tremendous variations*’ (Jay & Johnston, 2002: 73). Many studies have undertaken to present, analyze and compare initial teacher training programs (e.g. Calderhead, 1989; Clift, Houston, Pugach, & Johnson, 1990; Desjardins, 2000; Jay and Johnson, 2002; Korthagen, 2001; Ross, 1989; Tom, 1985; Zeichner, 1987). We present a brief outline of the main points of divergence between reflection-oriented programs.

The reflective domain. The first point concerns the appropriate domain for reflective training. Applying Tom’s (1985) thematic model to a study of initial training programs, Desjardins (2000) noted that:

Reflection can bear exclusively on the practice, e.g., teaching strategies. It can include an examination of the teacher's beliefs or personality. In some cases, the domain covers the entire profession, including historical and ethical factors. Finally, in some training models, reflection embraces the political, social and ideological dimensions of teaching practice. [free translation] (p. 37)

Reflective processes. Another notable point of divergence concerns the reflective process as it is applied in initial training (Desjardins, 2000). Grimmett et al.'s (1990) typology of the various conceptions of the reflective process in initial training is revealing. Beyond the divergences in terms of the reflective process, Zeichner (1987) noted differences in the many explanations and uses of this process. Some programs offer a global vision of the reflective process, whereas others go so far as to specify the steps in the process that teachers-in-training must follow. This divergence raises the question of whether reflective practice is really 'teachable', as Russell (2005) believed, or not (Usher, 1985).

The role of the practicum. Calderhead (1989) identified another point of divergence between initial teacher training programs: the role of the practicum. Arguing that reflective practice should be mentored in initial training, Schön (1987) recommended that teachers-in-training be immersed in hands-on teaching practice. The teaching practicum therefore becomes critically important, being the ideal place to develop reflective practice. On the opposite side of the fence, for those who view reflective practice through its critical, social and political dimensions, 'Exposure to the craft knowledge of the teacher is viewed in terms of its conservative effects, initiating the student teacher into taken-for-granted routines' (Calderhead, 1989, p. 45). In other words, the pre-service teacher should develop critical reflection first and do the practice teaching afterwards. In this case, the teaching practicum takes second place in initial teacher training.

Restructuring of initial teacher training programs. Zeichner (1987) mentioned a further divergence. It concerned the scope of the changes made to initial training programs. Reflective practice has been incorporated into initial training programs in widely different manners. In some cases, the entire program has been transformed. In most cases, however, the changes amount to an additional course on reflective practice. This raises questions about the effectiveness of the so-called 'reflective program'. Nevertheless, this observation must be tempered in light of the increasing emphasis on reflective practice in education since the 1990s.

Wide disparities are therefore found in terms of support for reflective practice in initial teacher training programs. Desjardins (2000) summarized the status of this concept, noting that the different models have distinct features in terms of basic concepts and objectives as well as the means to achieve those objectives (p. 40). This certainly applies to the divergent theories put forward. Thus, Beauchamp (2006) claimed that, 'Because of unclear understandings of what reflective practice actually is, there is a corresponding lack of understanding about how to teach it' (p. 12). So we still do not know which tools or programs will foster reflective practice in teacher training. As Korthagen (2001) pointed out, 'A major problem in research on the effects of promoting reflection is the question of how to operationalize reflection' (p. 91). This problem is a major concern in current empirical studies on reflective practice in initial training. In fact, most studies aim to understand how reflective practice is operationalized, and with what means.

A critical portrait of the methodology

The current empirical research on reflective practice is hampered by several limitations. The first of these was mentioned above: the lack of theoretical clarity and consensus on the very concept of reflective practice. As a rule, weak theoretical grounding engenders a multitude of hazards. Thus, according to Rattleff (2006) on the subject of the term 'reflection' and its synonyms, 'The scientific literature should provide clear definitions and make consistent use of these terms, which is also a precondition for carrying out empirical research' (p. 171). Beyond the theoretical haziness, the empirical research suffers from some methodological limitations.

Weak comparability between empirical studies. One of the foremost methodological criticisms is that the studies are too diverse to be compared. This criticism is directly connected to the lack of theoretical grounding for the concept of reflective practice. This may be illustrated by the example of the reflective portfolio (Mansvelder-Longayroux, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2007):

Recently, more and more publications have appeared on systematic research into the portfolio, but major differences between the objectives and forms of the portfolios that have been studied make it difficult to draw conclusions on the value of the portfolio in general. (p. 48)

Observation of reflective practice. Second, it is difficult to actually observe reflective practice 'in practice'. We still do not know how to determine what is going on. Korthagen (2001) explained the problem as follows:

Another fundamental problem in researching reflection is that much of what we are attempting to measure takes place in the teacher's head. Although techniques such as stimulated recall ..., the analysis of supervisory discourse, or logbooks may be helpful, there is always a question concerning whether these approaches present us with valid data about what really happened inside the person. (p. 91)

Consequently, there is no assurance that the data used in studies are reliable indicators of reflective practice. This uncertainty may lead to unfortunate outcomes: biased identification could find evidence of reflective practice where there is none, and vice versa, obtaining biased results.

