



Reflective Practices in Teaching

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STUDENT'S STATEMENT

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I, Ye CHEN declare that I developed this dissertation independently with the use of the resources listed in my bibliography.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to find out if reflective practices exist in Czech schools and whether teachers are aware of it. Besides, teachers' opinions on reflection as well as conditions that may influence reflection are examined. For this purpose, a small-scale questionnaire-based study is carried out with teachers in mainstream and special schools. Mixed-methods approach is adopted to collect data from questionnaire, observation and interview, which is then analysed by means of triangulation.

Results show that most participants have quite positive attitudes towards reflection: they agree that reflection is essential to improve the teaching standards and reflection helps personal development. Most of them know reflective practices and often do evaluation on themselves. Almost all of them believe that changes in teaching strategy/method have to be made based on changes in the needs of students. Nearly all teachers think students and colleagues help them to learn.

Remarkably, special school teachers or teachers with experience of teaching SEN (Special Education Needs) students are more aware of reflective practices and more likely used to making changes in teaching. Particularly, they think highly of the parents' role in improving their teaching. As for other conditions affecting reflection, research shows that class size, time, age and teaching experience play a role in influencing teachers' opinions.

Although only a few participants have training in reflective teaching, many of them consider training of importance to know about and practice reflection, but strongly emphasize the practicality of in-service training. Moreover, a good many of teachers give positive evaluation of their schools in terms of encouraging and facilitating reflective teaching.

Consequently, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are given, followed by recommendations for teaching, school administration, research and policy-making.

Key Words: Reflection, Reflective Practice, Reflective Teaching, Teaching Strategy, In-service, Mixed-methods Approach

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.0 Overview

In this Chapter, I first describe the background of my study and outline the importance of reflection in teaching. Then I compare the training I have in China and SEN program I am doing now in Europe, which leads to the motivation of my research. Subsequently the research aim and questions are introduced, followed by statement on the significance for the assimilation of the study. Finally I explain my research focus by introducing compulsory education system in Czech Republic, as well as its teaching qualification and in-service training.

1.1 Background

One of Donald Schön's contributions is to 'bring reflection into the centre of an understanding of what professionals do' (Smith, 2005: The reflective practitioner–reflection-in-and–on–action). Usher et al. (1997: cited in Smith: 2005) comment that 'the dominant paradigm [technical-rationality]...has failed to resolve the dilemma of rigour versus relevance confronting professionals', whereas they believe Schön has found an alternative epistemology of practice 'in which the knowledge inherent in practice is understood as artful doing'. Later in 1987, Schön 'introduced the concept of reflective practice as a critical process in refining one's artistry or craft in a specific discipline', and he 'recommended reflective practice as a way for beginners in a discipline to recognize consonance between their own individual practices and those of successful practitioners' (Ferraro: 2000:2).

After Schön, many training programs for teacher education and professional development have been designed based on his concept, hence Schön's theory on reflective practice has been significant (Smith, 2005: Conclusion). Particularly, the 1990's have seen the decade of reflection in teacher education and 'Nowadays nobody addressing the topic of teacher education can claim ignorance of this concept' (Gimenez, 1999:130). As Pollard (2002: xiii) puts it, the need and importance of reflection in teaching is:

Because teachers are concerned with citizens of the future, with life-chances, social inclusion and with the quality of children's experiences in the present, they can never avoid value questions. Because they deal, from moment to moment, with a

constant flow of dilemmas, they can never avoid the need to exercise professional judgment. Professionals for the rapidly developing new century thus need flexible and resilient approaches to continuing development, and it is important that the significance of reflective teaching has been explicitly recognized (DfEE, 2001a).

Research on effective teaching over the past two decades has shown that effective practice is linked to inquiry, reflection, and continuous professional growth (Harris 1998, cited in Ferraro: 2000:4-5). Ferraro (2000:5) adds on by stating 'Reflective practice can be a beneficial form of professional development at both the pre-service and in-service levels of teaching. By gaining a better understanding of their own individual teaching styles through reflective practice, teachers can improve their effectiveness in the classroom'.

1.2. Motivation, aim and significance of the study

I have been working for 7 years as a project manager of the international office in a Chinese medical university. My responsibility involves international exchange and cooperation projects, as well as foreign students' admission. At the same time, I am a teacher of a Chinese culture introduction course for foreign students. In my previous essay (Chen, 2007b), I compare my training program in China and European SEN program. My overview from the comparison is the 'guided teaching' in China versus 'facilitative teaching' in European countries such as UK and the Netherlands (2007b: 9).

In my view, education in China is, by and large, characterized by its rote teaching and learning (Chen, 2007b: 6). Li (2000:1) critically examines Chinese education by calling for the change from 'education for examinations' to 'education for quality'. Teacher-student relationship in traditional education is described as 'an unequal personal relationship' that:

The teacher is not only the controller of the teaching process, the organizer of teaching activities, the designator of teaching contents, and the assessor of student performance; he or she is also the embodiment of truth and the absolute authority. In the teaching process, the teacher is the active and dominant factor, while the student is the passive and submissive factor.

(Li, 2000:4)

While in comparison (Chen, 2007b: 8), SEN encourages independent learning, critical reflection and sharing with each other, in a belief that it will promote the professional development of teachers as well as students, who are also professionals from different fields of education. Therefore, SEN ‘...requires students to develop their own learning, often quite independently of tutors’, which is expected to ‘enable collaborative and cooperative exchanges of knowledge, understanding and practice across a range of international contexts’ (Roehampton University, 2007).

For instance, I (Chen, 2007b: 8) think SEN modules in Holland are noticeable for the ‘Interactive Professionalism’ (Ponte, 2003), the principle of which is to achieve professional development through interactive knowledge-construction (2003:19). Ponte (2003:19) articulates:

Professional development is achieved through interactive knowledge-construction; that is by professionals continuously developing knowledge about their own practice, and by consciously using this knowledge to continually develop that practice. Post-initial teacher-education courses at master level should enable professionals to develop insights into, and through, their own practice; to experiment with alternatives; to cooperate with students, parents and colleagues; to share knowledge and insights with others; and to participate in the debate on the position of vulnerable students in our education system and in our society.

From SEN program, I believe I have gained substantial benefits from sharing ideas by using critical reflection with my colleagues and lecturers, because inspiration always come up as a result of brainstorming. In addition, buddy school visits in UK and Holland give me opportunities to see how learning can be facilitated to create a student-centred classroom, which also leads to the improvement of teaching. Interesting to note, during my school visits in Czech (most of them in Prague), I have found many similarities between Chinese and Czech schools, where basically teachers maintain a dominant role in the classroom. Students are required to sit in order and discipline themselves, such as saluting teachers before and after class. It looks they are not used to asking questions unless they are requested to do so. Teaching and learning is seemingly thought to be a process of information giving and taking, followed by reproduction in exams.

It is due to the reasons mentioned above that my interest develops in reflection in teaching. The aim of my research is to create awareness and orientate the importance of reflective practices in teaching. The findings of my study would to some extent reveal Czech teachers' attitude towards teaching: whether they simply define teaching as knowledge transfer or they believe teaching is to facilitate learning by constantly reflecting on their teaching practice. Finally, suggestions will be given to the possibility of improving teaching and in-service training.

As a follow-up, I would like to apply the similar research in the context of China, whose education is largely characterized as 'rote-learning, memorization and passivity' (Kennedy, 2002:430). The assimilation of reflective teaching will have direct and indirect implications to teachers, students, parents, researchers as well as policy-makers.

1.3. Compulsory education in Czech Republic

My research focuses on Czech in-service teachers of primary and secondary education (gymnázium only), from both mainstream and special schools.

The compulsory education in Czech Republic is usually for 9 years, including primary (age 6-10) and lower secondary school (age 11-15). All pupils start in a basic school called základní škola, during second stage (age 11-15) it is possible for them to go to gymnázium-secondary school providing general education. The school year is from September 1 to August 31 of the next year. In 2006/07, the school year comprises 194 days of teaching. Each lesson is 45 minutes spread over 5 days a week. The number of pupils per class is between the minimum of 17 and maximum of 30. Objectives and the basic curriculum content are set by National Teaching Standards and each school selects teaching methods and textbooks from a list approved by MEYS (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) (EURYDICE, 2006:3-4 and Watanabe, 2007:para.7).

For students moving on to upper secondary education there are 3 options: gymnázium, technical school called Střední odborná škola (SOŠ), or vocational school called Střední odborné učiliště (SOU). All upper secondary schools require completion of a compulsory education. Each school additionally sets entrance

requirements including an entrance exam. MEYS lays down educational standards determining the aims and content and approves curricula, which is very flexible. These schools then organize their own final examinations (Watanabe, 2007:para.8 and EURYDICE, 2006:4).

Special schools exist from pre-primary to upper secondary level. Their curriculum and qualifications are as close as possible to those of mainstream schools; 3.6 % of the population falls outside mainstream education. Attendance at a special school requires a recommendation from an appropriate authority and parental consent. The new Education Act puts stress on integration (EURYDICE, 2006:6).

1.4. Teacher training in Czech Republic

As for teacher qualification, would-be teachers at primary and secondary levels of education must obtain a university qualification, generally Master level. Teachers do not have civil servant status. The new Act on Educational Staff (563/2004) regulates the prerequisites for the performance of the profession, their further education and the career scheme. (EURYDICE, 2006:6). The Act (563/2004) defines qualifications of teachers working with SEN children. University teacher training in special education or additional university training in SEN is requested (European Agency, 2006: para.8).

The Act (563/2004) guarantees 12 days for further studies of teachers per school year. MEYS provides the financial support to cover part of expenditures of in-service training and further education. The study model consists both theory and practice: traditional methods (lectures, seminars) and the "learning by doing" approach (experience learning through practical exercises, workshops etc.) are used. Emphasis is placed on the continual increase of professional development. All university teacher- training programs include modules on education for SEN students. (European Agency, 2006: para.9).

My research is limited to the teachers of in-service because: Firstly, the schools I have visited in the Netherlands and Czech Republic are primary or secondary schools, where most teachers are in their in-service or transitional stage (Bolam 1990, cited in Strnadová, 2006). Secondly, "there have been doubts whether pre-service teachers can actually carry out reflection during the course of their 'training', or even if 'training'

and reflection are compatible” (Gimenez, 1999:131). Thus experience gained by in-service teachers will hopefully help them apply reflective practices. In Galvez-Martin’s (1997a: 1) research, analysis of the data indicates consistently that the group of in-service teachers achieves higher levels of reflection than the pre-service group, even though the former receives no training on reflective thinking.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

2.0 Overview

In this Chapter, some key words are highlighted such as reflection, reflective practice and reflective teaching. The framework of Gimenez (1999) is referred to define reflection in teacher education, of which benefits and misapplications are also presented. After reviewing some reflective practices in teaching, conditions that influence reflection are examined.

2.1 Reflection

2.1.1 What is reflection?

In ordinary understanding, reflection means a careful thought about something, which usually happened a while ago. For instance, reflection is 'serious and careful thought' (Cambridge Dictionary Online: 2007) or 'careful thought about something, sometimes over a long period of time' (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Online: 2005).

'Dewey (1933) characterizes reflection as a specialized form of thinking. It stems from doubt and perplexity felt in a directly experienced situation and leads to purposeful inquiry and problem resolution' (Grimmett and Erickson 1988, cited in Gimenez, 1999: 130). Amulya believes every adult does reflection to some degree and tries to get something from the past experience (2003:3). She further comments that 'Reflection is an active process of witnessing one's own experience in order to take a closer look at it, sometimes to direct attention to it briefly, but often to explore it in greater depth' (2003:1). With regard to education, reflection is 'reviewing, reconstructing, re-enacting, and critically analysing one's own and the class's performance' (Shulman 1987, cited in Galvez-Martin, 1997b: 3). Easley makes a comparison between reflection and a mirror on the wall, saying reflection is of 'paramount importance' and a 'catalyst for brainstorming' (2006:36). Boud also holds that:

Reflection is a human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. It occurs both at conscious and unconscious level, is developed to different stages in different people, and can occur daily or before, during and after substantial other activity. Reflection in the context of learning is a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which

individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understanding and appreciation.

It may take place in isolation or in association with others. It can be done well or badly, successfully or unsuccessfully. In education it is necessary to ensure that reflection is a conscious and productive experience in order to allow us to make active and aware decisions about our learning, both as a teacher and as a learner.

(Boud 1985, cited in Vos and Vlas, 2000:5)

Therefore, reflection is more intense and purposeful than common thinking. Amulya (2003:1) thinks the key to reflection is 'learning how to take perspective on one's own actions and experience-in other words, to examine that experience rather than just living it', in order to 'allow the possibility of learning through experience...or any other internal or external event, before, during or after it has occurred'.

2.1.2 Learning and reflection

Knowles (1987, cited in Bartz and Calabrese, 1991:1) identifies 5 areas that make adult learning different from children:

- (1) Past experiences of adults greatly influence how they view and integrate new knowledge.
- (2) Adults have a strong need to be self-directed learners.
- (3) Readiness to learn in adults is driven by their need to use new knowledge to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.
- (4) Adults approach learning from a problem-centred as opposed to a subject matter-centred perspective.
- (5) Motivation in adults is as likely to come from internal factors such as self-esteem and pride, as from external factors such as pay or praise from superordinates.

Dewey regards learning as a continuing process based on experience by saying 'the principles of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those [experiences] which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after' (Dewey 1938, cited in Jonassen and Grabowski, 1993:254). Hence learning can be defined as 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience' (Kolb 1984, cited in Jonassen and Grabowski, 1993:254).

Reflection is considered to be a deep level of learning as it 'encourages ownership of knowledge through self-reflection rather than reliance on an external authority' (O' Hanlon, 2003:31). Similarly, Amulya (2003:3) argues 'Even staying aware of what we are doing does not itself create learning' because 'Learning is a purposeful activity, although not a complicated one'. Bolhuis outlines 4 ways where learning can be attained: direct experience, social interaction, studying theory and reflecting (Bolhuis 2004, cited in Schildwacht, Bolhuis and Broeders, 2006: 66). She (2004) warns there is overconfidence in learning through theory and by reflecting, because 'learning occurs, much more than we realize, through concrete and specific acting and experiencing in day-to-day practices (2006: 66).

Although reflection has become especially popular in teacher education since the 1990's, the meaning of reflection is so ambiguous as to have been 'hijacked by different quarters, ranging from those who advocate it on grounds of moral responsibility to those who favour technical effectiveness' (Gimenez, 1999:131). Hence, Gimenez (1999) makes a summary of dimensions of reflection in teacher education as follows:

2.1.3 The moment of reflection

According to Schön (1983), reflection can be divided into during action (reflection-in-action) or before/after action (reflection-on-action). Examples given by Gimenez (1999:131) are teachers' corresponding to interaction with students (reflection-in-action), planning and post-lesson thoughts (reflection-on-action). Schön believes not only we can think about doing, but also we can think about doing something while doing it (1983:54). He (1983: 68) explains:

The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomena and a change in the situation.

According to Smith (2005), the notion of 'repertoire' is important to reflection-on-action:

When a practitioner makes sense of a situation he perceives to be unique, he sees it

as something already present in his repertoire. To see this site as that one is not to subsume the first under a familiar category or rule. It is, rather, to see the unfamiliar, unique situation as both similar to and different from the familiar one, without at first being able to say similar or different with respect to what. The familiar situation functions as a precedent, or a metaphor, or... an exemplar for the unfamiliar one.

(Schön 1983, cited in Smith, 2005: The reflective practitioner–
reflection-in-and-on-action)

Admittedly, to identify the moments of reflection-in-action is more difficult as reflections happen “when people are ‘in the thick of things’ and take a momentary ‘time out’ to reflect on a problem” (Gimenez, 1999:131). Nonetheless, Smith (2005) holds we do not ‘think on our feet’ in full for everything we do and the relationship between reflection in and on action is clear. He describes:

We have to take certain things as read. We have to fall back on routines in which previous thought and sentiment has been sedimented. It is here that the full importance of reflection-on-action becomes revealed. As we think and act, questions arise that cannot be answered in the present. The space afforded by recording, supervision and conversation with our peers allows us to approach these. Reflection requires space in the present and the promise of space in the future.

(Smith 1994, cited in Smith, 2005)

2.1.4 The content of reflection

This dimension refers to reflecting about teaching and reflecting about the social conditions influencing one’s teaching, which can be connected with the levels of reflection (Gimenez, 1999:131).

2.1.5 The mode of reflection

It is to ask reflection is ‘as a private activity to be pursued in isolation by individual teachers’ or ‘as a social practice and public activity involving communities of teachers’ (Gimenez, 1999:131-132).

