Articles

Contemplative Observation for Teacher Development

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Abstract

This paper considers how teachers can self-develop using contemplative observation. This technique, which is part of the body of contemplative education, has a clear method for use and may offer a useful way of exploring the "inner landscape" (Palmer, 1998) of a teacher. Since this is a new field, some background to contemplative education is given, followed by an explanation of contemplative observation and two examples. It is suggested that self-development can occur at a deep level by connecting inner and outer observations of the teacher, so combines professional development with general self-development. It is also suggested that this technique may be particularly useful for some in-service teachers rather than pre-service teachers, but that its use, like some other reflective techniques such as journaling, carries risks for the teacher psychologically and that it needs to be understood thoroughly and used with care.

Keywords: contemplative observation, contemplative education, reflective practice

Introduction

As teachers, we strive to improve. Even though "good teaching" is hard to analyse, we know it when we see it. Intuitively, we recognize it. It is clear, too, that it does not depend on having the best or the biggest repertoire of techniques and methods, since as Palmer 1998 points out, a teacher can have many years of experience yet have a successful class one day and a disaster the next. Even though obtaining an adequate level of competence in subject knowledge and basic knowledge of pedagogy is necessary, the elusive "good teaching" seems to lie beyond pure knowledge.

The fact that reflective practice has become so common in teacher training contexts may illustrate this awareness by increasingly focusing on the teacher. There is a dynamic relationship between all the knowledge the teacher has and the actual teaching situation she is in, and "good teaching" occurs when, *somehow*, some kind of finesse is achieved in that relationship. In the past, teaching skill was often relegated to "experience" but as Farrell 2006 notes, "we do not learn as much from experience as

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we learn from reflecting on that experience" (p.77). Specific effort is needed to improve.

In addition to the more analytical types of reflective practice that aim at objectivity, such as classroom observation using categories, there are now many other types that consider the "internal landscape" of a teacher, such as journals and metaphors. One problem, though, is that these have been criticized for being "elusive, general and vague" with "a lack of concrete, data-led and linguistic detail" (Mann & Walsh 2013, p. 291). Contemplative observation, is one technique that can be used as reflective practice and it has a clear method usable by any teacher. However, it is as yet an unfamiliar technique. Some background into contemplative education will be given next before considering contemplative observation.

Contemplative Education Background

Contemplative observation is one of the reflection techniques included in contemplative education, an emerging and developing field, particularly in tertiary education and particularly in the United States. "Contemplative education" is a new term. Zajonc 2014 points out that it did not exist "twenty years ago", i.e. in the early 1990s, and like many new terms, it has taken on a variety of definitions for different writers.

Contemplative education has an epistemology different to that of mainstream intellectually based western-style education. Broadly speaking, it could be said to have a holistic approach to knowledge, not one based purely on an intellectual approach that explores the world in "parts" in isolation (the cartesian approach). Contemplative education is naturally interdisciplinary and sees the world as "alive" and interconnected. This does not mean that it does not value analytical, measurable research. It does. However, it sees this as only a partial way of knowing, and includes subjective forms of investigation. The results of such investigation may not always be externally provable to others, but nevertheless aim to explore something systematically at the core. Hence contemplative education includes first-person approaches.

Tremmel 1993 considers "the limitations of a one-dimensional, analytic view of reflection" (p.435) that is based on a conventional western academic approach that has stressed the intellect, and suggests the inclusion of "the Zen Buddhist tradition of "mindfulness" into teacher training programs. He stresses, though, that "While I do not advocate the abandonment of our Western traditions, I do seek some common ground between these two traditions in human thought"(p.435). Contemplative education seeks something similar.

In contemplative education, professional development in a certain field is linked to self-development as a person. The teacher cannot be separated from who she is as a person when not teaching. Some teachers may try to do this, adopting "my teaching persona" when at school and a

different persona outside school, but Palmer (1998) suggests that this only leads to a "divided self" that, lacking integration, results in internal problems for the individual, and by extension, to the whole educational community.

Two difficult-to-describe aspects that we may regard as the qualities of particularly good teachers are a sense of presence and the ability to understand learners on a deep level. These aspects may usually be regarded as "unteachable" or as qualities that may possibly be gained slowly through age and experience. However, contemplative education sees these not as accidentals, but as necessary qualities for a teacher in addition to pure subject knowledge, and offers approaches for learning them.

