Reflective Development through the Care Model

Reflective Development through the Care Model:

Empowering Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

By

Niki Christodoulou

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This book is dedicated with affection and respect to my teachers, mentors and coaches; and in particular to

caring ESL/EFL teachers and educators around the world

who stand in appreciation of our profession.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Action Inquiry
ApI	Appreciative Inquiry
CCA	Constant Comparative Analysis
CD	Cooperative Development
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CR	Critical Reflection
CRC	Critical Relational Constructivism
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
GRP	Guided Reflective Practice
HE	Higher Education
IS	In-Service
L2	Second Language
LTE	Language Teacher Education
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
PD	Professional Development
PS	Pre-Service
QualCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
RCT	Relational Cultural Theory
RIGMs	Reflective Inquiry Group Meetings
RLT	Reflective Language Teaching
RM	Research Mentor
RP	Reflective Practice
RT	Reflective Teaching
SLE	Second Language Education
SLTE	Second Language Teacher Education
TD	Teacher Development
TE	Teacher Education
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
WBL	Work-Based Learning

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PREFACE

Almost thirty years ago, I walked into my first classroom as a teacher. I was hired to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) to immigrant students at an American high school in the state of New Jersey. Coming fresh out of the university with a Master's in Education and a specialization in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), I felt inspired, excited and eager to interact and share knowledge with my students. Surprisingly enough, there was no fear or anxiety in my heart about what I was to encounter on that first day as a novice teacher. On the contrary, walking into my first classroom felt natural. It was as if I was going *home*. And for the next five awesome years, my ESL classes in this American high school were my 'academic home'- a space filled with warmth, love and understanding where my young students and I felt free to express ourselves, interact with one another and co-create knowledge. Instinctively, I knew back then, as I do now, that emotions were the primary catalyst in the learning process. My inner guidance system which almost felt like a sixth sense, showed me, time and time again, that no learning takes place if one does not feel good or accepted in a given context.

Thirty years later, I still have the same feeling of ease, comfort and familiarity whenever I walk into a classroom. Since 1993 I have been teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at a private university in Cyprus. Although the context has changed, the magical sensation of positive anticipation I had thirty years ago still remains the same. Every semester is an exciting journey with adult learners who bring their own emotions, values, experiences and knowledge to the learning process. As a guide to my students' learning, I stand in awe at what unfolds as we evolve together through our exploration of language in an environment of positive emotionality. Caring about how my students feel and tending to their emotions has proven to be an infallible *formula* in my career as a teacher and educator.

Whether the context is Teaching English as a *Second* Language (TESL) or Teaching English as a *Foreign* Language (TEFL) to high school or university students makes no difference to me. What matters is that underneath the whole process of teaching and learning lie a genuine love

and respect for my profession and all that it entails. TESL/TEFL is an academic field rich with unique challenges that have made my teaching experience gratifying. It has always been a privilege to be the facilitator of learning to students of different linguistic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. The unfortunate paradox, however, is that despite the richness they bring to the learning process, ESL/EFL students have often been labeled in the scholarly literature in a number of ways including the terms limited English proficient (LEP) students, language-minority students or English-language learners (ELLs).

Although the intention behind the terms was not to ascribe a deficiency to these students, I believe that such labels can be 'dangerous' as they often create the false impression that the potential of ESL/EFL students may be a limited one simply because they are not fluent in English and/or English is not their native language. For me, the term *limited* when referring to a human being holds a negative connotation which subtly permeates our conscious filters and gets to our subconscious. Even the most aspiring of ESL/EFL teachers and educators may, at times, unconsciously and unwittingly *fall in the trap* of perceiving ESL/EFL students in a *limited* way due to the frequent and common use of these labels in academia.

In my view, ESL/EFL students are nothing but 'limited'. On the contrary, their bilingual, trilingual or often multilingual background gives them an added advantage in the language learning process. Their knowledge of more than one language provides them with multifaceted neurological processes that help them become more versatile than native speakers of English when it comes to understanding and processing language. I can personally attest to this since I was an EFL student myself while growing up in my home country Cyprus. My knowledge of other languages (Greek being my native tongue, French, Italian and Spanish) has always provided me with the ability to draw connections between languages while learning English. Moreover, my being an EFL student has equipped me with the ability to empathize easily with my ESL/EFL students' needs, emotions and struggles while learning the language.

