



REFLECTION TOOLS FOR TEACHER QUALITY

Title

GEOGRAPHICAL METAPHORS

Goal

By making a geographical metaphor where teacher quality is visualized as a map, participants are stimulated to identify landmarks of teacher quality

Targetgroup

The target group for this tool can vary. It can be used with teachers, teacher educators and student teachers both in an institutional, national or international setting.

The group can have any size with a minimum of 6.

Summary/description

The goal of this reflection tool is to stimulate reflection on teacher quality by using a cartographic metaphor. The participants try to make a map as a cartographical representation of teacher quality, using cities, mountains, rivers, deserts, lighthouses, etc. to identify aspects of teacher quality.

The tool is creative, collaborative and gives an alternative to written reflections.

The participants are asked to draw a geographical map that represents teacher quality. Therefore they have to identify aspects of teacher quality that are important to them. Next step is to relate these aspects to geographical and cartographical terms (like cities, villages, ruins, rivers, canals, ferries, isles, lighthouses, mountains, airports) and then to place them on a suitable location on the map.

The result can be displayed in the staff room.

Methodology

The participants (in groups of 3 to 5) are invited to make a shared map of the land of teacher quality. This assignment can be motivated by indicating that it is useful to have a graphical representation of teacher quality instead of an abstract list of competences. A picture is worth a thousand words!

As a source of inspiration examples from www.worldofexperience.com or The Atlas of Experience can be used.



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The first step is to identify aspects of teacher quality that the groups want to place on the map. It is important to have consensus on the aspects to be selected. Not all aspects have to be positive, - aspects like bureaucracy or burn-out can be included.

The next step is to translate the identified aspects to geographical or cartographical terms like Port Folio for a harbour, Burn-out for an extinct volcano, Bureaucracity, Sea of Creativity, The Stream of Knowledge, etc. In this step local specifics can be added (the name of the school, headmaster, etc.).

Also a suitable type of landscape needs to be selected (islands, rivers, mountains, cities, ...).

During the third step, the names have to be put on the map, in such a way that related aspects are in some way connected (by roads, ferries, bridges, etc.) or located near to each other.

In the final step, the map can be used to reflect on undiscovered areas or territories where you feel insecure or can get lost easily, on what you need to explore, on unknown territories, on the need to build new bridges, etc.



See the step-by-step guidelines for a detailed procedure.

The final map can be made by painting or drawing the map or by using a computer (either by using the facility on www.worldofexperience.com or by scanning an existing map and replacing the names by new names).



Variations

Creating geographical representations of teacher quality can be a stimulating activity, especially when it leads to a concrete product: a map that can be put on the wall.

However, making a map that can be presented to others is difficult.

Three approaches can be used:

- Free style: the participants use their free imagination and creativity and develop and design their own landscape by drawing or painting a map. This requires a high level of creativity and skills in drawing and/or painting.
- Fill-in map: the participants are provided with an existing map where the geographical names are removed. Examples can be found on the internet by searching for images of blank maps (see also www.teacherqualitytoolbox.eu) or by using map software (like maps.google.com).
Participants can add cities, roads, ferries and come up with names of mountains, rivers, seas, etc,
This can be done on paper or with a computer and picture-editing software (or powerpoint).
- Map making software: with the map making software of www.worldofexperience.com beautiful maps can be made in an easy way. However, maps cannot be printed and need to be ordered. This is costly (€50,-). Also the possibilities are restricted: there are 5 different landscapes and the location of cities, mountains, etc. is fixed. This can frustrate the creativity of the participants.

Drawing maps is one of the possibilities to stimulate reflection by using metaphors. Metaphors can be used in a variety of ways. Another example is to use animal metaphors: What animal represents the ideal teacher?

Animal metaphors are used in many cultures to indicate specific human characteristics (the sly fox, the wise owl, etc.).

One example of the use of animal metaphors is given by Edward Wolfs and Twan Brouwers who suggest using animal metaphors in mentoring students during teaching practice:

- Mice on the table: the pupils are having a party since the cat has left home. How can you make your presence known again?
- The Turtle: You are so slow, pupils are getting sleepy. How to energize your class?
- The Deer: Don't freeze when things go differently from what you intended.
- The irritating Fly: A fly distracts and hinders you from concentrating on your work.
- The Chameleon: beautiful to see, adapts to the context, but where is the real you?



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- The Porcupine: not very easy to touch, easily irritated and then stops communicating.
- The Peacock: very satisfied with himself, and showing his capacities to the outside world. At the same time: keeping a distance.
- The Ostrich: You don't see what you don't want to see
- Etc.

Background/theory

The use of cartographic metaphors to illustrate abstract concepts has an old tradition as can be seen from 'la Carte du Pays de Tendre' (Map of Tenderness) from 1654.



Cartographic metaphors are often used to create order in a large amount of information (e.g. in internet or databases). Depending on the intended goal and nature of the information to be represented, a variety of maps can be used, e.g. metro plans, decision schemes, etc.



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Metronetwork Paris



Mapping the Networkschool (www.denetwerkschool.nl)

The maps can also be used as a way of representing development, e.g. a teacher's career, showing the road through fertile grounds, deserts, desolate mountains and green valleys.

An interesting initiative can be found at www.worldofexperience.com.



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The website World of Experience and the book Atlas of Experience (by Louise van Swaaij and Jean Klare) offer a variety of landscapes that try to map abstract concepts like love, time, creativity, boredom, knowledge, growth, etc.



