

Management in Education: Reflective piece draft guidelines

Joan Mowat

School of Education, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, UK

Michael Jopling

Education Observatory, University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton, UK

As part of our strategy to develop the journal for practitioner and academic audiences, we take pleasure in introducing our new reflective piece section and the guidelines for submission.

If you would be interested in submitting a reflective piece, please contact the editors:

Joan Mowat: joan.mowat@strath.ac.uk Michael Jopling: M.Jopling@wlv.ac.uk

What does a good reflective piece look like?

A good reflective piece should centre on your own thoughts and feelings relating to an issue in educational management and leadership (broadly defined) to which many practitioners can relate and which has a strong contemporary resonance. Potential examples would include your reflections on a transition to a new role, reflecting retrospectively on a role you have just relinquished or reflecting on a project or new initiative which you have led. You may also reflect on a critical incident and what you have learned from it (but please see guidance in the final paragraph regarding informed consent). You should try to draw the reader into the narrative, using a conversational style which prompts their curiosity and makes them want to read further. The writing should resonate with the reader such that they can relate to it through his or her own experience.

How does it differ from an opinion piece?

An opinion piece is designed to provoke a reaction in the reader and to stir them to action. It may often be provocative and take a contrary or new stance with regard to an important and current issue within the discipline, field of enquiry and/ or profession. A reflective piece may also do some or all of these things but it serves a different purpose. It is more personal and less objective (while still being informed by theory/research). However, it should not just be meandering thoughts. It should be analytical and critical in approach. It needs to give the reader access into aspects like:

- how you came to understand things the way that you do;
- your rationale for doing things this way;
- the values and beliefs which underpin your actions; ▫ the dilemmas you encountered on the way and how you dealt with them (or not);
- how others responded to you;
- the thoughts and feelings that this invoked in you; ▫ how you rationalise and make sense of the outcomes and impacts of your actions.

You might want to consider the following questions:

- Would you do the same again? What would you do differently in a similar set of circumstances?
- Has your perspective changed? If so, in which ways and why?
- What did you learn which has informed your own practice?
- What might be the broader implications for policy and practice?

Reaction it should provoke in the reader

Depending on the nature of the reflection piece and its focus, it should invoke a range of responses. It should

encourage the reader to think at a deeper level about the issue in question, foster a desire to read more about the subject and encourage them to reflect on their own experiences.

Prospective Word Count

1500 words (excluding references)

What counts as a good reflection piece?

A good reflection piece is timely, relevant and written in a style which is both accessible and engaging to the reader. Submissions may be from practitioners and academics based in the United Kingdom or internationally, but the broader implications should be stressed whichever is the case.

Paragraphs should be self-contained and not overly long. If using data, the writer needs to be mindful to weave this data into their narrative and not lose the reader through over-scientific jargon or convoluted language. The piece should have a natural flow. The narrative should build logically and coherently and any arguments which are forwarded should be backed up by evidence drawn from either experience or the literature. Care should be taken to ensure that any individual cannot be recognised from the narrative unless they have given his or her consent. Ideally, readers will find a reflective piece interesting and will be able to recognise how it relates to them personally and professionally.