However, it was not until I began my doctorate in Teacher Education that I became aware of the fact that ESL/EFL students are not the only stakeholders in the learning/teaching process who need empathy, understanding and support. My doctoral work in reflection and reflective practice and its impact on the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Higher Education in Cyprus has revealed that ESL/EFL teachers also need empathy, support and guidance by 'understanding others' throughout

their career. In a nutshell, my doctoral research has shown that reflecting on teacher emotions and placing them in the centre of the educational process is of paramount importance.

Although language research increasingly acknowledges the importance of reflection in excavating the personal, individual and emotional nature of teachers' work, educational policies and professional teaching standards tend to overlook the humanistic and emotional dimensions of the teacher's role. Teachers are passionate human beings and their identity, behaviour and emotions are intimately connected with their personal beliefs and values, thus their reflective selves. At the same time, emotions are also socially constructed and a teacher's behaviour emerges as a result of interactions with others. Successful teacher interactions, however, presuppose an environment of trust, openness and willingness. In such a context, the individual can feel free to engage in a journey of self-awareness and co-construction of knowledge in a reflective dialogue with others who can facilitate the reframing of pre-existing beliefs and practices.

This book is primarily written in celebration and appreciation of reflective ESL/EFL teachers across the globe whose committed and dedicated practice enrich the TESL/TEFL profession on a daily basis. The research in the book constitutes an in-depth examination of the potential of facilitating reflective practice in the educational world of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Higher Education. More specifically, the research investigation sheds light on the impact of Guided Reflective Practice on the practice and teaching persona of five EFL university teachers in Cyprus as well as on the learning experience of the researcher/mentor. In addition, it is my hope and intention that the insights and research findings presented in the book can be of use to teacher educators and mentors in the TESL/TEFL field.

Few empirical studies exist which illustrate the incorporation of reflective practice as a facilitative and developmental tool offered to Higher Education English as a Foreign Language in-service teachers in a co-educational and appreciative environment. The research in the book incorporates insights from humanistic learning theory, relational cultural theory and critical constructivism. Research findings show the increased understanding of 'self' and EFL practice which occurs when teachers are guided to learn using reflective practice as a vehicle for mindful and caring interactions with others. The book also reveals the ways in which the research process has influenced and reshaped my practice and identity as

an EFL educator and reflective facilitator. I link my research commitment to my belief in the uniqueness of the individual and the importance of learning as a result of building human relationships through reflective and dialogical interactions with others.

Using an action inquiry methodology and qualitative data collection and analysis, the present research addresses three research questions by investigating the teachers' perceptions of the impact of guided reflective practice and assessing their response to the process. Data collection methods include reflective journals, reflective inquiry group meetings, dialogue observation sessions based on video-recordings, online chats, and holistic interviews with the teachers.

From the present research emerged the Collaborative, Appreciative, Reflective Enquiry (CARE) model for teacher development, revealing new understandings and insights for TEFL through practices in which emotions are a primary catalyst for transformational teacher learning. The proposed CARE model of guided reflective practice constitutes an alternative framework which identifies ways of facilitating and operationalising reflection in an *acritical* and appreciative context. Moreover, the CARE model highlights the emancipatory potential of reflection as a tool for growth and development and not as an institutional requirement.

I am claiming that the significance of the research lies in the fact that it offers new conceptualisations vis-à-vis the capacity of teachers of Higher Education English as a Foreign Language to learn and maximise their potential through reflection when they feel appreciated as individuals and educators. More specifically, findings about the participants' learning as well as my own learning reveal an increased self-awareness and awareness of practice, an ability to critically reflect on context without being judgmental of others, and a willingness to reframe practice. More importantly, however, findings show a felt appreciation for the therapeutic effects of reflection and a positive approach to practice as a result of being guided and supported in the reflective practice process by 'understanding others'.

Implications include the significance of appreciative reflective practice in teacher interactions and collaboration, teacher agency in the knowledge production in TEFL, and positive emotionality in empowering teachers to live out their identities and values in practice. It is my hope that this small pocket of teacher reform represented by five EFL teachers and their research mentor (the author) can pave the way forward to similar reform

initiatives in the TEFL profession that would entail human connectedness and caring in teacher learning through reflection.