Amulya (2003:2) maintains the choice to learn from experience at either individual or collective level depends on one’s learning agenda. In addition, there is no need to

segregate individual reflection from group reflection since they support each other inside the same learning process. She (2003:3) notes that 'The kinds of questions that emerge from reflection aimed at individual experience tend to relate to the development of practitioner thinking, whereas reflection oriented around collective work often yields questions connected to aligning actions with organizational values and goals'. However, Farrell (1999:2) argues that group reflection would be more beneficial to individuals. He agrees with Senge that 'groups could complement individual members' strengths, and compensate for each member's limitations all for the common goals larger than individual goals' (Senge 1990, cited in Farrell, 1999:2).

2.1.6 The depth and speed of reflection

The typology for this dimension includes (1) Rapid reaction: immediate and automatic (2) Repair: pause for thought, on the spot but very quick (3) Review: muse over and reassess (4) Research: systematic and sharply focused observation and reflection (5) Rethorising and reformulating: abstract, rigorous, (re)-formulated reflection (Griffiths and Tann 1992, cited in Gimenez, 1999:132). In addition, (1) and (2) are likely to be personal and private, belong to reflection-in-action; while (3), (4) and (5) belong to reflection-on-action, which are likely to be interpersonal and collegial (Griffiths and Tann 1992).

Nevertheless, Schön (1983:62) notes "A practitioner's reflection-in-action may not be very rapid. It 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 characteristic of the practice".

2.1.7 The levels of reflection

Based on Habermas' notion of cognitive interests, 3 levels of reflection have been identified, namely technical, practical and critical. Gimenez (1999:132) explains:

The technical level reveals a concern with efficiency and effectiveness of the means used to attain ends which are accepted as given; the practical reflection is concerned with the assessment of educational goals and how they are achieved by the learners, the critical reflection considers the worth of educational goals, how well they are being accomplished and who is benefiting from the successful

accomplishment of those ends.

Manen (1982, 1990) argues that each level is higher than the previous and supplanting it, while for Mezirow (1981), Carr and Kemmis (1986) the emancipatory or critical level is more significant and valuable and replaces the other two levels (cited in Griffiths and Tann 1992). By comparison, Zeichner (1994) questions whether a detached position should be taken towards the 3 levels, or whether reflection should be a guided process, in which teachers are motivated to examine the immediate context of the classroom as well as analyse the implications of their teaching (cited in Gimenez, 1999:132).

2.2 Reflective practices in teaching

2.2.1 Reflective practice

The notion of reflective practice was brought up by Schön in 1987 as a critical process in refining one's artistry or craft in a specific discipline, recommended for beginners as a way of learning by staying aware of the consonance between their own individual practices and those of successful practitioners (cited in Ferraro, 2000:2). Accordingly, Schön (1996, cited in Ferraro, 2000:2) holds reflective practice involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline. Regarding reflective practice in teaching, Serafini maintains it is the stance and the willingness teachers (pre-service or in-service) have to question their teaching and the learning experiences provided to students. To be more specific, it is a purposeful process that teachers use to improve their teaching performance and to critically analyse what, how and why they do what they do. Thus, "the value of reflection lies in its potential to refine classroom practice and improve the quality of the teaching-learning process for both teachers and students" (Serafini 2002, cited in Galvez-Martin, 2003:1).

Gimenez (1999) highlights the role research on teacher thinking has in the development of reflection in teaching. Defined as 'the ways in which knowledge is actively acquired and used by teachers and the circumstances that affect its acquisition and employment' (Calderhead 1987, cited in Gimenez, 1999:135), teacher thinking attempts to examine the relationship between 'teacher's minds and actions' (1999:135)

and explain 'why teachers do what they do in classrooms' (1999:136). Research on teacher thinking not only reveals that 'teachers consciously monitor their teaching before, during and after the lesson' (1999: 136), but also boosts reflective teaching which will be discussed below.

2.2.2 Reflective teaching

Since the introduction of reflective practice to teacher education, many training programs have been designed particularly for the purpose of improving teaching. Farrell (1999:1) refers reflective teaching to 'teachers subjecting their beliefs and practices of teaching to a critical analysis'. Pollard (2002:12) believes the notion of 'reflective teaching' has the origin from Dewey's (1933) distinction between 'routine action' and 'reflective action'.

According to Dewey, 'routine action' is guided by tradition, habit, authority or institutional definitions and expectations, which is relatively static and unresponsive to changing priorities and circumstances; whereas 'reflective action' implies a constant willingness of self-appraisal and development, which is relatively dynamic, flexible and adaptable (2002:12). Accordingly, Pollard (2002:12-23) identifies 7 areas as key characteristics of reflective teaching:

- (1) Aim and consequences: The reflective teacher, being aware of the political process and its legitimate oversight of public education service, is expected to pursue their values and beliefs as guided by their own individual moral and ethical concerns. Besides, they are supposed to be willing to contribute to the educational service both as a citizen and as a professional.
- (2) A cyclical process: Reflective teaching is a spiralling process where teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously. It is a dynamic process leading towards higher-quality standards of teaching.
- (3) Gathering and evaluating evidence: 4 competences (reviewing relevant existing research, gathering new evidence, analysis and evaluation) are required to carry out evidence-based classroom inquiry and to support the progressive development of higher standards of teaching.
- (4) Attitude towards teaching: Dewey (1933, cited in Pollard, 2002:17-18) considers 3 attitudes to be key attribute to reflective teaching. Firstly, the essential attribute is 'open-mindedness'. It is 'An active desire to listen to more sides than one, to give heed to facts from whatever source they come, to give full attention to

alternative possibilities, to recognize the possibility of error even in the beliefs which are dearest to us.' Secondly, the prerequisite attribute is 'responsibility'. It is to 'consider the consequences of a projected step; ...be willing to adopt these consequences when they follow reasonably'. The last attribute is 'wholeheartedness' meaning reflective teacher should be dedicated, single-minded, energetic and enthusiastic. 'There is no greater enemy of effective thinking than divided interest...A genuine enthusiasm is an attitude that operates as an intellectual force. When a person is absorbed, the subject carries him on'.

(5) Informed teacher judgment: Reflective teaching calls for the collaboration on the strengths of the knowledge of teachers, researchers and policy-makers, so that each involving party's potentiality can be maximized to overcome the weakness.

(6) Learning with colleagues: Capitalizing on the social nature of learning (Vygotsky 1978, cited in Pollard, 2002:20), the level of reflective teaching is almost always enhanced, should it be done with other colleagues at school or during seminars, tutor groups and workshops. The value of learning with colleagues is the opportunities to share and compare, support and advise in reciprocal ways, which according to Kohl (1986, cited in Pollard, 2002:20) can be both personally fulfilling and educationally effective. Besides, doing reflection with other people is usually more interesting and fun.

(7) Reflective teaching as creative mediation: Reflective teaching requires interpretation and mediation on externally developed frameworks for teaching and learning. Adaptation in some particular context is necessary to fulfil the external requirements, as well as to maintain teachers' own understanding of the value of teaching. Osborn et al (2000, cited in Pollard, 2002:22) observe 4 kinds of 'creative mediation': protective mediation, innovative mediation, collaborative mediation and conspirational mediation.

2.2.3 Benefits and misapplications of reflective practices in teaching

The major benefit is teachers' deeper understanding of their teaching style, leading to greater effectiveness of a teacher. Apart from that, various literatures show other benefits can be found in the validation of a teacher's ideals, beneficial challenges to tradition, the recognition of teaching as artistry, and respect for diversity in applying theory to classroom practice (Ferraro, 2000:4).

Furthermore, reflection has gradually acquired its due recognition in professional development. Alba and Sandberg insist that in professional development, there should be a shift from pure transmission of knowledge or skills to incorporation of 'embodied understanding of the practice in question' (2006:405). And 'such a shift would mean promoting development of professional ways-of-being that can deal with the complexities, ambiguities, and dynamic change inherent in professional practice' (2006: 401). Kydd (1997:2) believes the relationship between individual and organizational professional development is a complementary one, as effectiveness and efficiency are to be promoted by reflection at both levels. Pollard (2002:4) claims that reflective teaching is supportive to professional development and maintenance because it 'feeds a constructive spiral of professional development and capability'.

Meanwhile, Boud and Walker (1998) summarize misapplications of reflective practice in the courses and workshops of higher education. They emphasize that social and cultural context should be examined to foster reflection because 'None of these [misapplications] are problematic per se; it is the ways in which they are used which give rise to difficulties' (1998:192). The problems they outline include:

- Recipe following (reflection becomes a 'ritualised, mechanical checklist' with no regard to learning context or outcomes);
- Reflection without learning (reflection becomes 'self-referential, inward looking and uncritical' without a focus on conceptual frameworks);
- Belief that reflection can be easily contained (assumption that reflection can be restricted to and proceed within the teacher's 'comfort zone');
- Not designing for a formal learning context ('mismatch between the type of reflection proposed and where it is used');
- Intellectualising reflection (reflection is simply treated as a matter of thinking rigorously without a proper emotional insight into it);
- Inappropriate disclosure (failure to contract the reflection process leading to unnecessary revealing than manageable);
- Uncritical acceptance of experience (belief that the value of experience can be damaged by reflection, since experience is not 'masterable');
- Going beyond the expertise of the teacher ('unfortunate disclosures' make teachers unable to cope with the reflective process, due to their unawareness of what they can and cannot handle)

--Excessive use of teacher power (the misuse of teachers' power may lead reflective practice to increasing teachers' attraction rather than influencing over the lives of students).

2.2.4 Reflective practices in teaching

Before attempts to implement reflective practice in teaching, Schön (1987:para.28) warns work should be done against the bias that 'practice is a second-class activity and theory is a privileged form of knowledge'. In addition, teacher is not 'a blank slate to be trained and taught the results of research carried out by researchers' despite of 'the actual institutional conditions of practice [which] restrict what it is that a practitioner can do'.

In view of this, Gimenez (1999:141) argues 'By becoming aware of their [teachers'] own insights, and confronting it with alternative views as represented by research reports, teachers may generate more informed judgment... The process is not unidirectional in the sense that teachers should apply knowledge generated by research, but rather a dialectical one, in which one can inform the other'.

According to Ferraro (2000:3), 'At the level of in-service teaching, studies have shown that critical reflection upon experience continues to be an effective technique for professional development'. Examples of such activities are regular group reflection sessions (such as study teams and peer coaching) and serving as a coach or mentor to colleagues. Farrell's (1999:13) research on 'teacher development groups' shows the major benefit is the support each participant receives from the group as a whole.

Meanwhile Amulya (2003:3) thinks reflective practice is basically structured around inquiry, driven by questions, dialogue and stories. Experiences are examined for the purpose of 'gaining visibility on a problem or question we need to answer'. The most useful techniques, she believes, are stories ('narrative accounts of experience') and dialogue/journaling ('building thinking about experience out loud'). Similarly, Gimenez (1999:138-139) recommends re-telling lived experience as an efficient way to do reflection. The reason is 'teachers in the past were

learners...teachers are socialized through their various educational experiences, reflection on these experiences can uncover implicit beliefs about teaching and learning...the very act of having to retell lived experiences will lead to reflection on practice and therefore lead to growing awareness of the learning process'.

'Proactive reflection' is advocated by Easley to establish between teachers and parents a sound and trustworthy relation attuned for reflective practice. During the open house night or 'You Tell Me' conference, parents are encouraged either to write or speak on what children say about their teacher, and what do parents think the teacher can better help their children. This kind of partnership strengthens the dialogue between teacher and parents, and in turn helps teacher meet students' needs. Easley claims that proactive reflection is the best kind of reflection because it is 'a win/win/win situation', in which teaching gets improved, teachers feel their competence enhanced and students learn better (Easley 2006, cited in Chen, 2007a: 7).

As mentioned before, peer coaching and evaluation is an effective way to do reflection. Particularly, peer coaching with video feedback (i.e.: showing video recording of classroom performance and having group discussion afterwards) can be a valuable tool, provided trust and confidence can be built beforehand (Schildwacht et al, 2006: 66). I (Chen, 2007a: 7-8) feel the most advantage in peer coaching is its role-exchanging exercise, which enables teachers to look into the difficulties in the shoes of their students. In addition, teachers are given chances to see how their colleagues conduct the class and learn from each other. This is a brainstorming activity, which gives teachers insights into their teaching strategies and brings progress in their profession. Easley (2006:38) ascribes teachers' involvement in peer coaching to their own motivation. She comments, 'It was created by teachers and for teachers. It featured teachers from within our building and addressed real teacher issues. It was reflection at its purest and best'.

With regard to reflection for SEN teachers, Claasen (2006b) introduces 'Personal Development Plan (PDP)' focusing on 9 domains of competences. Competence in this context is defined as 'The ability of an individual to adequately perform tasks, resolve problems, in his professional practice', and is characterized by 'self-steered, goal-oriented, context-bound and integral use of qualities' (Claasen, 2006a). Competence

differs from knowledge or skills owing to its 'invisible possibilities in teacher performance and the effectiveness of teacher performance' (WOSO, 2004:42).

In particular, general characteristics of special needs education are outlined as: Involvement in severe problems of physical or intellectual disability; Demand-driven working calling for creativity and teamwork; Diagnostic teaching requiring combination of practice and research; Interdisciplinary work to combine education and therapy; Individual support demanding special conversational skills; Attuning pupils' in-school and out-of-school development; Passing on knowledge and development of networks and care structures (WOSO,2004:31-32).

PDP includes competences in: Working with pupils (interpersonal relationship, pedagogy, didactic and classroom organization); Collaborating with colleagues; Cooperating with school environment (such as parents and institutional authorities); Reflection and development; Personal effectiveness of managing with work situations and Practicing cycle of diagnostic teaching. Accordingly, each domain consists of 3 items: what is meant in this domain, what competences are needed and the knowledge or skill required. For each item of competence, 4-level grading is given as 'This is not so easy (-)', 'This is reasonably easy (+/-)', 'This is easy enough (+)', and 'This is easy (++)'. While for each item of knowledge or skill required, 3 open questions are asked on 'Result I want to achieve', 'When do I want to achieve them' and 'Which way do I want to achieve them'. Teachers may get a brief idea about what competence(s) they have, what they think might be inadequate and what they do not have at the moment (cited in Chen, 2007a: 2-3).

2.3 Conditions that influence reflection in teaching

2.3.1 Context

Boud and Walker (1998:195) define context as 'the total cultural, social and political environment in which reflection takes place', and context is 'mirrored in and is in turn modified by particular local settings within which learning occurs: the classroom, the course and the institution'. They think 'Context is perhaps the single most important influence on reflection and learning' (1998:196) because:

Context influences teachers and learners in a variety of ways in their everyday interactions as well as in learning outcomes and processes. Included here are

influences on teachers, in terms of what goals they pursue for what ends, their own competence in handling teaching-learning situations and the resources they deploy; on learners, in terms of what they aspire to and how their expectations are framed; on learning outcomes, in terms of what teachers and learners accept as legitimate goals and what outcomes are valued over others; and on learning activities, in terms of what processes are acceptable in any given situation. (1998:195)

Therefore, Boud and Walker suggest a 'learning milieu' (1998:196) be created in an awareness of local context to promote reflection. They (1998:198) suggest the following factors to be considered:

These include what teachers are and are not able to do, the need to build trust and the problematic nature of so doing, the need to create situations in which learners are able to make their own meaning rather than have it imposed on them, the ways in which disciplines and professions frame what is possible in the higher education setting, consideration of whose interests are being pursued in reflective activities and the importance of creating and respecting boundaries between the institutional imperatives of learning and the personal domain of the learner.

2.3.2 Trust and confidence

Schildwacht (2006) et al stress the necessity of creating trust and confidence before applying video feedback in peer coaching. The reason is 'coaching may also generate conflict between teachers because it violates traditional norms of autonomy, privacy, and equality in schools. Therefore, it is important to inquire about teachers' satisfactions and concerns with the collaboration process' (Koher et al 1997, cited in Schildwacht et al, 2006:66).

Farrell also claims that the issue of trust should be discussed in the first meeting of 'teacher development group', his research on promoting reflective practice for English as foreign language (EFL) teachers from different institutions. He (1999:12) says 'Trust takes a long time to develop and... is not a given in such teacher groups and must be earned by each participant of the group'. He (1999:12) suggests a 'letter of trust' to be signed by each participant who would promise no disclosure of delicate contents of the meetings without permission of the whole group. Closely related to the issue of trust is rank (1999:2). Since the group participants in Farrell's research are

from different institutions, the hierarchy structure in the same school that may hinder reflection can be largely whittled away.

