



REFLECTION TOOLS FOR TEACHER QUALITY

Title

REFLECTION BY USING PICTURES

Goal

The goal of this reflection tool is to stimulate reflection on implicit ideas with respect to teacher quality by selecting pictures that are metaphors for teacher quality.

Targetgroup

The target group for this tool can vary. It can be used with teachers, teacher educators, student teachers, headteachers and policy makers (and also in mixed groups) both in an institutional, national or international setting. The group can have any size with a minimum of 6.

Summary/description

Participants are asked to pick a card from a wide variety of picture cards. Each participant selects a card that, in his/her opinion, represents 'teacher quality'. The picture card acts as a metaphor for teacher quality.

With the chosen card the participants start a discussion, explaining why they chose that specific card, thus starting a discussion on teacher quality

Methodology

Phase 1

The facilitator spreads a wide variety of pictures on the table. The pictures show a variety of images (realistic, daily life, sports, art, nature, school situations, ...) He/she invites all participants to select one (or three) pictures that for him/her represent metaphorically the concept of teacher quality.

When each participant has selected his/her picture(s), they form subgroups, explaining why they selected that specific picture(s), what they think the card tries to illustrate and what teacher qualities are represented.

Phase 2

In the next phase the (sub)group can discuss what elements of quality were emphasized by the different participants using a number of questions:

- What qualities are chosen by the participants



Identifying Teacher Quality

- What emotions are involved?
- What types of qualities can be identified (e.g. skills, attitudes, etc.)
- What differences exist between the participants?
- Can these differences be related to differences in for example school type, role, nationality, gender, age, experience, cultural background, etc.?

Phase 3

List all qualities identified by the group.

Participants are asked to prioritize the list of qualities by selecting the 10 qualities that are most important to them. By putting together the lists, a shared 'standard' can be made (depending on the coherence of the list: is there a common core list that is shared by almost all participants?).

Phase 4

Finally, the participants can be asked how the qualities fit in the common core and what the consequences are for their professional development plans.

Variations

The method can be varied in number of ways:

- The method can be made more personal/confronting by using a different starting question: 'Chose a picture that represents best how you view your professional quality'
- The picture cards can be used as an appetizer and a way for getting-to-know-each-other
- The method can also be used with different topics: what picture represents a good school, your team, your personal career, ...
- When cards are used that are connected to classroom situations, the question can be raised: 'What happens next?'. This can be discussed or played in a short role play exercise.
- When there is a large group of participants in phase 3, a shared list can be developed in steps:
 - Start with pairs, who develop a shared list of the 5 most important qualities of teachers, based on their selected picture card and their discussion in phase 2
 - Two pairs sit together to compare their top5. Their task is to develop a shared top5
 - Two groups of four combine in a group of 8, to compare their top5's and to come to a shared top5
 - Etc. until the full group is reached. When the group in the last steps is large, negotiators from each subgroups can be used to do the negotiations.



Identifying Teacher Quality

Background/theory

In many reflection tools, the focus is on a language oriented approach: through reading, writing, discussion or oral presentation. These language oriented approaches often stimulate cognitive and analytical processes.

The use of images can stimulate reflection using different senses. By using picture cards the starting point will be personal emotions, convictions and experiences.

Miles, S. & Kaplan, I. (2005) Using images to promote reflection: an action research study in Zambia and Tanzania. In *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, Vol 5, No 2, pp 77-83.

Conditions

When the questions and discussions are more on a personal level (e.g. 'choose a picture that represents best how you view your professional quality'), it is important that the participants feel safe and that there is a shared understanding of trust.

Materials

Set of picturecards. These can be ready made (e.g. http://www.managementboek.nl/boekeninfo.asp?CODE=rocqqqqqcbihr&RefererID=NHP_int) or selfmade (by collecting free postcards, searching the internet, etc.).

The type of pictures can vary, depending on the type of reflection that is intended. The images can be metaphorical (e.g. a parachute, a cactus, animals, balloons, etc.) or more focussed on real life classroom situations, showing teachers and pupils.

Strength and weaknesses

Strengths:

The picturecard reflection is easy to use and flexible.

It can be used as an introduction, an appetizer or a teaser to a larger session.

The use of picturecards can stimulate implicit ideas and focus the discussion on the exchange of mental models and personal constructs.

With the use of the picturecards a cognitive and theoretical discussion on teacher quality can be raised to the personal level.



Identifying Teacher Quality

Weaknesses:

The picturecards in themselves do not facilitate in-depth reflection. The depth of reflection and the consequences for professional development depend on the quality of discussion, the elaboration on reflection questions, etc.

The use of the picture cards does not in itself stimulate a systematic analysis of teacher quality.