Dr Niki Christodoulou
June, 2016
Nicosia, Cyprus

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

There are six chapters in the book. Chapter 1 sketches my personal interest and background in reflection and reflective practice and gives an overview of the wider educational context in Cyprus vis-à-vis teacher education, the higher education system, the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) landscape and of my local TEFL context in higher education. Chapter 2 reviews the literature relevant to reflection, reflective practice and reflective language teaching highlighting the role of emotions in critical reflection and the importance of evolutionary mentoring in cooperative teacher development. Chapter 3 discusses my philosophical paradigm and the design of the research process, its methods and methodology. Chapter 4 presents, analyses, and discusses the results from the research data. Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions and implications of the research in light of the research questions. Chapter 6 summarises the contribution and limitations of the research and provides recommendations for future research. Seven appendices follow the final chapter and shed further light on the various methods and the data analysis used in the research. I hope you enjoy reading and reflecting on the contents of *Reflective Development through the Care Model: Empowering Teachers of English as a Foreign Language* as much as I have enjoyed writing the book.

FOREWORD

In the past two decades, literature on 'teacher reflection' and 'reflective practice' has become prominent in the field of education (e.g. Brookfield, 1995; Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Lagerwerf & Wubbels, 2001; Lyons, 2010; Pollard, 2002; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). In particular, 'reflective practice' and 'teacher reflection' have been deemed as desirable activities of teaching practice and have become part and parcel of teacher professional development internationally, emphasising the value of teachers' capacity to reflect upon their teaching in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of their teaching practice. However, there have also been criticisms of the treatment of reflective practice as a sterile and un-emotional process (Zembylas, 2014), a disciplinary mechanism of confession (Fendler, 2003), and an instrumental set of skills to be applied by all teachers (Edwards & Thomas, 2010). Although virtually all sub-disciplinary areas of education have tackled the issue of 'reflective practice' and 'teacher reflection' in great length, the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Higher Education has tended to overlook this topic and especially its collaborative and emotional elements.

Niki Chistodoulou's book, which stems out of her dissertation, comes to fill an important void in the literature of Teaching English as a Foreign Language. It is the first book in Higher Education English as a Foreign Language that takes on the important role of emotions as a catalyst for transformational teacher learning. In particular, her proposed Collaborative, Appreciative, Reflective Enquiry (CARE) model is immensely valuable for teacher development in higher education—an area that admittedly has had difficulties in the past acknowledging the emotional aspects of teacher reflection.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the role of emotions in teaching and teachers' lives at all levels of education from primary to secondary and higher education (e.g. Boler, 1999; Leathwood & Beatty, 2007; Samier & Schmidt, 2009; Schutz & Pekrun, 2007; Schutz & Zembylas, 2009). While reflective practice is not always mentioned by name in these books, there are references to the emotional aspects of professional experience and how emotions contribute to the making of

teacher identities and professional practices. Other authors (e.g. Boud, Keogh & Walker; 1985; Brookfield, 1995; Mezirow, 1990) call attention to the importance of emotions in the process of reflection and transformative learning, however, what exactly this suggestion means in social terms is not always clear (Fook, 2010). Fook (2010), in particular, wonders "whether we may need some more sophisticated understanding of the complex interplay of personally and organizationally experienced emotions incorporated into critically reflective practice" (p. 45).

Christodoulou does not hesitate to 'emotionalise' (Holmes, 2010) reflection and reflexivity in professional practice and explore the interplay of personal and organisational emotions incorporated in the process of reflection. Yet, she does so in a way that moves beyond reflexivity as the capacity to respond to routine, tradition and habitual aspects of teaching. The perspective that is brought by Christodoulou, especially through the practical implications of her CARE model, highlights not only the emotionality of reflexivity but also the emancipatory potential of emotional dynamics as a space of professional learning within which teachers can 'grow' rather than 'develop' according to institutional requirements.

Christodoulou, then, takes seriously Fook's (2010) call to further explore the place of emotion in reflective practice and joins recent efforts to address how "emotions are core to reflexive processes" (Holmes, 2010, p. 147), specifically in the context of Higher Education English as a Foreign Language. Christodoulou argues that recognising the emotional aspects of the process of reflexivity (e.g. through making teachers feel appreciated as individuals and educators) offers important insights into developing capabilities for critical reflection without being judgmental of others. In addition, Christodoulou shows through her research that teacher reflection, collaboration and emotions are closely intertwined and thus she demonstrates that comprehending the emotionality and relationality of reflexivity is vital to examining its consequences for higher education.