To facilitate the reflection in such group, Dishon and O'Leary (1984, cited in Bartz and Calabrese, 1991:3) suggest the followings to be considered: Distributed or shared leadership; Heterogeneous membership; Positive interdependency or recognizing and valuing dependence among one another; Social skill acquisition or working effectively with others; Group autonomy from the professor so that it solves its problems in its way.

2.3.3 Gilbert and Trudel's (2005) findings about conditions that influence coach reflection

First of all, 'Access to Knowledgeable Peers'. Reflection can be facilitated by 'peer sounding boards' (peer(s) with coaching experience), if respect and trust for their experience can be established. However, the competition between peers may undermine the sounding boards so that 'issue discussion groups' and 'peer network' are suggested to increase access to coaching peers (2005:33-35).

Next factor is 'Stage of Learning' (2005:35). Evidence shows that most coaches start their careers in an 'acquisition stage of learning' (in the first 3-4 years), and gradually arrive at a 'construction stage of learning' until a 'comfortable level' is achieved. Besides, learning orientation or approach to learning influences the extent of reflection in different learning stages. According to Schön (1983), artistry can be seen in most reflective practitioners who will 'internalise challenging practice dilemmas, seeing them as deficiencies in his or her professional practice as opposed to externalising them as deficiencies of others, or placing them beyond the realm of personal control' (cited in 2005:36).

The third condition is 'Issue Characteristics' (2005:37), which concerns the type and complexity of issue at coach's stage of development. 'For routine performance issues (e.g., techniques or tactics) the coaches would often rely on coaching materials as a strategy generation option...However, while discussing other types of coaching issues (e.g., parental influence or team organization) they seldom referred to their coaching materials as a source for generating strategies' (2005:37). Noticeably,

'Issues that were once considered extremely challenging, are later viewed as routine as a coach progresses from knowledge accretion to knowledge restructuring' (2005:38).

The last influence is the 'Environment' (2005:39). The profile of reflection has a close link with environmental variables such as parental pressure, support from sports association, the profile of the community, the level of competition and the age of the athletes (2005:39). As concluded by Schön (1983), institutional environments that were open, cooperative, and nurtured creativity would be conducive to reflective practice (cited in 2005:40).

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.0 Overview

In this Chapter, the concept of paradigm is defined and examined at the level of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Two main approaches (positivism and constructionism) in educational research are introduced and compared. Research framework is explained, including research questions, environment, associated methods (sampling, questionnaire, observation and interview) and the need to use mixed methods for triangulating the findings. During the research process, due considerations are taken into account on reliability, validity and ethics.

3.1 Paradigm and approaches to educational research

3.1.1 Paradigm

Thomas Kuhn is thought to introduce and influence the notion of 'Paradigm' in the area of social science (Husén, 1988:17). Even though paradigm was not clearly defined by Kuhn, Husén thinks essentially 'A paradigm determines how a problem is formulated and methodologically tackled' (1988:18). Best (2006) outlines some characteristics of paradigm, which should have 'A set of assumption about the social world and humankind; A set of distinctive concepts; An established or accepted body of knowledge; An indication of unanswered questions; A methodology for attempting to solve them and is embraced by a 'scientific community' (Kuhn 1962, cited in Best, 2006). Briefly, Robson defines paradigm as 'The overall conception and way of working shared by workers within a particular discipline or research area' (2002:550). Similarly, Birley and Moreland believe paradigm is 'a theoretical model within which the research is being conducted, and organizes the researcher's view of reality' (1998:30).

Particularly, Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:1) hold the framework of paradigm can be explored at the level of ontology, epistemology and methodology, which are hierarchically correlated to influence a researcher's view of reality and the associated research construction. To sum up, Creswell (1994, cited in Creswell 2003:6) says 'Philosophically, researchers make claims about what is knowledge (ontology), how we know it (epistemology), what

values go into it (axiology), how we write about it (rhetoric), and the process for studying it (methodology)'.

3.1.2 Approaches to educational research

Husén (1988:17) briefly reviews the history of the main paradigms in educational research and comments:

The twentieth century has seen the conflict between two main paradigms...The one is modeled on the natural sciences with an emphasis on empirical quantifiable observations which lend themselves to analyses by means of mathematical tools. The task of research is to establish causal relationships, to explain...The other paradigm is derived from the humanities with an emphasis on holistic and qualitative information and to interpretive approaches.

Robson (2002:43) also describes the debate in the past 30 years between positivists (quantitative researchers) and constructionists (qualitative researchers) as 'paradigm wars'.

Positivists, in favour of an objective and reality, want to reveal and validate universal causal law based on quantitative design by collecting data to find 'empirical regularities where two or more things appear together or in some kind of sequence' (Robson, 2002:20). They seek to 'apply the natural science model of research to investigations of the social world...based on the assumption that there are patterns and regularities, causes and consequences in the social world, just as there are in the natural world' (Denscombe, 1998:239).

By contrast, constructionists argue that meaning and value can hardly be excluded if human being is the object of the research in real world. Dilthey (1833-1911, cited in Walliman, 2005:17) maintains that a researcher should 'seek to explain natural phenomena in the physical world, but find understanding in the spiritual world'. Robson (2002:21) argues "when people are the focus of the study, particularly when it is taking place in a social real world context, 'constant conjunction' in a strict sense is so rare as to be virtually non-existent". Creswell (2003:8) believes constructionists focus on 'the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand

the historical and cultural settings of the participants', and they recognize that 'their own background shapes their interpretation.'

Even though positivism has undergone much criticism, I (Chen, 2006: 5-6) disagree with Byrne (1998, cited in Robson, 2002:26) who declares 'Positivism is dead. By now it has gone off and is beginning to smell'. Admittedly, positivism is continuously progressing by making modifications to address the critiques of anti-positivism. Take post-positivism for example. Although still committing itself to the basic assumptions of positivism (i.e. ontological realism, objective truth and experimental validation of theory), post-positivism admits 'the theories, hypotheses, background knowledge and values of researcher can influence what is observed' (Reichardt and Rallis 1994, cited in Robson, 2002:27). And the objective reality can be known 'only imperfectly and probabilistically because of researcher's limitations' (Robson, 2002:27).

Subsequently, as a solution to the 'paradigm wars', pragmatic approach is advocated which allows a researcher to 'use whatever philosophical or methodological approach works best for a particular research problem at issue. This leads to mixed method studies where both qualitative and quantitative approaches are adopted' (Robson, 2002:43). As noted by Miles and Huberman (1994, cited in Goodwin and Goodwin, 1996:169-170):

We need both words and numbers to understand our world. While our view is pragmatic, we consider effective research most likely to result if, given the topic of interest, the researcher is free to select and implement a host of methods, unshackled by a permanent allegiance to this or that approach.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Introduction

'Design is concerned with turning research questions into projects' Robson (2002:79). Hakim (1987, cited in Robson, 2002:80) believes research design should deal with not only aims and plans but also the 'practical constraints of location, time, money and availability of staff'.

Robson categorizes a design into a fixed, flexible or mixed one. The advantage of fixed design is its ability to 'transcend individual difference and identify patterns and

processes which can be linked to social structures and group or organizational features' (2002:98). Whereas the relative weakness is its inability to 'capture the subtleties and complexities of individual human behaviours'(2002:98). In comparison, flexible design does not have much pre-specification and usually evolves, develops and 'unfolds' as the research proceeds (2002:5). While mixed-methods design is thought to have considerable advantage by making use of two or more methods to get both quantitative and qualitative data (2002:5).

Creswell (2003:3) categorizes 3 frameworks for designing a proposal: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches. To understand them, he suggests considering the 3 elements: Philosophical assumptions about what constitutes knowledge claims; General procedures of research (strategies of inquiry); and Detailed procedures of data collection, analysis and writing (methods). He (2003:4) argues that 'The situation today is less quantitative versus qualitative and more how research practices lie somewhere on a continuum between the two. The best that can be said is that studies tend to be more quantitative or qualitative in nature'.

*And?
your voice*

3.2.2 Research questions, assumptions and aims

The main question is to ask if reflective practices exist in Czech mainstream or special schools, and whether teachers are aware of it. Associated questions are what teachers think about reflection and what conditions that influence reflection. Accordingly, my assumptions are:

- Most teachers are not aware of reflective practices in teaching, but practically have been doing it during their work without employing any specific method.
- Some teachers have already known about reflective teaching and purposefully combined reflection strategy into their work.
- Reflective teaching practice is more carried out with special school teachers or teachers having experience of working with SEN children, than those in mainstream schools or having no SEN experience.

Hence, the aim of this research is to create awareness and orientate the importance of reflective practices in teaching. Consequently, suggestions will be given to the possibility of improving teaching and in-service training.

3.2.3 Research environment

The majority of the research started in early May when school visits were arranged inside and outside Prague. Questionnaires were distributed along with classroom observations and interviews, concurrently done with some of the participant teachers. I finished the last school visit around mid-June. Considering submission of dissertation to be in end-July, the time for the research is quite limited.

Apparently, language is in many occasions a barrier in Czech Republic where English is not so commonly spoken. It limits the extent of my research. For instance, questionnaire seems to be a more realistic option to collect the majority data. Nevertheless, since translation is a big concern I cannot afford to omit, teachers' understanding of the questions and my interpretation based on the translation of teachers' replies would make data analysis more complicated.

Considering the choice about research method, Denscombe (1998:83) thinks it 'will be influenced by the strategy itself, but it will also reflect preferences about the kind of data that the researcher wishes to obtain and practical considerations related to time, resources and access to the sources of data'. Indeed, 'it is a matter of deciding which is the most appropriate method in practice, not of deciding that one data collection is superior to all others in any absolute sense.'

3.2.4 Sampling

Non-probability or purposive sampling is adopted, as it is commonly used by small-scale survey. It is 'less complicated to set up and is acceptable when there is no intention or need to make a statistical generalization to any population beyond the samples surveyed' (Robson, 2002:264). 'The principle of selection...is the researcher's judgement as to typicality or interest' (2002:264-265). Maxwell (1996:70) suggests 'Selecting those times, settings, and individuals that can provide you with the information that you need in order to answer your research questions is the most important consideration in qualitative sampling decisions'.

Concerning the sample size, O'Leary (2004:104) maintains it largely depends on the goal of the research, the parameters of the population and the type of data to be collected. 'Alternatively, researchers working with qualitative data can follow size

guidelines required for minimal statistical analysis (covered below). This will allow them the option of quantitatively summarizing some of their qualitative findings in order to make more mathematical generalizations about their population.' She (2004:105) suggests 'minimal statistical analysis':

If your goal is to do just basic statistical analysis (sometimes used to support more qualitative data analysis), you will generally need a minimum of about 30 respondents. Because statistical analysis is based on probability, the use of smaller numbers can make it difficult to show statistical significance. Keep in mind that with small samples, you will need to argue representativeness.

3.2.5 Survey questionnaire

- Advantages and disadvantages

Denscombe (1998:105-106) argues that the questionnaire has the advantages of: Economical in terms of materials, money and time; Easier to arrange; Standardized answers; Pre-coded answers (respondents are faced with the relatively easy task of needing to pick one or more answers which are spelt out for them, instead of needing to think of how to express their ideas). On the contrary, its disadvantages are also quite obvious: Pre-coded questions can be frustrating for respondents and, thus, deter them from answering; Pre-coded questions can bias the findings towards the researcher's, rather than the respondent's, way of seeing things. Questionnaires, by their very nature, can start to impose a structure on the answers and shape the nature of the responses in a way that reflects the researcher's thinking rather than the respondent's; Postal questionnaires offer little opportunity for the researcher to check the truthfulness of the answers given by the respondents.

Noticeably, Robson (2002:231) points out the 'social desirability response bias' in questionnaire-based survey. This usually happens when respondents do not like to report their true feelings or attitudes in the questionnaires. Instead, they respond in a way showing them in a good light, or give the answers the research intends to get. Therefore, due consideration needs to be taken to a well-structured questionnaire as well as the time and place the questionnaire is carried out

- Questionnaire design

“The information from questionnaires tends to fall into two broad categories-‘facts’ and ‘opinions’” (Denscombe, 1998:89). Accordingly, my questionnaire consists of 3 parts with 24 questions, most of which are designed as close-ended. 3 open-ended questions are set to allow respondents to express their viewpoints if they would like to. According to Denscombe (1998:101), open questions are more likely to reflect the full richness and complexity of the views held by the respondent, while close questions generate uniform information easy to be quantified, compared and analysed. Practically, for designing self-completion questionnaire, Robson (2002:245) suggests ‘Cut down open-ended questions to a minimum...unless you can afford to spend a lot of time on analysis or have only a small number of responses to deal with’.

The first part of the questionnaire is about demographic data, in which I ask respondents about their gender, age, teaching experience, type of school they work, number of students in the class and whether they have experience of teaching SEN students. In the second part, I ask teachers if they are aware of reflective practices in teaching. For example, what kind of reflective method(s) they use, whether they have relative training in reflection etc. The last part deals with teachers’ opinions on reflection. For instance, whether students, parents or colleagues have a role in reflecting on teaching and if reflection helps improving teaching standards and personal development. Conditions that may influence reflection but cannot be included in part 1 are specified in part 3, such as attitude and aim of teaching, time, school environment and training.

Length of questionnaire and time to complete it are taken into consideration. Wolf (1988:479) thinks 15 minutes should be the limit of responding time to prevent ‘respondent fatigue’ leading to careless or inaccurate responses. In order to gain ‘respondent cooperation’ and consider the way to distribute the questionnaire, I limit the time to be less than 10 minutes, which is between the usual break-period of two classes in Czech schools.

Attentions are given to wording of the questions as well as layout of the questionnaire. Among the general rules of question wording given by de Vaus (1991,

cited in Robson, 2002:245-246) such as use simple language, keep questions short and avoid leading questions etc., I slightly disagree when he warns against the use of negative questions. Instead, I am for a variety of questions because it may stop the respondent becoming bored and falling into a 'pattern' of answers (Denscombe, 1998:100). Thus, I set 'Yes/No' questions in part 1-2 and 5 degree questions in part 3 with 1 negative question asking teachers if they think they have no extra time for reflection. As for questionnaire layout, 'Consideration needs to be given to the size of type, sequencing of item, provision of adequate space to answer unstructured items, and other details of presentation' (Wolf, 1988:481). Finally I set the questionnaire to 2 pages with an extra page of covering letter, which indicates the aim and importance of my research and assures confidentiality of the respondent. The letter is signed by my supervisor and with an official stamp of pedagogy faculty.

- Pre-testing questionnaire

The draft questionnaire is pre-tested initially by my classmates who help me with the phrase and structure. After that, 2 teachers (1 from a primary school in Tilburg, Holland and 1 from a secondary school in Prague, Czech Republic) are invited to fill in the questionnaire. Both of them work in the mainstream schools and have experience of teaching SEN students. The teacher in Tilburg is an English native speaker and she rephrases some questions, while the teacher in Prague corrects a mistake in translation on the Czech-version questionnaire. Their constructive comments help me 'understand the meaning of the question to respondents and how they arrive at their response' (Robson, 2002:254). Considering the time and limited resources I have in Prague, piloting questionnaire is not carried out which usually requires at least 20 respondents (2002:254).

- Distribution of questionnaire

Robson (2002: 236) outlines 3 ways where most questionnaires are administered: Self-completion, face-to-face interview and telephone interview. Although 'questionnaires that are administered face-to-face with the respondent can be valuable for social research' (Denscombe, 1998:88), yet due to the constraint of time and language, only a few questionnaires are carried out in this way. Most questionnaires are completed at the same time by the colleagues of the teacher, whom I do observation and interview with. Postal questionnaire is applied with one of the special

school outside Prague in the northeast Czech Republic. A visit is paid to this school without an interview due to a tight schedule of that day. I am aware of the limitation my questionnaires are distributed, which I would articulate in the later chapter. On the other hand, this modified way of distribution ensures a high response rate that all questionnaires are filled and collected in time.

3.2.6 Observation

'Observation can lead to deeper understandings than interviews alone, because it provides a knowledge of the context in which events occur, and may enable the researcher to see things that participants themselves are not aware of, or that they are unwilling to discuss' (Patton 1990, cited in Hoepfl, 1997:53). Nevertheless, O'Leary (2004:104) cautions that observation can be quite challenging because it requires researchers 'continually consider and negotiate how their own inherent biases might...colour their observations and have a potential impact on the observed'. It can be described as 'What you see isn't always what you get' (2004:170).

