

An Chomhairle  
Mhúinteoireachta

The Teaching Council



**Title of Research Project:** Weaving the Thread of School-University Partnership to Support Student Teachers' Reflective Practice

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**Relevant key words:** Reflective Practice, School-University Partnership, Initial Teacher Education

**Summary:**

This project explored reflective practice within an initial teacher education programme. The objectives included: 1. Determining what level of critical thinking student teachers displayed in their reflective writing and 2. Creating an opportunity to hear the co-operating teachers', school placement tutors' and pedagogy lecturers' voice regarding their implicit and explicit input into student teachers' reflective process.

The study included a qualitative analysis of student teachers' ( $n = 100$ ) reflective writing submissions at different stages of their school placement experience. The data analysis involved determining the level of critical thinking present in written reflections. Results for this first stage indicated that introducing student teachers to reflective writing frameworks such as Brookfield (2017), supported enhanced levels of criticality. While levels of criticality were raised in terms of unearthing assumptions and focusing on critical moments, Brookfield (2017) describes engaging with

critical ideology reflection as crucial and this was evident to a lesser extent. To challenge ideology, creative and collaborative reflection approaches (Johns, 2017) are suggested.

A second stage of the project focused on capturing teacher educators' and co-operating teachers' understanding of the reflective practice process and the role they play in supporting student teachers' reflective practice. Twelve semi-structured interviews took place with co-operating teachers ( $n = 4$ ), school placement tutors ( $n = 4$ ), and pedagogy lecturers ( $n = 4$ ). The interviews focused on: understandings of reflective practice by teacher educators, their roles in the process, and identifying their continuing professional development needs to support ITE reflective practice. Stage two findings revealed two prominent features: Unanimous agreement on the importance of reflective practice but various understandings regarding the purpose of reflection were expressed. Overall participants indicated a preference for collaborative reflection activities over individual reflections in terms of pedagogical benefits and greater opportunity for working through many classroom issues with student teachers. Participants also expressed a willingness to provide more reflective practice support to student teachers if resourcing allowed. They also expressed a desire for continued professional development in this regard.

The project concluded with a workshop on 'integrating reflective practice in ITE' with school placement tutors, pedagogy lecturers and co-operating teachers in December 2019. During the workshop participants explored innovative approaches to reflective practice and discussed ways to successfully embed and engage in creative and collaborative reflection with student teachers.

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