Finally, it is important to remind ourselves that teacher reflection can work with and against normalising power relations at play in teaching practices and here is precisely where Christodoulou's research is particularly valuable in the field of higher education. Her CARE model suggests that teachers and students who learn English as a second or foreign language in higher education need to become constantly aware of the technologies of domination and the technologies of the 'self' that construct themselves

through the learning of an international language such as English; in these processes, guided reflective practice can constitute an emancipatory 'tool' only if it is self-critical as well. The role of emotion in these processes is fundamental in continuously redefining the content and process of reflective practice. Christodoulou's important and most timely book offers indispensible guidelines and a profoundly practical model for engaging teachers in transformational teacher learning. The particular implications of this idea in practice demand further empirical exploration in the future—an area that seems to be gradually carved very well by Christodoulou. We owe her a great debt for adding yet another layer of articulating teacher reflection as an approach that involves a more complex understanding of emotion as an integral part of the process of reflexivity.

Michalinos Zembylas,
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CHAPTER ONE

THE CONTEXT

> If we want teachers to be educators, then we must educate them. We must provide them with opportunities, support, and challenge to become reflective, critical, and creative thinkers, to grow intellectually, to engage in a process of constant transformation.
>
> (Hill, 2000: 50)

Introduction

Almost a century ago, John Dewey (1916) highlighted the importance of fostering good habits of thinking in learners. Since then, intellectual development and the ability to think critically have been aims of formal education. In today's era of technological advances and knowledge proliferation, developing the intellectual capacities of learners becomes even more important as good and critical thinking is the key to academic and personal success (Thompson, 2011). According to Brookfield (1987), critical thinking is the ability to deconstruct events and to reason the origins of situations. If personal advancement is the aim, schools must prepare learners to 'exercise judgment and creative thinking to gather, evaluate, and use information for effective problem solving and decision making in their jobs, in their professions, and in their lives' (Swartz and Parks, 1994: 1). This places enormous responsibility on the classroom teacher who must help learners acquire good thinking skills. At the same time, it underscores the importance of teacher education (hereafter, TE) in developing the thinking skills of teachers. In my opinion, if teachers are to foster intellectual development and critical judgment in their learners, they must first be educated and trained in becoming reflective thinkers themselves, internalising reflection and constantly applying it in their practice.

When the terms *thinking* and *reflection* are used in the education profession, I often discern much confusion and misunderstanding. Similarly, the terms *education* and *schooling* elide in their meaning as they

are used interchangeably, when, in my view, they are antithetical. I feel compelled to offer my *take* on these terms in an attempt to situate this book in the wider educational context that surrounds me.

Sketching my 'take' on things

According to Schostak (2008) education is 'the process of exploring alternative ways of thinking, doing, believing, expressing one's 'self'. It is the process through which one forms one's own judgment independently of those who set themselves up (or are set up institutionally) to be the judges of others' (p. 2). In contrast, schooling is 'about following norms of behaviour and thinking that have been legislated by authorities (governments, examination boards, 'tradition' etc.)' (ibid) which judge what should be considered as correct. For supporters of traditional instructional models of education and schooling, learning is the acquisition of knowledge in teacher-centred environments, where little questioning of the transmitted knowledge takes place. In contrast, other scholars concerned with education (Polanyi, 1969; Schön, 1987) believe that the primary essence of education is to empower learners to think for themselves and become more conscious of their learning (Rogers, 2003), as 'the central purpose of schooling is to help students think and learn better' (Presseisen, 1987: 35). Currently, creating autonomous and independent reflective thinkers is, in fact, listed as one of the aims of educational curricula around the world (PRILHE Project, 2004; The European Commission for Education and Training, 2010; The National Curriculum Framework, 2011).

I contend that *education* and *schooling* are two terms that do not share the same goal. Unlike education, schooling, for both students and teachers, 'is not renowned for its attention to inculcating reflective and critical thinking and judgment in its learners' (Hill, 2000: 50). In writing about a TE program in Australia, Hill argues that 'most teachers are more schooled than educated', lacking the ability to join in 'thoughtful dialogue about substantive issues' (ibid, p. 50) or engage with their learners intellectually. Hill's research findings are, in my view, relevant to teacher educators around the world as many teachers are schooled and trained in control-oriented and authority-centred institutions which do not foster the kind of adult intellectual growth that would lead to flexible and autonomy-supportive teaching and learning. Hill (2000) defines autonomy-supportive teachers as individuals who have an increased sense of personal agency and aim to promote learners' capacity to think and act for

themselves. Moreover, autonomy-supportive teachers are concerned with broadening the minds of their learners by increasing their awareness and equipping them with the skills to engage in lifelong learning.