Particularly, I use observation as a means of building certain rapport with the teachers I do questionnaire and interview with. Observing their classes gives me the chance to know the teaching environment and helps me better understand the context to which they answer the questions. More importantly, I find out that teachers show great interest in my observation from their classes during the interview, since for them it is an opportunity to reflect on their teaching. The benefit of sharing my observation with the teachers indeed increases their willingness (including their colleagues) to fill in the questionnaires and to give time for interview.

Among Hoepfl's (1997:53) observation strategies, I use 'passive presence' and 'limited interaction' observations: the former being as unobtrusive as possible and not interacting with participants, the latter intervening only when further clarification of action is needed. Considering ethic issue, I only take observational notes without photograph, audio and videotapes. Heykant (2006) suggests observing teacher's behaviour according to their classroom management, interaction with the students and instruction or didactics. The purpose is to see whether pupils' basic needs can be met in terms of feeling competent, autonomous and having good relations. During my observation, I follow the guideline of 'Characteristics of an Inclusive and Learning-

friendly Classroom' (UNESCO Bangkok, 2005:24).

3.2.7 Interview

'Face-to-face interviews offer the possibility of modifying one's line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating underlying motives in a way that postal and other self-administered questionnaires cannot' (Robson, 2002:272). Yet one of its disadvantages is the biased responses resulting from the interviewee's reaction to the interviewer, either positive or negative (Gay, 1987:203). Apart from that, 'interview is time consuming, expensive and requires a level of skill usually beyond that of the beginning researcher' (1987:203).

Interview is used to clarify or double-check the answers in my questionnaire from some respondents. It is semi-structured allowing relative freedom of interviewer to modify question order or add extra questions whenever necessary. Questions are sometimes rephrased in a hope to find out interviewee's belief and attitude which are 'relative difficult to get at...often complex and multidimensional, and appear particularly prone to the effects of question wording and sequence' (Robson, 2002:272).

'Biases are difficult to rule out' (Robson, 2002:273) during interview, and 'in order to obtain valid information the interviewer must gain the trust (and perhaps affection) of the respondent' (Miller and Cannell, 1988:461). They (1988:461) explain,

The interviewer seeks to establish rapport and takes a friendly, empathic attitude, he or she is nondirective-giving the respondent no cues about "correct" answers-and certainly does not express his or her own opinions. A combination of the nondirective approach and a friendly attitude is supposed to decrease response error by relieving the respondent of the pressure to maintain a totally positive self-presentation and by motivating the respondent to reveal him/herself accurately.

3.2.8 Pragmatic position

A pragmatic approach is adopted combining the use of quantitative and qualitative methods. The reasons of doing so are, as Greene et al. (1989, cited in Goodwin and Goodwin, 1996:162) put it:

- Triangulation: using separate methods to measure the same phenomenon and converge the results to more credibility.
- Complementarity: results from one method can be used to enhance or illustrate the result of others.
- Development: findings from the initial method often give hint and lead the other methods subsequently.
- Initiation: non-convergence or contradiction from the mixed approach may shed light on areas of additional study.
- Expansion: scope and depth of inquiry can be extended.

Denzin (1988:512) further elaborates on the need for triangulation:

The social world is socially constructed, and its meanings, to the observer and those observed, is constantly changing. As a consequence, no single research method will ever capture all of the changing features of the social world under study... Interpretations which are built upon triangulation are certain to be stronger than those which rest on the more constricted framework of a single method.

However, Bogdan and Biklen (1992, cited in Goodwin and Goodwin, 1996:160) warn the novices like me of the complexity in the mixed approach. Instead of producing a 'superior hybrid', mixed research design can be misled to 'produce a piece of research that does not meet the criteria for good work in either approach'. The reason has much to do with the practical issues I have to face with, such as time, language, professional use of each method and other limited resources.

3.2.9 Descriptive analysis of data

As my research is a small-scale study tending to be more qualitative than quantitative, Microsoft Excel is used to analyse the quantitative data from the questionnaire. Demographic information as well as replies to Yes/No and 5-degree questions is shown in frequency and percentage in tables. Qualitative data from open-ended questions and interviews are also put into tables, showing the similarities and dissimilarities of the responses. General findings from classroom observation are presented as well.

Hoepfl (1997:55) holds qualitative data analysis 'begins with identification of the themes emerging from the raw data...The goal is to create descriptive, multi-dimensional categories which form a preliminary framework for analysis. Words, phrases or events that appear to be similar can be grouped into the same category' Patton (1990, cited in Hoepfl, 1997:54-55) thinks qualitative researchers tend to use inductive analysis of data, meaning that the critical themes emerge out of the data. Thus 'Qualitative analysis requires some creativity, for the challenge is to place the raw data into logical, meaningful categories; to examine them in a holistic fashion; and to find a way to communicate this interpretation to others' (Hoepfl, 1997:55).

3.3 Reliability and validity

'Reliability is concerned with questions of stability and consistency' (Singleton and Straits, 2005:91). 3 types of reliability in conventional research are outlined by Kirk and Miller (1986, cited in Hoepfl, 1997:59-60): The degree to which a measurement, given repeatedly, remains the same; The stability of a measurement over time; and The similarity of measurements within a given time period.

Concerning validity, Maxwell (1996:87) refers it to the 'correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account'. He (1992, cited in Maxwell, 1996:86) notes 'Validity is a goal rather than a product...Validity is also relative: it has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context-independent property of methods or conclusions'. O'Leary (2004:104) remarks:

Many researchers who collect qualitative data in order to understand populations are not looking for representativeness. Their goal is often rich understanding that may come from the few, rather than the many. Applicability comes from the 'lessons learned', that might- depending on context-be applicable in alternative or broader populations.

As far as my research is concerned, pre-tests of the questionnaire are done with my classmates and 2 teachers in Tilburg and Prague respectively. Translation of the questionnaire from English to Czech is cross checked by 2 local translators. Apart from that, a researcher working in the field of reflective practice in Fontys OSO (Tilburg, Holland) is invited to review the questionnaire and give his expert opinions

on it. A reflective session is organized in Charles University where I have chance to introduce my research, followed by group discussion between an American Fulbright professor and my classmates. I also have individual sessions with my supervisor who helps me to finalize the questionnaire design. Moreover, triangulation is adopted for data collection and analysis, combining observation, questionnaire and interview. In short, every effort is made in the hope to reduce biases and distortion of the findings, thus to some extent will increase the reliability and validity of my study.

3.4 Ethical considerations

'Ethics refers to rules of conduct; typically, to conformity to a code or set of principles' (Reynolds 1979, cited in Robson 2002:65). Since ethical issues lurk in any research involving people, it raises a question of how a researcher's 'right to know' balanced against the participants' right to privacy, dignity and self-determination (2002:65-66). Reese and Fremouw (1984, cited in Singleton and Straits, 2005:515) identify 3 broad areas of ethic consideration:

- In the process of data collection and analysis, researchers are expected to be careful and forthright in observing, analysing, and reporting findings.
- In the treatment of participants, researchers should adhere to basic ethical principles accepted in our culture and legal tradition to treat the participants with respect and protect them from harm.
- In the responsibility to society, the dissemination and use of research findings should generally promote the social welfare.

Considering ethical issues in my research, I have taken the following measures:

- The questionnaire is distributed with a covering letter indicating what program I am involved in and who is sponsoring this program, as well as the aim and importance of my research. Assuring confidentiality of the respondent, the letter is signed by my supervisor and with an official stamp of pedagogy faculty.
- Permission to conduct my research is given by the schools, which is done between my supervisor and school headmasters.
- Oral consent is obtained from individual teacher when observation or interview is to be done with him/her. They are given enough information about my research to make a choice whether or not to participate. Furthermore, they are assured that any

information obtained from them will be treated as confidential and anonymous, to be used in my research only.

Chapter 4 Analysis

4.0 Overview

In this Chapter, data collected from questionnaire, interview and observations are descriptively presented and analysed. Microsoft Excel is used to present quantitative data (demographic information and close-ended questions) by showing the frequency and percentage, while qualitative data from open-ended questions and interviews are put into collective tables noting the similarities and dissimilarities. General findings from class observation are also presented.

4.1 Demographic data

A total of 41 questionnaires are collected. 8 of them are found with incomplete information and thus discarded, which gives the final number of participants at 33(80.49%), 18 teachers from mainstream schools (abbreviated as MT hereinafter) and 15 teachers from special schools (abbreviated as ST hereinafter). Part 1 of questionnaire contains demographic data such as gender, age, teaching experience, type of school working now, number of students in the class and experience of teaching SEN students. The result of the sample is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Demographic Data

Category	Groups	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Gender	Male	10	30
	Female	23	70
2. Age	<26	4	12
	26-35	9	27
	36 – 45	11	33
	>45	9	27
3. Teaching experience (in years)	<5	10	30
	5 – 9	4	12
	10 – 14	7	21
	>14	12	36
4. Type of school working now	Mainstream	18	55
	Special	15	45
5. Number of students in class	1-10	15	45
	11-20	4	12
	21-30	12	36
	>30	2	6
6. Experience of teaching SEN students	Yes	27	82
	No	6	18
Total		33	100

4.2 Teachers' awareness of reflection

Part 2 of questionnaire has 5 'Yes/No' questions, asking about teachers' awareness of reflective practices in teaching: do they often evaluate or reflect on themselves, are they used to making changes in teaching strategy/method, what kind of reflective strategy/method they use and whether they have relative training in reflective teaching.

Most participants (88%) are aware of reflective practices in teaching and do evaluation or reflection often (97%). Majority of participants (79%) say they are used to making changes in their approach towards teaching strategy/method, and many of them (67%) claim they use one or some methods to reflect on their teaching. However, question on attending training or workshop of reflective teaching sees a rather low response, with only 30% participants saying yes. The result of the sample is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Questions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Are you aware of reflective practices in teaching?	Yes: 29	88
	No: 4	12
2. Do you evaluate or reflect on yourself often?	Yes: 32	97
	No: 1	3
3. Are you used to making changes in your approach towards teaching strategy/method?	Yes: 26	79
	No: 7	21
4. Do you use any specific strategy/method for reflecting your teaching?	Yes: 22	67
	No: 11	33
5. Have you had any training in reflective teaching?	Yes: 10	30
	No: 23	70
Total	33	100

Some inferences might be drawn from Table 1 and Table 2.

Question 1: Are you aware of reflective practices in teaching?

- Most of the participants (29 out of 33) answer yes.
- There is no big difference between

--MT and ST: 16 out of 18 MT (89%) and 13 out of 15 ST (87%) answer yes.

--Number of students in the class.

- Male is less aware than female teachers: 8 out of 10 male (80%) and 21 out of 23 female (91%) answer yes.
- Age and teaching experience may play a role. All 4 teachers in 'below 26 age group', and all 9 teachers in 'above 45 age group' answer yes (100%). Accordingly, all 10 teachers with less than 5 years teaching answer yes (100%), and 11 out of 12 teachers with over 14 years teaching answer yes (92%).

The explanation might be: For those who are below 26 or have less than 5 years teaching, they are newly graduated/qualified teachers who have had similar reflection training as part of their university study. While for those who are above 45 or with over 14 years teaching, long teaching experience may help them become more aware of their teaching.

- Experience of teaching SEN students clearly influences awareness: 25 out of 27 teachers with experience answer yes (93%), while 4 out of 6 teachers without experience answer yes (67%).

Question 2: Do you evaluate or reflect on yourself often?

All teachers answer yes except 1 MT (analysis for this MT can be found under Table 3.4). The reply is in accordance with the statement 'Reflection is something all of us can do. All it takes is a personal commitment to excellence' (Easley, 2006: 38).

Question 3: Are you used to making changes in your approach towards teaching strategy/method?

- Most of the participants (26 out of 33) answer yes.
- Male is less used to making changes than female teachers: 7 out of 10 male (70%) and 19 out of 23 female (83%) answer yes.
- There is a tendency with age and teaching experience: the older and longer teaching experience, the more likely to make changes. All 9 teachers in 'above 45 age group' answer yes (100%) and 11 out of 12 teachers with over 14 years teaching answer yes (92%), both of which get the highest percentage in their respective group.
- MT is less used to making changes than ST: 13 out of 18 MT (72%) and 13 out of 15 ST (87%) answer yes.

- Number of students in the class may play a role: 13 out of 15 teachers with 1-10 students answer yes (87%). All 4 teachers with 11-20 students answer yes (100%), while 8 out of 12 teachers with 21-30 students answer yes (67%).
- Experience of teaching SEN students is influential: 22 out of 27 teachers with experience answer yes (81%), while 4 out of 6 teachers without experience answer yes (67%).

Question 4: Do you use any specific strategy/method for reflecting your teaching?

- Many of the participants (22 out of 33) answer yes.
- There is no big difference between teachers with or without experience of teaching SEN students: 18 out of 27 teachers with experience answer yes (67%), and 4 out of 6 teachers without experience answer yes (67%).
- Less male have specific method than female: 5 out of 10 male (50%) and 17 out of 23 female (74%) answer yes.
- There is a tendency with age and teaching experience: the older and longer teaching experience, the more likely to use certain method(s). 7 out of 9 teachers in 'above 45 age group' answer yes (78%) and 9 out of 12 teachers with over 14 years teaching answer yes (75%), both of which get the highest percentage in their respective group.
- More MT than ST use certain method(s): 13 out of 18 MT (72%) and 9 out of 15 ST (60%) answer yes.
- Number of students in the class may play a role: 9 out of 15 teachers with 1-10 students answer yes (60%). 3 out of 4 teachers with 11-20 students answer yes (75%), and 9 out of 12 teachers with 21-30 students answer yes (75%).

Question 5: Have you had any training in reflective teaching?

- A few of the participants (10 out of 33) answer yes.
- There is no big difference between:
 - Male and female: 3 out of 10 male (30%) and 7 out of 23 female (30%) answer yes.
 - Teachers with or without experience of teaching SEN students: 8 out of 27 teachers with experience answer yes (30%), and 2 out of 6 teachers without experience answer yes (33%).
- Age and teaching experience play a role: 2 out of 4 teachers in 'below 26 age group' answer yes (50%), and 5 out of 9 teachers in 'above 45 age group' answer

yes (56%). Accordingly, 3 out of 10 teachers with less than 5 years teaching answer yes (30%), and 5 out of 12 teachers with over 14 years teaching answer yes (42%).

The explanation is similar to Question 1: For those who are below 26 or have less than 5 years teaching, they are newly graduated/qualified teachers who have had similar reflection training as part of their university study. While for those who are above 45 or with over 14 years teaching, long teaching experience gives them opportunities to take part in some training workshops or seminars.

- Less MT than ST have training: 4 out of 18 MT (22%) and 6 out of 15 ST (40%) answer yes.
- Number of students in the class play a role: 6 out of 15 teachers with 1-10 students answer yes (40%). 2 out of 4 teachers with 11-20 students answer yes (50%), and 2 out of 12 teachers with 21-30 students answer yes (17%).

4.3 Teachers' opinions on reflection

Part 3 of questionnaire deals with teachers' opinions on reflection. For example, participants are asked if they think students, parents or colleagues can help them improve their teaching, and if reflection helps personal development. Conditions that may influence reflection but cannot be included in part 1 are specified in part 3, such as attitude and aim of teaching, time, school environment and training.¹² five-degree questions are designed and participants are supposed to choose from 'strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree to strongly disagree'. The result of each statement is shown in the following tables.

Table 3.1

Question	Frequency		Percentage (%)
1. My attitude towards teaching practice influences the level of reflection.	Strongly Agree	3	9
	Agree	24	73
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	6	18
	Disagree	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total		33	100

This question is designed to find out teachers' attitude towards teaching, which is considered to be an important part of reflective teaching (Pollard, 2002:17-18). It can be seen that most participants respond positively (82%). 6 participants (5 MT and 1 ST) who choose to be neutral are likely to take positive position if looking at their positive responses in part2 (especially in questions 1-4)

Table 3.2

Question	Frequency		Percentage (%)
2. The aim of teaching is to give students as much knowledge as teachers know.	Strongly Agree	10	30
	Agree	15	45
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	6	18
	Disagree	2	6
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total		33	100

The original aim to ask this question is to find out whether teachers define teaching as simply knowledge transfer or they believe teaching is to facilitate learning for the students. The result turns out that the majority of participants agree with this statement (75%), whereas only 2 teachers (1 MT and 1 ST) disagree.

I had a short talk with one of the respondent. She is a science teacher in a mainstream school with 7 years of teaching experience. She told me the reason she disagreed was because she did not believe she could teach everything to her students. What she could do is to help students to learn by showing them different perspective of approaching a problem. Nonetheless, during my interview with a teacher of a special school with 10 years of teaching, I asked the reason why she chose 'strongly agree' with this statement. She replied that she thought she needed to teach not only the subjects in the curriculum, but also the knowledge of life, so that SEN students can know themselves better in this society.