Landscape of Love (www.landscapesoflove.com)



Landscape of Time (www.worldofexperience.com)



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These landscapes can give inspiration for making your own landscape of teacher quality.

The website also offers a facility to create your own maps, using five different types of landscapes (Harbour, Coastal Region, Lakes, Isles and Riverbasin) and up to 50 geographical names to be added. The maps can not be saved independent from the website, but they can be ordered in print.

Conditions

Making a map will take some time and the result depends on the creativity of the participants.

Materials

- Either drawing materials (larges sheets of paper, colour pencils, paint, etc.)
- Empty map (see [example](#))
- Or a software tool, like www.worldofexperience.com.

One or two examples to stimulate the imagination.

Strength and weaknesses

Strengths:

The cartographical metaphor is useful as it differs from the regular reflection and quality descriptions which are mostly based on language. Metaphors use pictures to deliver the message. The result is easily communicated.

And a picture is worth a thousand words.

This tool stimulates the development of a shared understanding of aspects of teacher quality

Weaknesses:

As learning and reflection styles vary, not all will be inspired by maps in the same way.

The tool does not stimulate in-depth reflection in itself. The quality of the reflection depends on the quality of the discussions.

The development of a beautiful and colorful map that can be presented to others is difficult. Drawing a map requires quite some drawing skills. The internet provides an easy alternative through www.worldofexperience.com, but this webtool has restrictions in the type and number of landmarks that can be placed,



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so participants can have the feeling that they cannot fully express themselves in the map. Also there is no easy way to print the maps yourself and ordering high quality prints are costly (€ 50,-).





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Step-by-step guidelines

GEOGRAPHICAL METAPHORS: MAPPING TEACHER QUALITY

Goal

The goal of this reflection tool is to stimulate reflection on teacher quality by using a cartographic metaphor. The participants make a map as a cartographical representation of teacher quality, using cities, mountains, rivers, deserts, lighthouses, etc. to identify aspects of teacher quality.

The tool is creative, collaborative and gives an alternative to written reflections.

Summary/description

The participants are asked to draw a geographical map that represents teacher quality. Therefore they have to identify aspects of teacher quality that are important to them. The next step is to relate these aspects to geographical and cartographical terms (like cities, villages, ruins, rivers, canals, ferries, islands, lighthouses, mountains, airports) and then to place them on a suitable location on the map.

The result can be displayed in the staff room.

Materials

- Drawing materials (larges sheets of paper, colour pencils, paint, etc.) or
- A software tool, like www.worldofexperience.com.
- One or two examples to stimulate the imagination.

Step by step

The participants are invited to make a shared map of the land of teacher quality. This assignment can be motivated that it is useful to have a graphical representation of teacher quality instead of an abstract list of competences. A picture is worth a thousand words!

As a source of inspiration examples from www.worldofexperience.com or The Atlas of Experience can be used.

Introduction

1. Introduction of the aim of the activity: to identify important and common aspects of teacher quality. The use of geographical metaphors makes it possible to avoid long lists of qualities and to visualize teacher quality in a new way.



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2. Illustration of the possible outcomes by showing examples of metaphorical maps.
3. Explanation of the method (free style, prepared maps or webbased tools)

Step 1: Identifying teacher quality

The first step is to identify aspects of teacher quality that the groups (3 – 5 participants) want to place on the map. It is important to have consensus on the aspects to be selected. Not all aspects have to be positive, aspects like bureaucracy or burn-out can be included.

1. Identify individually important aspects of teacher quality
2. Share and compare the individual lists and identify common aspects and differences between the individual aspects
3. Identify a shared list of teacher qualities
4. Identify other issues that are related to teacher quality (conditions, context, hindrances, development, control, ...)

Note: Step 1 can also be replaced by another reflection tool to identify teacher qualities (e.g. 'My most remarkable teacher')

Step 2: Finding metaphors

The next step is to translate the identified aspects to geographical or cartographical terms like Port Folio for a harbour, Burn-out for an extinct volcano, Bureaucracy, Sea of Creativity, The Stream of Knowledge, etc. In this step local specifics can be added (the name of the school, headmaster, etc.). Also a suitable type of landscape needs to be selected (Isles, rivers, mountains, cities, ...).

5. Translate the identified aspects to geographical concepts
6. Identify a suitable landscape that fits best with the concepts that have been identified and the emotions and feelings that the participants associate with teacher quality.

Step 3: Visualizing the maps

During the third step, the names have to be put on the map, in such a way that related aspects are in some way connected (by roads, ferries, bridges, etc.) or located near to each other.

7. Identify regions on the map that can be used for common themes
8. Decide how teacher qualities are related and how these relations can be illustrated
9. Can you visualize professional development in your map?

The activities in this phase vary depending on the method used: free style, prepared maps or webbased tools.



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Step 4: Reflection

The resulting maps can be used in a variety of ways.

- In Step 3, the geographical metaphor can be used as a travel map, illustrating the present position and the position to reach. In this way the map is a road map, visualizing a journey or expedition. In that case the reflection can focus on 'the road to take'.
- The map can represent the shared consensus of a team on teacher quality. In that case the map can be put on the wall clearly to see for all. The map can be used to develop a common language for addressing teacher quality and to discuss issues of quality. It can be used by a team to identify core qualities that team member are willing to be held accountable for.
- For individuals, the map can be used for personal reflection using questions like:
 - To which locations have you travelled already?
 - What are still undiscovered areas for you? What areas make you afraid to get lost?
 - What do you need to feel at home at these areas? Can you develop new roads or bridges (e.g. to colleagues)?