I posit that the development of the intellectual and reflective skills of students begins with the teachers. In its efforts to raise the standards of teaching and teacher education, the European Commission for Education and Training (2007) made a series of proposals. Three of these proposals specifically refer to a) promoting a culture of reflective practice (hereafter, RP) and research among teachers b) raising the status of teachers and c) supporting the professionalisation of teaching. The European Commission for Education and Training (2007) concluded that despite the increasing demands of a knowledge-based society, 'current systems for teacher training and education in [European] Member States are often failing to give teachers the training they need' (p. 1). Nevertheless, it is encouraging that 'promoting professional values and attitudes in the teaching profession (in which teachers adopt a culture of reflective practice, undertake autonomous learning, engage with research, and collaborate extensively with colleagues)' (European Commission, Final report, 2011: 4) is still very much on the agenda of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of European Member States dealing with the professional development of teachers and teacher leaders.

In my opinion, teachers need to be equipped with a new range of skills which would lead to new teaching methods. Acquiring pedagogical approaches that embrace reflective thought is a way to improve the quality of TE in all stages of a teacher's development. In clarifying the terms *thinking* and *reflection*, Moon (2004), argues that although reflection is akin to thinking, there is more to its content. According to Moon (2004), reflection is a process that lies somewhere between learning and thinking. She argues that 'we reflect in order to learn something, or we learn as a result of reflecting, therefore, 'reflective learning' as a term, simply emphasises the intention to learn as a result of reflection' (p. 80). Moon also maintains, and I concur, that reflection is not only a form of mental processing, but also 'a process of re-organising knowledge and emotional orientations in order to achieve further insights' (ibid., p. 82).

Moon's (2004) view on reflection is highly relevant to the current book. First, in the case of in-service (hereafter, IS) education and training, a supportive environment is necessary if teachers are to practise reflection with their colleagues and learners in a climate of 'positive emotionality' (O'Connor, 2008; Stuhr, 2008). In such a context, teachers can have the

opportunity to function as holistic educators (Korthagen, 2004) exercising their reflective capacities in conversations with peers while challenging their learners to engage in new intellectual and emotional experiences. Secondly, when Higher Education (hereafter, HE) is the context under consideration, the need for and the potential to create the conditions for reflective learning is great as adult learners and teachers alike have the power of *agency* to pursue a university experience which incorporates not just knowledge but also action (Barnett, 1997). Some of the objectives and main priorities of the Bologna Process for the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA, 2010) for the next decade focus on promoting lifelong and student-centred learning which recognises prior and more flexible learning. This kind of learning requires of teachers the ability to engage in reflection, the kind of ongoing, active and deliberate thought on beliefs, feelings, values and knowledge that can lead to a systematic (re)-examination of practice in a reflective dialogue with peers and learners. A detailed delineation of reflection, RP and reflective teaching can be found in Chapter 2.

My Interest and Engagement in Reflective Practice

The Work-Based Learning Network Conference – *The 'seed' is planted*

The *seed* for my interest in the area of RP took its first proper shape and form at the annual UK Work Based Learning (hereafter, WBL) conference in Nicosia, Cyprus (2003) where I presented a paper on the value and role of RP in English Language Teaching (hereafter, ELT). Since then, this interest has continued to grow, culminating in my writing various research papers and making conference presentations on the topic of reflection and RP.

On a professional level, the UK WBL conference constituted a turning point in my career as an English as a Foreign Language (hereafter, EFL) teacher as it marked the beginning of my commitment to investigate the role, impact and benefits of RP in ELT more systematically. Before the conference, I had been immersed in what Clark and Yinger (1979) call 'teaching routines' for years without consciously questioning taken for granted assumptions that framed my practice or investigating the 'tacit knowledge' that governed my actions (Schön, 1983, 1987). The WBL conference made me realise that the time had come in my professional career as a teacher to explore my 'espoused theories' and 'theories in use' (Argyris and Schön, 1974) as well as the values and perspectives that informed and governed my practice. Moreover, I felt for the first time the