It was not until then I realized that teachers might have different understanding of 'knowledge'. Clearly this question design has its deficiency owing to the ambiguous meaning of 'knowledge'. Except those whom I do interview with, the rest respondents may believe in teaching 'curriculum knowledge' or 'life knowledge' to give positive answers, or it is likely because they are not sure what exactly knowledge means that they give neutral replies.

Table 3.3

Question	Frequency		Percentage (%)
3.Changes in teaching strategy/method have to be made based on changes in the needs of students.	Strongly Agree	10	30
	Agree	21	67
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	2	6
	Disagree	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total		33	100

This question is designed to examine teachers' willingness to make changes according to the needs of students. Almost all participants give positive answers (97%).

2 MT choose to be neutral. One of them is a female teaching assistant for 1 year, working with children with learning difficulty and physical disability. Her lack of teaching experience may lead to her impartial reply, because she says no to question 3 of part 2 (Are you used to making changes in your approach towards teaching strategy/method?) The other respondent is a male teacher with 10 years of teaching but no experience with SEN student, which might be the reason he remains fair-minded.

Table 3.4

Question	Frequency		Percentage (%)
4. Students can help teachers to learn.	Strongly Agree	12	36
	Agree	18	55
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	2	6
	Disagree	1	3
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total		33	100

This question is designed to find out whether teachers think students have a role in reflective teaching. Almost all participants give positive answers (91%).

2 MT choose to be fence sitting, both with 1 year teaching experience. From the questionnaire of one of the respondent, I see she gives 'yes' answers to questions 1-4 in part 2. When asked what method(s) to reflect on teaching, she writes 'pupils evaluate the classes'. All of these imply her positive stance towards students' role in helping teachers to learn, and therefore I find it difficult to figure out why she chooses to be neutral in this question. On the other hand, I had an interview with the other respondent. He explained that his belief or aim of teaching could hardly change, and he complained 'Sometimes they (students) say they need more time to talk in the classroom. I also try to make class interesting and have more discussion, but when it's time for them to speak, they don't talk too much'.

1 MT gives a negative answer. He is 38 years old with 15 years of teaching but no experience with SEN student. From his questionnaire, I see he gives 'no' answers to all the 5 questions in part 2. In part 3, he denies the role of students and parents in

helping teachers to learn. Moreover, he disapproves of school environment in facilitating reflection and disagrees that reflection can help personal development. All of these imply his negative position in reflection. Since he does not write anything on open-ended questions, and no observation or interview is followed with him after collecting questionnaire, it is difficult to know in depth what he thinks of reflection.

Table 3.5

Question	Frequency		Percentage (%)
5. The size of class affects reflective teaching.	Strongly Agree	9	27
	Agree	18	55
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	5	15
	Disagree	1	3
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total		33	100

This question is designed to find out if the number of students influences reflective teaching. The majority of participants give positive answers (82%), implying the preference for small class. During my interviews, teachers give similar answers, such as:

--from a MT: "Yes, students know more in smaller class. And same for me as I have more chances to talk to each kids in a smaller class."

--from a ST: "Yes. Here I have more personal contact with kids. I also know well about their family. When there's problem, I know their special needs and where they suffer from."

5 participants choose to be neutral, 3 of them are MT with class size 23-27; while 2 of them are ST with class size 4-8. Since usually there are around 4-10 pupils per class in this special school, it might appear to them that class size is not a concern to reflective teaching. In regard to the 3 MT, they may feel satisfied with their class size.

1 ST gives a negative answer. He is 36 years old with 11 years of teaching and he has 6 students in his class. He works in a school for intellectually disabled, outside Prague in the northeast Czech Republic. His questionnaire is collected by post and there is no observation or interview with him. From the questionnaire I see he gives 'yes' answers to questions 1-3 and question 5 in part 2. In part 3, he thinks highly of the role of students, parents and colleagues in helping teachers to learn. Moreover, he favours his school environment in facilitating reflection and strongly agrees that

reflection can help personal development. All of these imply his positive attitude towards reflection, which might result in his disagreement on statement that ‘the size of class affects reflective teaching’.

Table 3.6

Question	Frequency		Percentage (%)
6. Teachers do not have extra time to reflect on their teaching practice.	Strongly Agree	0	0
	Agree	3	9
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	8	24
	Disagree	18	55
	Strongly Disagree	4	12
Total		33	100

This question is set to see whether time is a concern for teachers to reflect on their teaching. Many of respondents (22 out of 33) disagree with the statement, implying that they do not think time is a constraint for reflection. Moreover, all of them (22) reply yes to question 2 of part 2 (Do you evaluate or reflect on yourself often?). 20 out of 22 reply yes to question 1 of part 2 (Are you aware of reflective practices in teaching?). 17 out of 22 reply yes to question 3 of part 2 (Are you used to making changes in your approach towards teaching strategy/method?) and 16 out of 22 reply yes to question 4 of part 2 (Do you use any specific strategy/method for reflecting your teaching?) This indicates their general positive view on reflection.

1 teacher during interview explains ‘my colleague discussed with me when filling the questionnaire and she also agreed we have time to reflect. It can be in a very casual way, right? Such as chatting with colleagues during break time, or sometimes when I have a cup of tea at home, I think about my teaching and my students.’

On the other hand, 3 participants (1 MT and 2 ST) agree with this statement. Noticeably, this MT chooses ‘agree’ to all 12 questions in part3 and writes his suggestion for question 13 ‘Any ideas and suggestions are limited by low financial support of education system’. During the interview with 1 ST, she mentions ‘we don’t have much time, only 10 minutes short break. And we have meetings and have to fill in forms of curriculum reform for this September. We’re too busy and I feel teachers are isolated.’ Furthermore, it could be argued that due to the different understanding of reflection on teaching (formal or informal, reflection in or on action), 8 respondents remain detached from this statement.

Table 3.7

Question	Frequency		Percentage (%)
7. Parents can help teachers to learn.	Strongly Agree	3	9
	Agree	18	55
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	6	18
	Disagree	5	15
	Strongly Disagree	1	3
Total		33	100

This question is designed to find out whether teachers think parents have a role in reflective teaching. Many of respondents (21 out of 33) give positive answers. A lot more ST (13 out of 15, 87%) than MT (8 out of 18, 44%) recognize the importance of parents in their teaching. The reason might be that ST maintains a closer relationship with students and their parents. 1 ST says during the interview

Parents know more about than teachers because they stay longer time with their kids. They know what's the better way to handle. Our school has twice a year a meeting called 'Komplexni Hodnoceni' (complex evaluation). During the meeting, we can meet parents, students, psychologist and rehabilitater and we get useful information from parents.

Besides, experience of teaching SEN students also significantly affects teacher-parent relationship. 19 out of 27(70%) teachers with SEN experience answer yes.

On the contrary, 6 respondents (5 MT and 1 ST) deny the role of parents in helping teachers to learn. 1 MT says during the interview:

Parents eh... I am not sure. During meeting with parents 3 weeks ago, some parents just sat there listening to me talking. A few parents complained to me saying I should not give essay as homework to their children, as they are too small to have their ideas.

Table 3.8

Question	Frequency		Percentage (%)
8. Teachers can improve their teaching by learning from their colleagues.	Strongly Agree	15	45
	Agree	16	48
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	2	6
	Disagree	0	0
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total		33	100

This question is designed to find out whether teachers think their colleagues have a role in reflective teaching. Almost all participants answer yes (93%). 1 newly graduated teacher comments:

I just started teaching last year and many of my colleagues are experienced teachers. I said before I've gained a lot during the discussion with my colleagues after class. And I've done 5 times observation classes this year and I find it's quite useful. But some teachers said no to me when I asked to observe their class. They think students behave differently if someone is observing."

2 ST are unprejudiced. During the interview with one of them, she explains:

I'm not sure but I think they could if they do. I got help from Czech and foreign students who came to practice teaching in my class. Our school just started this year observing class for each teacher. I hope it helps.

Table 3.9

Question	Frequency		Percentage (%)
9. Reflective teaching is encouraged and facilitated in my school.	Strongly Agree	3	9
	Agree	22	67
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	6	18
	Disagree	2	6
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total		33	100

This question is designed to examine whether the environment facilitates reflective teaching. Many of respondents (25 out of 33) give positive answers. There is no big difference between MT (14 out of 18, 78%) and ST (11 out of 15, 73%). 1 MT says 'It's very much supported by the headmaster. He thinks observing class is very important and he encourages every teacher to do so'.

1 MT and 1 ST disagree. The analysis for this MT can be found under Table 3.4. As for the ST, she works in a special school of physical disability. She is 28 years old with 6 years teaching experience. Since she does not write anything on open-ended questions, and no observation or interview is followed with her after collecting questionnaire, it is difficult to know why she is not in favour of her school environment.

Table 3.10

Question	Frequency		Percentage (%)
10. Training is necessary for teachers to know about and practice reflection.	Strongly Agree	2	6
	Agree	20	61
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	9	27
	Disagree	1	3
	Strongly Disagree	1	3
Total		33	100

This question is set to find out what teachers think about the training in relation to improving their teaching. Many of respondents (22 out of 33) give positive answers. The participant who strongly disagrees explains during the interview:

This year we had a workshop on 'modern teaching' and it's terrible! They kept on saying 'make students feel good' and 'get students more involved into teaching' and it's nothing new! When I ask a question, I'd expect many of my students to answer but they don't. So I don't need someone to tell me I should ask students opinions, I need someone to give me an advice how to make them talk if they really don't want to, and they almost never want to.

Participants mention not only that the training should be practical-oriented, but also they should have freedom to choose to go or not (instead of arranged by schools which is usually obligatory). For those choose to be neutral, 7 out of 9 answer no to question 5 of part2 (Have you had any training in reflective teaching?). It could be argued that once they are given the appropriate training suitable to their needs, they would give favourable replies to this statement.

Table 3.11

Question	Frequency		Percentage (%)
11. Reflecting regularly on teaching practices is essential to improve the standards in teaching.	Strongly Agree	7	21
	Agree	24	73
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	3
	Disagree	1	3
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total		33	100

Table 3.12

Question	Frequency		Percentage (%)
12. Reflection helps personal development.	Strongly Agree	15	45
	Agree	16	48
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	3
	Disagree	1	3
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total		33	100

The above 2 questions are designed to find out in general, what do teachers think about reflection in terms of improving teaching standards and personal development. Almost all participants give positive answers (94% in question 11 and 93% in question 12).

1 MT (analysis for this MT can be found under Table 3.4) disagrees with statement 12 but agrees with statement 11, while 1 ST disagrees with statement 11 but strongly agrees with statement 12. She is 32 with 2 years of teaching in a school for intellectually disabled, outside Prague in the northeast Czech Republic. Her questionnaire is collected by post and it looks she has a fair view on reflection. For the last question of suggestion, she writes 'the current system suites me well'. Since no observation or interview can be done with her, it is difficult to know why she is not in favour of statement 11.

4.4 Open-ended questions

In the questionnaire, 3 open-ended questions (2 in part 2 and 1 in part 3) are designed, inviting participants to give more details or allowing them to express their viewpoints if they want to. Similarities and dissimilarities from their replies are shown in summary form in the following tables with a theme emerging from the responses. The full transcript of the responses can be found in Appendix B.

Part2 Question4 (see Table4.1): Do you use any specific strategy/method for reflecting your teaching? If yes, please indicate what kind(s) of strategy/method.

22 out of 33 participants answer this question, 13 from mainstream schools and 9 from special schools. Most strategy and method they use are quite matching. For instance, they both think highly of the role their colleagues and students can play in improving their teaching.

Noticeably, MT highlights the method of attending colleagues' classes and substitute teaching; whereas ST highlights the parents' role in their teaching practice. The result is shown below.

Table 4.1

Themes	Responses
Collaboration with colleagues	Cooperation/Consultation/Group work/ Discussion with colleagues/ Workshop/ Exchanging experience/ Observations of my colleagues or them observing me/ Substitute teaching/Attending colleagues' classes/ Comparison between classes of the same grade with other teachers
Learn from students	I ask the students/ Students evaluate the work/ Discussion with students / Pupils evaluate the classes/ Pupils self-evaluation (direct or via symbols)/ We talk to children and ask about their feeling /MOTIVATION/Notice the necessities of my students/ Dialogue with students/ Written assessment of the pupils.
Self-evaluation	I think about the class of the day and week/ Mind map/ Reflective diary/ Teacher's portfolio /Stories/ Yourself evaluation / Relax/Critical thinking / Assessment of teaching methods/Making notes into my class preparation
Learn from parents	Talking to the parents/ Regular meeting with parents of the students
Research	Doing a research on discipline in my classes

Part2 Question 5 (see Table4.2): Have you had any training in reflective teaching? If yes, please indicate what kind(s) of training (for example: workshop, conference, school-based training etc.).

9 out of 33 participants answer this question, 4 from mainstream schools and 5 from special schools. The result is shown below.

Table 4.2

Themes	Responses
Workshop	Participation on practically oriented workshops/ Emotional & social development of personality in the educational& pedagogic process/Huuti Go! I am the lecturer of this practice/ How to manage your practice, stress and collapse/ BASAL stimulation/Afozie /Alienism psychiatry/SPPG/ Chirofonetika
Seminar	Seminar at the international school of Prague/ In JÚŠ seminar.
School-based training	As a part of didactical seminars at my university.
Continuous education.	Several times in the scope of continuous education.

Part3 Question 13 (see Table4.3): Do you have any suggestion to make about teachers' in-service training in general?

22 out of 33 participants answer this question, 12 from mainstream schools and 10 from special schools. Most of their suggestions are quite similar. For example, they

admit the benefits of seminar and workshops but emphasise that it should be practical-oriented. Financial issue is also mentioned, possibly due to their not-well-paid job, which seems to be quite common for Czech teachers.

Particularly, 1 MT suggests less administration work for teachers so that they have more time and strength for further education. Issues such as improvement on an educational law and SEN pupils are mentioned by teachers from special schools. The result is shown below.

Table 4.3

Themes	Responses
Continuous education	/Possibility of 'Atestace' (certified improvement of education) / Testing or exams to increase the teachers qualification to maintain motivation and certain level/ Further education/ Every 5 years, give teachers 1 year vacancy or holiday for study and enough money;-)
Seminar and workshop	Regular seminars/Attending model classes (practical classes, not theoretic)/ Seminars and lectures for those interested/ More practical seminars are needed, not only theory/ They should have more free choices and be educated not only in their subjects but also in things of life around/ To have choice to attend sessions which are interesting or improve teaching.
Learn from colleagues	The support of colleagues and other staff, reflect on the classes together/ Attending different types of classes/ Practical demonstration by experienced teachers
School cooperation	Cooperation with universities/ To get the experience from other European schools/ Part-time job at expert-institution.
Increase financial support	Any ideas and suggestions are limited by low financial support of education system/ Every 5 years, give teachers 1 year vacancy or holiday for study and enough money;-)
Less administration	Less administration for teachers
Shooting a video 'ETUDE'.	This is how we can react directly in praxis.
Policy	To improve or put more details to law 563/2004.
SEN pupils	To give students the maximum where they can go alone. Not look at them as ill but as equal to normal persons who can be integrated without problem into the society.
No comment	Given the current conditions and the capacity and capabilities of the school-no/ No, the current system suites me well/ At the moment, I have nothing in my mind

4.5 Interview

4 out of 33 participants (2 from mainstream schools and 2 from a special school) are invited for interview after filling questionnaire. Due to the language concern, all interviews are conducted with teachers who can speak English. The aim of interview

is to clarify or double-check their answers. Similarities and dissimilarities from the interview are shown in summary form in the following table with a theme emerging from the responses. The full transcript of the interview can be found in Appendix C.

