# Book Review
# Teaching Reflective Learning in Higher Education:
# A Systematic Approach Using Pedagogic Patterns
# Edited by Mary Elizabeth Ryan

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## Introduction

In *Teaching Reflective Learning in Higher Education* (2015), over 20 contributors present their ideas, models, and practices around the topic of reflective learning in higher education. The content of the book is organized into three overarching sections with the themes of conceptual underpinnings of reflecting learning, reflective learning across disciplines and pedagogical integration of reflective learning (pp. vii-viii). The opening two chapters by Mary Ryan and Michael Ryan introduce their model of Teaching and Assessing Reflective Learning (TARL), which "…provides a means for course developers to include deep reflection at different points across a course so that students have the skills to critically engage with the theories and practices introduced along the way" (p. 22). They also explore epistemological stances around the concept and purpose of academically-focused reflective practices and discuss Bain, Ballantyne, Mills & Lester's (2002) 5R framework for reflection (reporting, responding, relating, reasoning and reconstructing) at length in order to position their work. Ryan and Ryan's (2015) TARL model and Bain et al.'s (2002) frameworks are referenced, adopted or adapted by the majority of the contributors and brings cohesion to the book as a whole. While the first part of the book is quite brief, with only two chapters explicitly exploring the conceptual underpinnings and models of reflection and reflective learning, it is quite strong and sets the stage for the subsequent chapters.

The second part of the book, containing nine chapters, will be of especial interest for those who engage in experiential and transformative learning practices. These chapters illustrate reflective learning methods in various genres or disciplines including: music, fashion design, dance, business (namely accounting), writing, and teacher education. These chapters show how the TARL model and 5R framework, sometimes adapted by the contributors to a 4R scale where *reporting* and *responding* are combined to represent one level of the reflective scale, can be used to help practitioners, or those in

facilitation or teaching roles to engage in transformative learning practices (p. 16, p. 75). This part of the book also includes a brief exploration of the use of multimodal journaling, discusses how reflection relates to the development of critical thinking skills, and illustrates ways in which pre-service teachers can utilize reflective practices to facilitate their own transformative learning events.

The third part of the book, with its four chapters on the theme of pedagogical integration of reflective learning, has a strong focus on ePortfolios as tools for reflection and discussions around curriculum development. The inclusion of chapters on ePortfolios, while valid for this type of book, comes across as afterthoughts. Perhaps creating a fourth theme for the book around multimodality and ePortfolios would have flowed better and given the reader a less disjointed introduction to authors McAllister and Yancey's e-related chapters and worthwhile discussions (p. 173, p. 189). The other chapters in this third part of the book continue to build on the practical uses of the theories broached throughout the text and give the reader something to take away with them. To the benefit of the contributors of this section, the discussions around integrating reflective practice are interesting and give the reader possible changes that can be implemented to support students, teachers and practitioners' reflective practices. A highlight is found in the exploration of Ryan and Ryan's (2015) aptly named "Embedding Pedagogical Change (EPC)" model that builds off of concepts put forward by such educational theorists as Shulman (1986) and Misha and Koehler (2006) and gives the reader yet another practical way to integrate reflective learning into their work (p. 213, p. 218, p. 219).

The final section of the book is the strongest of the three in that the contributors do not cast reflective practice as the saviour of education, but instead introduce the concepts as possible solutions to mitigate the disconnect between some students and their learning. An example of this somewhat humble approach is shown through Bahr and Crosswell's discussion around the tensions that exist between those who support the practice of reflective learning and those who do not in their chapter entitled *Leadership Enabling Effective Pedagogic Change in Higher Education* (p. 211). The book's contributors and Ryan, as editor, manage to find a balance between emphasizing the benefits of reflective learning, through discussion of their work, models and theories, while not belittling the benefits of traditional approaches to learning.

Overall, the book gives a strong foundation of theoretical, conceptual and practical uses of reflective practice in multiple areas. The chapters and themes selected by Ryan accentuate the transdisciplinary nature and benefits of reflective learning which will appeal to a variety of educators. She manages to make the collection accessible for those unfamiliar with reflective learning, while simultaneously providing inspiration and motivation for those already involved in the field. Having an area in the book more clearly devoted to multimodality and ePortfolios, with further exploration of blogging, texting and other digital modes that can be used in reflective practices would have added further dimension to the book, but does not take away from the strength of the collection as a whole.

## *References*

Bain, J. D., Ballantyne, R., Mills, C., & Lester, N. C. (2002). Reflecting on practice: Student teachers' perspectives. Flaxton: Post Pressed.

Ryan, M. E. (2015). Teaching reflective learning in higher education. A systematic approach using pedagogic patterns. New York, NY: Springer International Publishing. d10.1007/978-3-319-09271-3