Assessment of reflective practice. The third main problem in the empirical research concerns the assessment methods, or attempts to measure the degree of reflective practice in student teachers. Empirical studies generally use theoretical frameworks that include a hierarchy of reflective levels (see section *Reflective practice according to levels of reflection*). It is surprising to try to measure the reflective capacity of pre-service teachers when we do not yet know for sure whether the proposed tools to develop reflection are suitable or adequate. Even then, nothing guarantees that these tools would (1) enable pre-service teachers to exercise reflective practice, and (2) foster a high degree of reflection. In other words, it would be difficult to assess the reflective practice of pre-service teachers without first being confident that it has been suitably operationalized. Many of the reviewed studies conclude that pre-service teachers show a low degree of reflective thinking (e.g. Calderhead, 1989; Hawkes & Romiszowski, 2001; Mansvelder-Longayroux et al., 2007; Ross, 1989). We believe that there could be some confusion here between

the assessment target (the quality of reflective practice in pre-service teachers) and what was actually assessed (the effectiveness and relevance of support mechanisms for reflective practice).

The case of promotional studies. We end this section with a cautious critique that is seldom verbalized in the literature, and for which we take complete responsibility. It concerns our subjective impressions after reviewing a large number of empirical studies on reflective practice in initial training programs. Without focusing on any study in particular, and without generalizing either, it appears that some empirical studies on reflective practice in initial training have misappropriated this theme. It is used not only as a study objective, but also as a pretext to make claims for a tool or program designed to support reflective practice. A number of authors have voiced fears that reflective practice has become a catchword of education reform and innovation (Fendler, 2003; Hawkes & Romiszowski, 2001; Richardson, 1990; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). The intuition is that these studies have leveraged the interest in reflective practice for promotional gain, as presented in some common features: the authors have generally developed the tool of program themselves; the conceptual framework is generally underdeveloped and limited to a description of reflective practice in layman's terms, with no specific position by the authors, despite the lack of consensus on the concept; and the findings, regardless of the methodology used, are interpreted as promising for reflective practice, to the credit of the tools or program in question.

Following this brief critical portrait of reflective practice in initial teacher training, we begin our conclusion by reviewing the main features.

Table 2. Main critiques of reflective practice in initial training in terms of theory, practice, and methodology.

Theoretical critiques:

- Lack of clarity and consensus on the concept of reflective practice, particularly its relationship with action and emotion
- Axiological hierarchy of levels of reflective practice
- Domain-centered theoretical approach to reflective practice
- Inadequate concept of reflective practice

Practical critiques: divergences concerning

- The domains of reflection
- The reflective process
- The role of reflective practice in the teaching practicum
- The restructuring of initial teacher training programs

Methodological critiques:

- Weak comparability between empirical studies on reflective practice in initial teacher training
 - The difficulty of observing reflective practice 'in practice'
 - The difficulty of assessing reflective practice
 - The emergence of promotional studies
-

Conclusion

To recap, the objective of this article was to draw a critical portrait of reflective practice in terms of theory, practice and methodology. We began by presenting our conception of reflective practice, based on the definitive aspects identified by Beauchamp, to which we added two constitutive properties (grounded and generic). We then mapped the operationalization of reflective practice in initial teacher training and proceeded to review the literature in order to identify the various critiques, as presented in Table 2.

In light of the critiques discussed in this article, we propose a few recommendations. First, we have noted that the lack of a clear terminology or definition for reflective practice has both practical and methodological effects insofar as it gives rise to a number of disparities and divergences. In terms of theory, it would appear important to begin by clarifying the concept of reflective practice, using a sufficiently inclusive definition that is nevertheless not too general, in order to gather works on reflective practice under the same roof. Thus, although theoretical studies, such as Beauchamp's (2006), may not establish a final definition for reflective practice, they nonetheless create a promising starting point for obtaining some degree of consensus on the concept among the scientific community.

In terms of methodology, we have noted that reflective practice poses a number of methodological challenges related to observation and evaluation. Being essential for validating empirical research, these two methodological aspects merit intensified and concerted attention by the scientific community. In one sense, it would seem futile to conduct empirical studies on reflective practice using unproven observation and assessment methods. Accordingly, as part of cooperative empirical research efforts, the instruments used to observe and evaluate reflective practice should themselves be continuously and thoroughly evaluated. In addition, their methodological limitations should be addressed and ways should be found to improve them.

Finally, in terms of practice, we have underscored the wide diversity of support systems for reflective practice in initial teacher training programs. This appears to be the direct result of the lack of a clear and definitive terminology in the various theoretical frameworks. In this perspective, we can only encourage educators to base their initial teacher training programs on clear theoretical concepts combined with the results of empirical studies that use sound, validated methodologies. In addition, support systems for reflective practice could make greater use of the advances made in the scientific knowledge, as well as emerging consensus (where it exists) on support for and the development of reflective practice in pre-service teachers.

Note

1. We refer to the paper by Tardif (2010), which presents some current research trends concerning reflection and action.

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