Table 5

Themes	Responses
Aim of teaching: *Facilitating *Way of thinking *Social skills *Knowledge of life	--"I don't think teaching is all about giving students knowledge, because they will soon forget everything. I am trying to change their way of thinking...have a different point of view...and also the knowledge to think about the world." --"It's not about giving knowledge only. They need to learn how to behave well and learn social skills so they can live well after school education." --"Not only about the subjects I teach, but I want to influence them by giving them the knowledge of life, personality so that they can know themselves better in this society."
Learn from colleagues *Quite helpful *Build trust *Not sure	--"I've gained a lot during the discussion with my colleagues after class. I find observation classes quite useful. But some teachers said no to me when I asked to observe their class. They think students behave differently if someone is observing." --"And you don't talk with everyone in the school, only to the colleagues you can share." --"I'm not sure but I think they could if they do. Our school just started this year observing class for each teacher. I hope it helps."
Learn from students *Change way of teaching *Learn a lot from evaluation *Better than teachers! *Enrichment in life	--"Students might help me change some specific way of teaching, but the belief or the aim I have in teaching can hardly change." --"We have students evaluation form. Students do it with me and I really learn a lot from my pupils." --"Here (the special school) kids help each other because they can understand each other. They're happy, open and thinking about everything. Sometimes I'm surprised by the questions they ask, because they're so mature and considerate. They're better than teachers! " --"Actually I'm not here to teach. They're here for us and we learn from them: humanity, human being and how to cope with life. They can feel your problem much better. And then we realize how much they can give others. This is enrichment in your life."

<p>Learn from parents</p> <p>*Not sure</p> <p>*Quite helpful</p> <p>*Parents know more than teachers</p>	<p>-- "I am not sure. During meeting with parents 3 weeks ago, some parents just sat there listening to me talking. A few parents complained to me saying I should not give essay as homework to their children, as they are too small to have their ideas."</p> <p>--"We have regular meeting with parents and I think their comments during our meeting and discussion are quite helpful."</p> <p>--"Parents know more about than teachers because they stay longer time with their kids. They know what's the better way to handle. We get useful information from parents."</p>
<p>Small size class facilitates reflective teaching</p>	<p>--"It's really different if you teach a class of 15 students (like the language class) and a class of 31. With bigger class, I find it difficult to ask about students' opinions."</p> <p>--"Students know more in smaller class. And same for me as I have more chances to talk to each kids in a smaller class."</p> <p>--"I have more personal contact with kids. I also know well about their family. When there's problem, I know their special needs and where they suffer from."</p>
<p>Time for reflection</p> <p>*Yes, casual way</p> <p>*Young, reflect more</p> <p>*No time. Isolated</p> <p>*No time and space</p>	<p>--"Yes, we have time to reflect. It can be in a very casual way, such as chatting with colleagues during break time, or sometimes when I have a cup of tea at home. Maybe we are young teachers and as we don't know too much of teaching, so we reflect more?"</p> <p>--"We don't have much time, only 10 minutes short break. We're too busy and I feel teachers are isolated."</p> <p>--"We don't have time and we don't have space."</p>
<p>School environment</p> <p>*Support from headmaster</p> <p>*Eye-opening through 'non-Czech'</p>	<p>--"It's very much supported by the headmaster. He thinks observing class is very important and he encourages every teacher to do so."</p> <p>--"Our school just started this year observing class for each teacher. I hope it helps."</p> <p>--"Talking with visitors like you is always good experience. Czech school and teachers are sort of narrow-minded, so it's always eye-opening experience when we see the new ways or possibilities through 'non-Czech'."</p>

In-service training *Practical-oriented *More choices and freedom to choose	-- "This year we had a workshop on 'modern teaching' and it's terrible! They kept on saying 'make students feel good' and 'get students more involved into teaching' and it's nothing new! I don't need someone to tell me I should ask students opinions, I need someone to give me an advice how to make them talk if they really don't want to." --"Teachers should be more educated but should get more choices. If I think the workshop is going to help me or someone tells me it's a good choice, I'll go there." --"It depends. I'd like to know how to improve my teaching but I need to have freedom to choose, not to be told by someone else."
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4.6 Observation *— what?*

12 observations are done in 7 schools (5 mainstream and 2 special schools located in Prague) between early May and mid June 2007.

--9 out of 12 observations are in mainstream schools and 4 out these 9 classes include SEN students.

--3 out of 12 observations are in special schools (1 time in a school for intellectually disabled and 2 times in a school for physically disabled).

--8 lessons are conducted in the language of Czech and 4 in English. No interpreters are used in Czech lessons.

--Each observation lasts for 1 lesson (45 minutes).

--'Passive presence' and 'limited interaction' observations (Hoepfl, 1997:53) are adopted.

--Observational notes are used, without photograph, audio or videotapes.

--As mentioned in Chapter 3, the guideline of 'Characteristics of an Inclusive and Learning-friendly Classroom' (UNESCO Bangkok, 2005:24) is adhered to in my observation and the followings are some general findings:

- Relationships *✓*

The relationship between teachers and students is a bit friendly and warmer in primary schools than in upper secondary schools. Students salute teachers before and after class. They do not wear school uniforms but change shoes to sandals after coming to school. They sit in order and cannot eat in class. They raise hands and ask for permission for things like raising/answering questions, going to the toilet etc. Surprisingly, students (from grade 1) can bring mobile into classroom and I see one time a primary teacher gives a stern warning to a pupil who fails to switch off his

mobile. For most of the time, teachers dominate the class: students are used to listening to what teachers say and hesitant to ask questions, unless they are requested to do so. Discussion among students is seldom seen. This seems to be common especially in upper secondary schools, whereas in primary schools, the interaction between teacher and students is livelier.

- Who is in the classroom?

Heterogeneous group is seen in most observations: teachers, assistant teachers, Czech and non-Czech students and SEN students are in the classroom. WOSO (2004:38-39) identifies some challenges in handling SEN students: Learning versus caring/Compensating versus stimulating; Individual learning versus cooperative learning; Identity development and ethnic handling; Differences between target groups and schools.

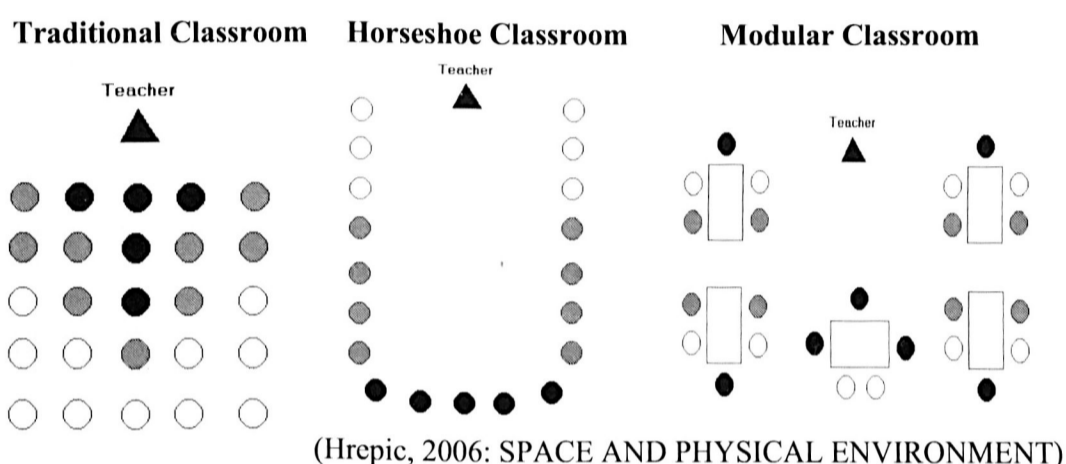
3 observations are carried out in 2 special schools. I see smaller class with 4-6 students per class and teachers have a closer relationship with students. 4 observations are done in 3 mainstream schools where SEN students (physical disability, dyslexia, down-syndrome) are included. I see bigger class with 20-25 students usually. With the help of teaching assistant, SEN students all actively participate in the classroom: they learn, play and talk with other students. Their individual learning is stimulated and facilitated by cooperative learning. I observe one Czech language class including a down-syndrome girl. The teacher gives her chance to do exercise in the chalkboard and discuss with others students. She also chooses which student to read the text. Sometimes different task is given to her, which the teacher thinks appropriate to her level. She smiles and other students are happy when talking with her too.

Pollard (2002:341) comment on the consequences of classroom practices to social inclusion:

It is recognized that the provision of social justice requires both careful reflection on the social consequences of routine classroom practices and the development of constructive whole-school policies. Concerned teachers will want to consider how to provide the best possible educational experiences for all children, including any groups that are particularly vulnerable to inequalities in provision (Maden, 1999).

- Seating arrangement

Most classrooms are designed into either 'Traditional' or 'Horseshoe' setting (see illustrations below), the latter is often seen in language class and class in the primary schools. 'Modular' setting is seen once but the teacher does not think it good for students and says she will change to 'Horseshoe' setting.



Comparatively speaking, I feel 'Horseshoe' setting facilitates the interaction between teachers and students by narrowing down the distance among them (for instance, there is closer eye or body contact). Moreover, it is easier for teachers to monitor the classroom and make changes when necessary. During some classes, I see teachers put those students they think more attention needs to be given in the front roll of the classroom, and encourage them to get more involved in learning. But the attention given to shy and outgoing student is not well handled from most of my observations, the latter usually getting more chances to ask and answer questions.

- Teaching resources, Learning materials

Multimedia is not often used in class. Most teachers rely on books, pictures, tape recorder and chalkboard. For students, they use textbooks and excise books. I see twice when teachers use computer/projector and 'smart-board', which are welcomed by students.

- Evaluation

Test and quiz are more observed in upper secondary schools than in primary schools. A few teachers write classroom portfolio from their observation as a way to evaluate their students.

Chapter 5 Evaluation

5.0 Overview

In this Chapter, general findings from Chapter 4 are presented and evaluated by linking Chapter 2 of literature review.

5.1 Teachers' awareness of reflection

Among 33 participants, most of them (88%) say they are aware of reflective practices in teaching and many of them (67%) claim they use certain method(s) to reflect on their teaching. The result is against my first research assumption, which says "Most teachers are not aware of reflective practices in teaching, but practically have been doing it during their work without employing any specific method". Furthermore, all respondents except one (97%) do evaluation or reflection often, and the majority of respondents (79%) say they are used to making changes in their approach towards teaching strategy/method. However, only a few respondents (30%) admit they have training in reflective teaching.

- **Gender**

10 male teachers participate in my research less than half of their counterparts (23 female). The figure of 2001-2002 shows that the percentage of female teachers in special schools is 75.83%, in primary schools 85.80% and in secondary schools 66% (Novacek, 2003:8). Since the percentage of female teachers is substantially larger than male, the comparison in gender is not done in my study.

- **In comparison with mainstream teachers (MT) and special teachers (ST):**

--There is no obvious difference in their awareness of reflective practices in teaching. Many of them from both school types also think reflective teaching is encouraged and facilitated in their schools.

--MT is less used to making changes in their approach towards teaching strategy/method than ST.

--More MT than ST use certain method(s) to reflect on their teaching.

--Less MT than ST have training in reflective teaching.

--A lot more ST than MT recognize the importance of parents in their teaching.

- If experience of teaching SEN students is taken into consideration:
 - There is no noticeable difference in using strategy/method to reflect on teaching. Many of them, either with or without SEN experience claim they use some method(s) despite no training in reflective teaching before.
 - Those with experience are far more aware of reflective practices in teaching than those without experience.
 - Those with experience are more likely used to making changes in their approach towards teaching strategy/method, than those without experience.
 - Those with experience are much more aware of the importance of parents in their teaching.

The above findings may prove my second and third assumption: “Some teachers have already known about reflective teaching and purposefully combined reflection strategy into their work”, and “Reflective teaching practice is more carried out with special school teachers or teachers having experience of working with SEN children, than those in mainstream schools or having no SEN experience”.

- Number of students in the class may play a role. Class size of 11-20 students sees relatively higher percentage in teachers’ willingness to make changes in their teaching strategy/method, as well as using certain reflective method(s) and more training on reflective teaching.
- Age and teaching experience may play a role:
 - Nearly full awareness of reflective practices in teaching is seen in those who are below 26 or have less than 5 years teaching, as well as those who are above 45 or with over 14 years teaching. These 2 groups are also reported to have more training in reflective teaching.
 - Generally, the older and longer teaching experience, the more likely used to making changes in the approach towards teaching strategy/method. They are also more likely to use certain method(s) to reflect on the teaching.

5.2 Teachers’ opinions on reflection

- Attitude and Aim

Most participants (82%) think that attitude towards teaching practice influences the level of reflection. Moreover, almost all of them (97%) agree that changes in teaching

strategy/method have to be made based on changes in the needs of students. In the first open-ended question of reflection method(s), teachers provide different ways of doing self-reflection. Particularly, 1 MT mentions her research on discipline in her class. The findings are in accordance with the notion of reflective teaching (Pollard, 2002), which requires that teachers should be open-minded, responsible and wholehearted towards teaching (2002:17-18). More importantly, a reflective teacher understands that teaching is a cyclical process where he/she monitors, evaluates and revises his/her own practice continuously, towards a higher-quality standard of teaching (2002: 15-16).

The aim of teaching sees a marked discrepancy from the respondents, resulting from the deficiency in the design of question. Nonetheless, the following interviews help clarify the ambiguity. Some teachers believe that to teacher is to facilitate learning, not only by teaching the subjects in the curriculum, but also by showing students the different perspective of approaching a problem-the knowledge of life. 'The aims and consequences of classroom practice...are any teacher's prime responsibility. However, classroom work cannot be isolated from the influence of the wider society and a reflective teacher must therefore consider both spheres' (Pollard, 2002:14).

- The Role of Students

Almost all participants give positive replies saying that they learn from their students (91%). As students are teachers' 'frontline stakeholders' (Easley, 2006:37), a reflective teacher would have to rely on his/her students, the most accessible human resources to carry out 'evidence-based classroom enquiry to support the progressive development of higher standards of teaching' (Pollard, 2002:16). In replying to the open-ended question of reflection method(s), various ways of learning from students are mentioned by teachers. Interviews from the teachers also support the importance of students in teaching, for instance 1 teacher says, "Whatever I do or behave is reflected by children and vice versa. They motivate me and I can change my strategy

At the same time, my classroom observations show that the relationship between teachers and students is found to be mostly dominated by the former. Students are used to listening to and taking down what teachers say. Discussion among students is seldom observed. Compared with the situation in upper secondary schools, the

interaction between teacher and students is livelier in primary schools. Notably, heterogeneous group is seen during my observation and special educational needs is well attended to.

- The Role of Parents

With regard to their opinions on whether parents can help teachers to learn, remarkable difference is seen between mainstream and special teachers, and between teachers with and without experience of teaching SEN students. As analysed in Chapter 4, this is possibly due to the closer relationship between teachers, SEN students and their parents. 1 special teacher notes in the interview “Parents know more about than teachers because they stay longer time with their kids. They know what’s the better way to handle. We get useful information from parents.”

Based on trust and comfort, Easley (2006:37) defines the interaction between teachers and parents as ‘Proactive Reflection’. She believes it is the best kind of reflection, because ‘teachers get valuable information from the parents [to] help meet their children’s needs, [and they] become partners in children’s education’. Vincent (2000:131) maintains that parents have both a right and duty to be involved in education:

As critical friend, maintaining close links with the school and supporting its work, but not unquestioningly; as alert actors involved in decisions concerning aspects of local and national policy; and as informed individuals closely involved in monitoring their own child’s education and supporting them at home.

- The Role of Colleagues

Nearly all participants say they learn from their colleagues (93%). Various ways of collaborating with colleagues are mentioned by teachers, in replying to the open-ended question of reflection method(s). In addition, learning from colleagues is brought up as a suggestion for in-service training. During interviews, teachers also highlight the help they get from their colleague but raise the issue of building trust with each other.

Previous studies (Cruickshank and Applegate 1981, Gimenez 1999, Gilbert and Trudel 2005) have proved the colleagues' role in helping teachers to learn. Pollard (2002: 20) articulates:

'The value of engaging in reflective activity is almost always enhanced if it can be carried out in association with other colleagues, be they trainees, teachers or tutors', because 'Aims are thus clarified, experiences are shared, language and concepts for analysing practice are refined, the personal insecurities of innovation are reduced, evaluation becomes reciprocal and commitments are affirmed. Moreover, openness, activity and discussion gradually weave the values and self of individuals into the culture and mission of the school or course'.

- Time and Class Size

Many of respondents (67%) claim that time is a not constraint for reflection, whereas 24% remains neutral and the rest say no time for reflection. As explained in Chapter 4, the discrepancy may arise from the different understanding of reflection on teaching (formal or informal, reflection in or on action). Hence, the following interviews provide clarification on the time issue. Van Manen (1991, cited in Galvez-Martin, 1997b: 3) asserts that reflection can take place only if pre-service teachers and teachers in general have the time to think about their teaching in terms of what was done, what could have been done and what should be the next step to take. In addition, Gimenez (1999:136) argues that according to findings from teacher thinking research: teachers do think about their work, perhaps they do not do it systematically, or they do things that externally appear to have been routinized.

Concerning whether class size affects reflection on teaching, the majority of participants give positive answers (82%). Previous studies (Culbertson and Yan 2003, Ramanathan and Bruning, 2003) show that teachers prefer a small size class, which makes it easier for teaching as well as learning. In Nxumalo's (2006:80) study, teachers recommend a class of 20 students or less as more appropriate for successful inclusion. During my interviews, teachers also give similar answers. For instance, a mainstream teacher says: "It's really different if you teach a class of 15 students (like the language class) and a class of 31. With bigger class, I find it difficult to ask about students' opinions."

Closely related with class size is the classroom setting. 'Horseshoe' arrangement is mostly seen during my observations. Hrepic (2006) explains the advantage of 'Horseshoe' setting 'Such an arrangement provides for each student equivalent visual access to most other students and the teacher...According some research, this arrangement results not only in greater participation, but also in wider participation than the traditional arrangement'.

- Training and School Environment

Many of respondents (67%) consider training of importance to know about and practice reflection. They give a list of reflective methods/strategies they learn from previous trainings. Nevertheless, both in the open-ended questions and during interviews, they rightly stress the practicality of in-service training and the options to attend. This is because in-service teacher's learning is problem-centred, which is identified as one of the characteristics of adult learning (Knowles 1987, cited in Bartz and Calabrese, 1991:1). Negative experience from unpractical workshop or seminars results in teacher's frustration, which may lead to their hesitance to take part in further trainings, especially those obligatorily arranged by schools.

A good number of participants (76%) give positive evaluation of their schools, in terms of encouraging and facilitating reflective teaching. During the interviews, they mention the role of school headmaster in promoting reflection. Take class observation for example. One young tutor teacher of a public secondary school says his request to observe some older teachers' class is turned down, because they think students would behave differently if he were in the class. Whereas during my visit to a private secondary school and a public basic school, observation colleague's class is not only very much advocated, but also carried out as a school policy by the headmaster. The private school, set up after the collapse of the communist rule in Czech Republic, is characterized for its strong and young faculty aged at 34 averagely. And the basic school is famous for its reform on creating 'student-centred classroom'. I assume the redefined relationship between students and teachers; between young and old teachers facilitates learning from teachers themselves. Gimenez (1999:140) comments 'I would like to think that reflection is better carried out in collaboration, but it is also necessary to be aware of the limitations of this type of work in schools. Institutions

would have an important role in fostering reflection by enabling collective reflection to take place'

As suggestions for in-service training, they refer to the cooperation with university and having continuous education. Noticeably, 1 MT suggests less administration work for teachers. Additionally, 1 ST recommends the idea exchange with European schools and with non-Czech visitors (such as Erasmus Mundus SEN students).

- General Opinion and Suggestions

Almost all participants give positive replies (93-94%) when they are asked if they think reflection is essential to improve the teaching standards and if reflection helps personal development. As declared by Pollard (2002:4), 'The process of reflective teaching supports the development and maintenance of professional expertise. We can conceptualise successive levels of expertise in teaching'.

General suggestions are given with regard to in-service training. Besides those mentioned above, participants also refer to increasing financial support to education, improving law 563/2004 and changing attitude to SEN students.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.0 Overview

In this Chapter, I review my research focusing on the motivation for study and the questions derived from it. General findings from the research are presented and evaluated including the limitations. Suggestions for future research are given, followed by the recommendations for teachers, school administrators, researchers and policy-makers.

6.1 Review of my research

I started this MA Erasmus Mundus Special Education Needs (SEN) program in August 2006. During the following 1-year time, I have been studying in UK, Netherlands and Czech Republic, which gives me opportunities to see different perspectives on educational policy and practice in European countries. Particularly during the stay in Holland, my interest has developed in the area of reflection owing to the considerable benefits I have gained from it. The difference between 'guided teaching' in China versus 'facilitative teaching' in Europe provides me with inspiration on previous readings and essay writings on reflection in learning, teaching and personal development. In addition, after coming to study in Prague, I have noticed marked similarities between Chinese and Czech teachers that ultimately drive my attention of research on reflective practices in teaching.

In my research, I would like to find out if reflective practices exist in Czech schools (mainstream and special) and whether teachers are aware of it. Besides, I want to know about teachers' opinions on reflection and conditions that may influence reflection in teaching. Consequently, I hope to create awareness and orientate the importance of reflective practices in teaching, as well as giving suggestions for the possibility of improving teaching and in-service training.

6.2 Research findings

Results show that most teachers in my study are aware of reflective practices in teaching and many of them use certain method(s) to reflect on their teaching. Almost all respondents often do evaluation or reflection on themselves, and the majority of them are used to making changes in their approach towards teaching strategy/method.

However, only a few respondents admit they have training in reflective teaching. Remarkably, special teachers or teachers with experience of teaching SEN students are more aware of reflective practices in teaching. They are more likely used to making changes in their approach towards teaching strategy/method.

The initial findings fall against my first assumption ('Most teachers are not aware of reflective practices in teaching, but practically have been doing it during their work without employing any specific method'), yet prove my second and third assumptions: ('Some teachers have already known about reflective teaching and purposefully combined reflection strategy into their work' and 'Reflective teaching practice is more carried out with special school teachers or teachers having experience of working with SEN children, than those in mainstream schools or having no SEN experience').

As for other conditions that may influence reflection, research shows that teachers prefer small-size class and are concerned about time for reflection. Moreover, age and teaching experience influence reflection: those who are below 26 or have less than 5 years teaching, as well as those who are above 45 or with over 14 years teaching have greater awareness and more training of reflective practices in teaching. Generally, the older and longer teaching experience, the more likely used to making changes in the approach towards teaching strategy/method.

In exploring teachers' opinions on reflection, I find:

--Most participants think that attitude towards teaching practice influences the level of reflection. Almost all of them agree that changes in teaching strategy/method have to be made based on changes in the needs of students. Even though the aim of teaching sees a marked discrepancy from the respondents, interviews help reveal some teachers are aware that teaching entails both curriculum knowledge and the 'knowledge of life'.

--Almost all participants give positive replies saying that they learn from their students and colleagues. Particularly, special teachers or teachers with experience of teaching SEN students think highly of the parents' role in their teaching.

Relationship between teachers and students is found to be mostly dominated by the former from my classroom observations. Students are used to listening to and taking

down what teachers say. Discussion among students is seldom observed. Notably, heterogeneous group is seen during my observation and special educational needs is well attended to.

--Many of respondents consider training of importance to know about and practice reflection, but strongly emphasize the practicality of in-service training and the options to attend. A good many of them give positive evaluation of their schools in terms of encouraging and facilitating reflective teaching, but raise the issue of building trust and confidence to promote reflection.

--Almost all participants answer positively when asked if they think reflection is essential to improve the teaching standards and if reflection helps personal development.

6.3 Evaluation of the study

6.3.1 Pilot study

I consider my research as a pilot study, through which I hope to determine more features of design for my future research in the field of reflective teaching. Light, Singer and Willett (1990, cited in Maxwell, 1996:45) argue 'no design is ever so complete that it cannot be improved by a prior, small-scale exploratory study. Pilot studies are almost always worth the time and effort. Carry out a pilot study if any facet of your design needs clarification'.

According to Maxwell (1996:44), pilot study 'can be focused more precisely on your own concern and theories...specifically to test your ideas or methods and explore their implications, or to inductively develop grounded theory'. Additionally, he (1996:45) notes that the particular use of pilot study in qualitative research is to:

Generate an understanding of the concepts and theories held by the people you are studying...it provides you with an understanding of the meaning that these phenomena and events have for the actors who are involved in them, and the perspectives that inform their actions. In a qualitative study, these meanings and perspectives should constitute a key component of your theory.

6.3.2 Limitations of the study

Mixed-methods approach is adopted to collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data by questionnaire, observation and interview. Categorising strategies (Maxwell, 1996:78-79), such as coding and thematic analysis, are used for data analysis, which means to “‘fracture’ (Strauss 1987, cited in Maxwell, 1996:78) the data and rearrange it into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts”. Nevertheless, limitations arise from my study should be taken into account, some of which have been discussed in Chapter 3 ‘Research environment’.

--Language and time are the biggest concerns when doing research in Prague where English is not an official language. It limits my research design and finally I opt for a small-scale questionnaire-based study, combining with a few observations and interviews. Reasonably, most questions in the questionnaire are designed as close-ended, which seems to be a more realistic option.

Language issue affects not only the questionnaire translation (including translation of replies to open-ended questions), but also the interview and observation. Since no interpreters are used, I only interview the teachers who can speak English. For observation, I feel less dependent on translation as I can ‘monitor both verbal and nonverbal cues’ (Hoepfl, 1997:53).

Moreover, if I go further into the issue of interpersonal relationship, I realize time is too short to build certain rapport with the teachers and schools. I believe this is particularly important for a foreigner like me to do a research in a foreign country. Even though I just do questionnaire with a few interviews and observations, it is still necessary to interact with head teachers and their colleagues, as well as teachers and their students, which is not as easy as it is imagined to be. Reason is that as people coming from different cultural background, there are always plenty of ‘invisibilities’ or ‘iceberg’ (Claasen, 2006a) I cannot foresee.

On the other hand, doing research in a foreign country provides a good opportunity and channel to involve myself into local culture and its people. What I have seen and learned as an ‘outsider’ would appeal to the people in their home country as this is

usually what they are ignorant of, or take for granted. In this sense, SEN program provides me with a platform for this cultural exchange.

--The ambiguity of some questions in the questionnaire may lead to different understanding of the respondents. For instance, what 'knowledge' refers to in question 'The aim of teaching is to give students as much knowledge as teachers know'.

--The sample size is small and except 1 school in the northeast Czech Republic, the other schools are all in Prague. Moreover, research does not include technical school (SOŠ) and vocational school (SOU), which along with gymnázium, form Czech upper secondary education. Interview on special school is done with only 1 school for physically disabled thus excluding school for intellectually disabled or school for sensory disabilities.

--Except 1 school outside Prague where questionnaire is collected by post, most questionnaires are completed at the same time by the colleagues of the teacher, whom I do observation and interview with. Yet despite the limitations this way of distributing the questionnaire have, it ensures a high response rate that all questionnaires are filled in and collected in time.

Due to the limitations mentioned above, there is no intention to generalize the findings 'beyond the specific settings studied' (Robson, 2002:177). Instead, the results from my pilot study would serve as a source of inspiration for future research in the field of reflective teaching. Maxwell (1996:97) argues:

External generalizability is often not a crucial issue for qualitative studies. Indeed, the value of a qualitative study may depend on its lack of external generalizability, in the sense of being representative of a larger population; it may provide an account of a setting or population that is illuminating as an extreme case or ideal type.

6.3.3 Implications for future research

According to the limitation listed above, I would like to suggest for future research: Firstly, enlarge the representativeness of the sample. This can be done by including more school types (either mainstream or special), or enhancing the geographic

distribution of school (both in and outside Prague). Next, questions need to be carefully formulated, leaving little room for ambiguity or misunderstanding. Thirdly, do interviews with teachers who can't speak English. Lastly, carry out a case study by doing in-depth, longitudinal examination on a reflective teacher, with whom to see how he/she integrates reflective practices into teaching. Likewise, an action research can be done with a less reflective teacher, with whom to see how his/her teaching can be improved by implementing reflective teaching.

6.4 Recommendations for future practice

In Chapter 1, I have talked about the similarities between Czech and Chinese teachers, which is one of the motivations of my study. As a concluding part of my dissertation, I would like to, based on my research findings, give the following recommendations:

For teachers, the importance of students, parents and colleagues in their teaching should be reiterated and equally paid attention to. Especially for mainstream teachers who have no teaching experience with SEN students, they ought to become more aware that students' parents can help improve their teaching. What they need to do is to tap the potentiality of parents and get them involved into the teaching and their children's learning.

For schools, the headmaster plays a key role in facilitating reflective teaching. In a reflection-friendly environment, the concerns raised by teachers can be largely dissolved on issues such as trust and confidence between colleagues, less administration work for teachers. For example, many teachers in my research talk about the benefit of observing their colleagues' class. Hence the headmaster can encourage this reflective practice by making it as a school regulation. Furthermore, organizing meetings for mainstream and special teachers or for local and foreign schools shall provide a brainstorming opportunity for reflection on teaching and benefit any party involved. In view of this, Erasmus Mundus SEN program provides a platform for Czech schools/teachers/students and 'outsiders' (foreign educational practitioners) to learn from each other. How to make full use of this platform can be further explored.

For researchers, they are expected to provide more practically oriented training for teachers, because “teacher knowledge is based on individual experience and is simply believed to be of value if it ‘works’ in practical situations” (Pollard, 2002:18). Educational research ‘has the potential to complement, contextualize and enhance the detailed and practical understandings of practicing teachers’ (2002:19). OECD (1982, cited in Strnadová, 2006) defines in-service training as ‘Education and training activities engaged in by primary and secondary school teachers and principals, following their initial professional certification, and intended mainly or exclusively to improve their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes in order that they can educate children more effectively’.

For policy-makers, teachers raise issues of increasing financial support and improving educational law. Day (1997) suggests that ‘those policy-makers and strategists who seek to understand teachers and contribute to their development must, therefore, conceptualise professional development and change as multidimensional, a dynamic interplay between different teachers’ histories, experience, environmental factors, career and lifelong learning cycles. Moreover, “Systemic policy-making agendas which involve ‘the adjudication of relatively scarce goods and services for the purposes of optimising (as distinct from maximising) the impact of educational benefits’ must be complemented by educative agendas for schooling which centre upon, ‘the pursuit of moral, intellectual and aesthetic virtues’ of teaching (Grimmett, 1995, cited in Day 1997)”.

To summarize, Pollard (2002:20) proclaims ‘we strongly advocate attempts to maximize the potential for collaboration between teachers, researchers and politicians. For such collaboration to be successful it must be based on a frank appreciation of each other’s strengths and weaknesses’. Therefore reflective teaching ‘calls for attempts to draw on the strengths of the knowledge of teachers, researchers and politician or policy-makers [to] overcome the weaknesses which exist in each position’.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

--Covering letter and introduction letter from Charles University

Vážení kolegové,

jmenuji se Ye Chen a pocházím z Číny. V současné době dokončuji diplomovou práci na Karlově Univerzitě – Pedagogické fakultě v rámci projektu Speciálních vzdělávacích potřeb. Tento program započal před 2 lety jako součást mezinárodního projektu „Erasmus Mundus“ sponzorovaného Evropskou komisí.

Práce se vztahuje k problematice „reflektivní praxe“ používané v učení. Požadavkem tohoto výzkumu je rozšířit poznatky o „reflektivní praxi“, a tak umožnit učitelům více využívat tuto metodu a zužitkovat tak lépe životní zkušenosti. Dovoluji si přiložit dvoustránkový dotazník k vyplnění a předem děkuji za váš čas při jeho zpracování.

Doufám, že na základě tohoto výzkumu bude možné zlepšit metody učení a služby vztahující se k pokračujícímu vzdělávání.

Veškeré informace získané z tohoto dotazníku jsou považovány za důvěrné. V případě dotazů mne prosím kontaktujte na telefonním čísle: 00420-774349066 nebo prostřednictvím emailu: cysandycn@gmail.com.

Velice Vám děkuji za spolupráci.

S pozdravem

Ye Chen

Vážení kolegové,

3. května 2007

Tímto potvrzuji, že pan Ye Chen je posluchačem evropského studijního programu Erasmus Mundus SEN. Dovoluji si Vás tímto požádat o poskytnutí podpory tomuto studentovi, pokud se na Vás obrátí ve věci výzkumu v rámci zpracování jeho diplomové práce.

Děkuji. S pozdravem Doc. PhDr. Jan Šiška, PhD.
Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Pedagogická fakulta

Email: jan.siska@pedf.cuni.cz

tel.: 221900279

--Questionnaire in English

Questionnaire on Reflective Practices in Teaching

Demographic data

1. Gender (please tick “√” the applicable box) Male
 Female
2. Age _____
3. Teaching experience (in years) _____
4. Type of school you work at now Mainstream school
(Please tick “√” the appropriate box) Special school
5. Number of students in your class _____
6. Experience of teaching student(s) with special educational needs Yes
(Please tick “√” the appropriate box) No

This questionnaire is designed to find out whether ‘reflective practices’ in teaching exist and whether teachers are aware of it. In ordinary understanding, reflection means a careful thought about something, which usually happened a while ago. The idea of using reflective practices is to improve the standards of teaching by evaluating teachers’ own teaching experiences, such as taking notes in the class on the class performance, issues, and students’ activity, inviting your colleague to observe your class and give feedback, the exchange of ideas with students’ parents during parents-teachers meetings, etc.

For each question below, please tick “√” the appropriate box for you.

1. Are you aware of reflective practices in teaching? Yes No
2. Do you evaluate or reflect on yourself often? Yes No
3. Are you used to making changes in your approach towards teaching strategy/method? Yes No
4. Do you use any specific strategy/method for reflecting your teaching? Yes No

If Yes, please indicate what kind(s) of strategy/method.

5. Have you had any training in reflective teaching? Yes No

If Yes, please indicate what kind(s) of training (for example: workshop, conference, school-based training etc.).

For each statement below, please tick “√” the most appropriate for you.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My attitude towards teaching practice influences the level of reflection.					
2. The aim of teaching is to give students as much knowledge as teachers know.					
3. Changes in teaching strategy/method have to be made based on changes in the needs of students.					
4. Students can help teachers to learn.					
5. The size of class affects reflective teaching.					
6. Teachers do not have extra time to reflect on their teaching practice.					
7. Parents can help teachers to learn.					
8. Teachers can improve their teaching by learning from their colleagues.					
9. Reflective teaching is encouraged and facilitated in my school.					
10. Training is necessary for teachers to know about and practice reflection.					
11. Reflecting regularly on teaching practices is essential to improve the standards in teaching.					
12. Reflection helps personal development.					

13. Do you have any suggestion to make about teachers' in-service training in general?

--Questionnaire in Czech

Dotazník vztahující se k Vzájemné výměně zkušeností v učení

1. Pohlaví (prosím zatrhněte) Muž
 Žena
2. Věk _____
3. Učitelská praxe (v letech) _____
4. Typ školy, ve které v současné době pracujete (prosím zatrhněte)
 Základní nebo střední škola
 Škola pro studenty se speciálními potřebami
5. Počet žáků ve třídě _____
6. Zkušenosti se studenty, kteří mají speciální vzdělávací potřeby (prosím zatrhněte) Ano
 Ne

Tento dotazník má zjistit, jestli učitelé o „reflexivní praxi“ vědí a jestli ji používají ve výuce. V běžném pojetí reflexe (odraz) znamená zamyšlení se nad něčím, co se stalo. Využívání „reflexivní praxe“ má vést ke zlepšení úrovně při výuce prostřednictvím zhodnocení profesní zkušenosti ostatních, formou psaní učitelského deníku, pozvání kolegů k účasti na hodině a posouzení použitých metod, dialog s rodiči studentů během pravidelných setkání, atd.

Pro každou z následujících otázek zatrhněte příslušné políčko.

1. Uvědomujete si „reflexivní praxi“ v učení? Ano Ne
2. Hodnotíte se, přemýšlíte často o sobě? Ano Ne
3. Jste zvyklí dělat změny v již zaběhlých strategiích/metodách? Ano Ne
4. Používáte nějakou konkrétní metodu/strategii reflexe při výuce? Ano Ne

V případě, že ano, napište o jakou metodu se jedná, stručně popište

5. Absolvoval/a jste nějaké školení, trénink (např. workshop, konference, seminář, atd.) zaměřený na získání více informací o možnostech reflexivní praxe? Ano Ne

V případě, že ano, stručně popište

Pro každou z následujících položek, prosím zatrhněte “√” tu, která nejvíce odpovídá vašemu názoru

	Souhla sím bez výhrady	Souhla sím	Nejsem ani pro ani proti	Nesouhla sím	Vůbec nesouhla sím
1. Můj postoj k učebním praktikám ovlivňuje úroveň reflexe					
2. Cílem výuky je předat studentům co možná nejvíce zkušeností a znalostí, které učitel má					
3. Změny v učebních strategiích a metodách by měly být založeny na změnách potřeb studentů					
4. Studenti mohou pomoci učiteli se rozvíjet					
5. Počet studentů ovlivňuje reflektivní metody učení					
6. Učitelé nemají čas navíc, aby přemýšleli o svých učebních postupech					
7. Rodiče mohou pomoci učiteli se rozvíjet					
8. Učitelé mohou zlepšit svůj styl výuky za pomoci využití postupů svých kolegů					
9. Reflektivní praxe výměny podporuje a usnadňuje výuku v naší škole					
10. Školení, trénink jsou pro učitele nezbytné, aby věděli jak tyto metody reflektivní praxe uplatňovat					
11. Pravidelné přemýšlení i učebních metodách je zásadní pro zlepšení standardu výuky					
12. Reflexe napomáhá osobnímu rozvoji člověka					
13. Máte nějakou představu/nápad, jak zlepšit pokračující vzdělávání učitelů?					

Appendix B: Excerpts from open-ended questions

MT-Mainstream Teacher ST-Special Teacher

Part2 Question 4: Do you use any specific strategy/method for reflecting your teaching? If yes, please indicate what kind(s) of strategy/method.

--MT1: Cooperation between the assistant and the teacher. Consultation about the performance of pupils when preparing work for 'weaker' pupils.

--MT2: Group work. Workshop.

--MT3: Question 'Do you understand?' Students evaluate the work at the end of the year.

-- MT4: I ask the students. I think about the class of the day/week.

-- MT5: I am making notes into my class preparation on what went well and on what was well received.

--MT8: Discussion with colleagues. Attending colleagues' classes. Discussion with students.

--MT9: Exchanging experience. Attending colleagues' classes. Assessment of teaching methods.

--MT 11: Discussion with students. Mind map.

--MT 12: As a part of my studies, I was writing a reflective diary, doing a research on discipline in my classes. And as the most useful method, I would mention observations (of my colleagues or them observing me).

--MT 13: Substitute teaching.

--MT 14: Substitute teaching. Pupils evaluate the classes. Teacher's portfolio.

--MT 15: Self-evaluation (direct or via symbols)-the pupils comment on the class and on the level of achieved abilities and knowledge. Comparison between classes of the same grade with other teachers. Substitute teaching.

--MT 16: There are various methods.

--ST1: Self-evaluation consultation with assistant and colleagues.

--ST2: Stories can help to explain how to solve certain situations. Sometimes, a situation keeps repeating itself, and then we should change the angle and try different solutions.

--ST3: Consultation with colleagues. Talking to the parents. Written assessment of the pupils.

--ST6: We talk to children and ask about their feeling and knowledge and use it in practice.

--ST9: MOTIVATION: whatever I do or behave is reflected by children and vice versa. They motivate me and I can change my strategy.

--ST10: I try to notice the necessities of my students, to be close to them, and find the way to explain to them learning in the way.

--ST11: Dialogue with students.

--ST12: Regular meeting with parents of the students, and consultation with colleagues.

--ST14: Yourself evaluation. Relax. Dialogue. Cooperation. Critical thinking.

Part2 Question 5: Have you had any training in reflective teaching? If yes, please indicate what kind(s) of training (for example: workshop, conference, school-based training etc.).

- MT4: Seminar at the international school of Prague. Every debate and sharing with other teachers is beautiful.
- MT5: Participation on practically oriented workshops.
- MT12: School-based training (as a part of didactical seminars at my university).
- MT16: Several times in the scope of continuous education.

- ST2: Emotional & social development of personality in the educational& pedagogic process.
- ST3: Emotional & social development of personality in the educational& pedagogic process.
- ST6: Huuti Go! I am the lecturer of this practice.
- ST13: In JÚŠ seminar.
- ST14: How to manage your practice, stress and collapse. BASAL stimulation. Afozie. Special course. Alienism psychiatry. SPPG. Chirofonetika.

Part3 Question 13: Do you have any suggestion to make about teachers' in-service training in general?

- MT2: Less administration for teachers-they will have more time and strength for further education.
- MT3: Regular seminars. Possibility of 'Atestace' (certified improvement of education). Cooperation with universities. Part-time job at expert-institution.
- MT4: Introduce some testing of teachers and the possibility of exams increasing the teachers qualification to maintain motivation and certain level.
- MT6: Further education such as studying at university, Ph.D. exams
- MT8: Attending model classes (practical classes, not theoretic)
- MT10: Example: I don't need someone to tell me I should ask them their opinions or try to force them speak. I need someone to give me an advice how to make them talk if they really don't want to. And they always never want to.
- MT12: The most important is the support of colleagues and other staff. It's also good to reflect on the classes together.
- MT13: Seminars and lectures for those interested.
- MT14: More practical seminars are needed, not only theory.
- MT15: Given the current conditions and the capacity/capabilities of the school-no
- MT16: Attending different types of classes. Demonstrations. Practical demonstration by experienced teachers.
- MT18: Any ideas and suggestions are limited by low financial support of education system.

- ST1: No, the current system suites me well.
- ST2: Shooting a video 'ETUDE'. This is how we can react directly in praxis.
- ST6: I go to seminar once a month where I meet other teachers and colleague from other institutions. We are talking about educational methods and exchange information. It is inspiring.
- ST8: To get the experience from other European schools.

- ST9: They should have more free choices and be educated not only in their subjects but also in things of life around (historical backgrounds, religion, art, multi-culturism, politics and meetings with foreigners)
- ST10: At the moment, I have nothing in my mind.
- ST11: Every 5 years, give teachers 1 year vacancy/holiday for study and enough money;-)
- ST12: To improve or put more details to law 563/2004.
- ST13: To give students the maximum where they can go alone. Not look at them as ill but as equal to normal persons who can be integrated without problem into the society. They can have alleviation only according to their handicap, not more.
- ST14: To have choice to attend sessions which are interesting to you or improve your teaching.

Appendix C: Excerpts from semi-structured interviews

Excerpts from semi-structured interview with a tutor teacher (třídní učitel) in a secondary mainstream school (gymnázium)

Question 1: How did you come to know the term 'reflective practice' and how often you do it?

Answer 1: "In my university. We had some courses on this but just basic stuff so I know more or less it is similar to feedback. And yes, me and my colleagues do it everyday. Sometimes during class, sometimes after class... We talk about our students and exchange some ideas."

Question 2: Can you explain why you tick 'neither agree nor disagree' for the statement "The aim of teaching is to give students as much knowledge as teachers know"?

Answer 2: "I don't think teaching is all about giving students knowledge, because they will soon forget everything, especially history (laughter). I am trying to change their way of thinking...have a different point of view...and also the knowledge to think about the world. But I'm a bit disappointed as I find students are not active and lack of their ideas...probably it's also because I don't have a good way of teaching."

Question 3: Can you explain the reason to tick 'neither agree nor disagree' for both the statements "Students/Parents can help teachers to learn"?

Answer 3: "Students might help me change some specific way of teaching, but the belief or the aim I have in teaching history can hardly change...Sometimes they said they need more time to talk in the classroom. I also try to make class interesting and have more discussion, but when it's time for them to speak, they don't talk too much...Parents eh... I am not sure. During meeting with parents 3 weeks ago, some parents just sat there listening to me talking. A few parents complained to me saying I should not give essay as homework to their children, as they are too small to have their ideas. And writing a full-page essay is too difficult to them... So now I don't mark their essay so strict, as long as they have their ideas in it, not a full page is ok with me."

Question 4: Do you think the size of class affect the reflective teaching?

Answer 4: "Oh yes. It's really different if you teach a class of 15 students (like the language class) and a class of 31. With bigger class, I find it difficult to ask about students' opinions."

Question 5: How do you think of your colleagues' role in helping your teaching?

Answer 5: "I just started teaching last year and many of my colleagues are experienced teachers. I said before I've gained a lot during the discussion with my colleagues after class. And I've done 5 times observation classes this year and I find

it's quite useful. But some teachers said no to me when I asked to observe their class. They think students behave differently if someone is observing."

Question 6: What do you think of training workshop? Do you think it is helpful to your teaching practice?

Answer 6: "This year we had a workshop on 'modern teaching' and it's terrible! They kept on saying 'make students feel good' and 'get students more involved into teaching' and it's nothing new! When I ask a question, I'd expect many of my students to answer but they don't. So I don't need someone to tell me I should ask students opinions, I need someone to give me an advice how to make them talk if they really don't want to, and they almost never want to"

Excerpts from semi-structured interview with a teacher in a primary (Základní škola) inclusive school.

Question 1: What do you think of the aim of teaching?

Answer 1: "It's not about giving knowledge only. They need to learn how to behave well and learn social skills so they can live well after school education."

Question 2: How do you see parents'/students' role in your teaching practice?

Answer 2: "We have students evaluation form and it's using pictures so children with dyslexia can fill in without difficulties. Students do it with me and I really learn a lot from my pupils... We have regular meeting with parents and I think their comments during our meeting and discussion are quite helpful."

Question 3: Do you think the size of class affect the reflective teaching?

Answer 3: "Yes, students know more in smaller class. And same for me as I have more chances to talk to each kids in a smaller class."

Question 4: Do you think teachers have time to reflect on their teaching practice?

Answer 4: "Yes, I think so. My colleague discussed with me when filling the questionnaire and she also agreed we have time to reflect. It can be in a very casual way, right? Such as chatting with colleagues during break time, or sometimes when I have a cup of tea at home, I think about my teaching and my students. Maybe we are young teachers and as we don't know too much of teaching, so we reflect more? (laughter). But I do think teachers have time to reflect...."

Question 5: What does your school do to help reflective teaching?

Answer 5: "It's very much supported by the headmaster. He thinks observing class is very important and he encourages every teacher to do so."

Excerpts from semi-structured interview with a teacher in a special primary and secondary school (Základní škola a Střední škola)

Question 1: Since you have experience teaching in mainstream school before, what do you think of the difference(s)?

Answer 1: "First it's the number of students. Here most classes have only 4-8 kids and it's much less than 20-25 kids in the school I taught before. Second, kids here are more aware of who they are and why they're here. They're fighting for life, not only physical disability but also social attitude. I think students in mainstream school sometimes are selfish and complain for nothing. Here kids help each other because they can understand each other. They're happy, open and thinking about everything. Sometimes I'm surprised by the questions they ask, because they're so mature and considerate. They're better than teachers!

Question 2: How do you see yourself in teaching knowledge to your students?

Answer 2: "Not only about the subjects I teach, but I want to influence them by giving them the knowledge of life, personality so that they can know themselves better in this society.

Question 3: Do you make changes in your teaching method for children with special needs?

Answer 3: "Oh yes, we have to. Children are restricted by their handicap so the methods I used before have to be changed. They have good ideas but short attention. They don't know many things and forget very quickly so we have to repeat."

Question 4: Do you think you have time to think about how to improve teaching?

Answer 4: "Um...we don't have much time, only 10 minutes short break. And we have meetings and have to fill in forms of curriculum reform for this September, which is a stupid idea. We're too busy and I feel teachers are isolated."

Question 5: What is the parents' role in your teaching?

Answer 5: "Parents know more about than teachers because they stay longer time with their kids. They know what's the better way to handle. Our school has twice a year a meeting called 'Komplexni Hodnoceni' (complex evaluation). During the meeting, we can meet parents, students, psychologist and rehabilitater and we get useful information from parents.

Question 6: Do you think your colleagues can help you with your teaching?

Answer 6: "I'm not sure but I think they could if they do. I got help from Czech and foreign students who came to practice teaching in my class. Our school just started this year observing class for each teacher. I hope it helps."

Question 7: How do you like the teaching workshop or seminar?

Answer 7: "Teachers should be more educated but should get more choices. If I think the workshop is going to help me or someone tells me it's a good choice, I'll go there. This year my colleagues had a terrible training session with a lady talking about evaluation of school. Our school said it's obligatory to attend the meeting and luckily I was not there. My colleagues told me it's not possible to survive the meeting, as they already knew what the lady was talking about!"

Excerpts from semi-structured interview with a teacher in a special primary and secondary school (Základní škola a Střední škola)

Question 1: How do you see the role of students in your teaching?

Answer 1: "Actually I'm not here to teach. They're here for us and we learn from them: humanity, human being and how to cope with life. They can feel your problem much better. And then we realize how much they can give others. This is enrichment in your life."

Question 2: Do you think the size of class affects your teaching?

Answer 2: "Yes. Here I have more personal contact with kids. I also know well about their family. When there's problem, I know their special needs and where they suffer from."

Question 3: Do you think you have time to think about how to improve teaching?

Answer 3: "We don't have time and we don't have space. And you don't talk with everyone in the school, only to the colleagues you can share. But talking with visitors like you is always good experience. This year an Israeli student came to my class and stayed for 1 month. My students and me found it's quite interesting and helpful. Czech school and teachers are sort of narrow-minded, so it's always eye-opening experience when we see the new ways or possibilities through 'non-Czech'."

Question 4: Do you think the teaching workshop or seminar helpful?

Answer 4: "It depends. Next week I'm going to have a training session of musical therapy and my colleague told me it's useful. I'd like to know how to improve my teaching but I need to have freedom to choose, not to be told by someone else."