Defining Contemplative Education

The basic question in contemplative teaching is "who is the teacher?" Byrnes (2009) describes contemplative teaching in this way: "It extends beyond teaching as technique (hand) and teaching as reflection (head) to the inclusion of one's inner teacher or wisdom (heart). Technique emphasizes the how of teaching. Reflection interrogates the what and why, while contemplation focuses on the *who*." (p. iii). This echoes Palmer's comment that "we teach who we are" (Palmer 1998, p.15). So a clear and accurate view of self is the aim, not one biased by personal emotions and thoughts.

Byrnes (2009) notes that contemplative education does not reject "technical" and "reflective" abilities but includes them and adds the third aspect of the heart. She suggests that the "central features" of contemplative teaching are "compassion, integrity and mindful awareness" (Byrnes, 2009, p.1). These three constantly interact within a person, furthering the development of each one. Byrnes places these three aspects in a relationship that looks equal. However, without mindful awareness, it might be difficult to develop integrity, for example. It may be that mindful awareness holds a crux position. Certainly, the key to contemplative education is the ability to pay attention.

Aspects of Contemplative Practice

There are many aspects of contemplative practice but in general "contemplative teaching begins by knowing and experiencing ourselves directly. We unlearn how we habitually think, sense and feel, so we can return to the present moment freshly and clearly" (Brown, 1998, p.1). Some major aspects, as I see them, are given below:

Slowing down, paying attention

In order to pay attention, there needs to be a slowing down of the mind, and various techniques may be used for this. "Mindfulness" is one of the most common ways in the West, and "involves the commitment of attention to occurrence in the present moment, which can thereby cultivate awareness of present-moment information" (Grossenbacher & Rossi 2014, p. 24). Mindfulness, however, is only

one contemplative technique, and there are many other contemplative practices that can also be used, such as movement practices like tai chi. Paying attention to something (often, one's own breath) in a sustained manner is the aim. This is challenging as the mind tends to drift off into chains of thoughts or into an emotional state which starts to occupy the mind more and more deeply. As soon as the drift away from the object of attention has been noticed (and this may be after seconds or many minutes), the practitioner brings the attention back to the focus and tries again to keep the attention there.

Deliberate action

Using one of these contemplative practices, the practitioner learns to pay attention by using the mind deliberately. She creates a clear starting point and ending point in which to deliberately become aware of the processes occurring. Tai chi has very clear physical poses at the beginning and end of each pattern. However, a clear start and finish can be created internally in the mind by thinking to oneself "I am beginning now" or "I am ending now."

Detached and nonjudgmental stance

When thoughts or feelings arise during the contemplative practice, the practitioner aims only to observe these in a detached way rather than to follow them and actively think about them and develop them. So the practitioner aims not to get carried away by thoughts or feelings, just to notice them.

The stance of only noticing means that the practitioner does not get involved with the thoughts or feelings by focusing on their content and making a judgement about whether it is good or bad or anything else. The thoughts and feelings are just observed.

Integration

There is an effort to be aware of the state of the body including one's speech, the emotions and the mind and to bring them into an integrated state. This integrated state is probably what constitutes what we feel as the "presence" of a person. It is a sense that the person is fully inside their body and is directing his or her mind. This is in contrast to times when we operate in an unintegrated way; for example if a person is absorbed in thinking about work and is rushing out of the door to catch a bus, their mind that is thinking is in a different "place" to the rushing body. As a result, the person may drop things or simply not notice things around them at that time. In an integrated state, the person has brought his attention to the body and speech, emotion and mind and has awareness of them as a whole.

Compassion

The quality of compassion develops, I think, along with the expanded awareness that arises with contemplative practice. There is an increasing sense of the self, not as something separate, but as something that is connected to others. Since there is connection, compassion naturally arises. This is my view.

Although this may sound as though

contemplative practice requires specific training, some teachers naturally possess a high degree of presence and awareness. However, these qualities can be developed or furthered by training. The qualities developed become part of a teacher as a person, not just part of her professional repertoire of methods. In this sense contemplative education is rather similar to the numerous "ways of..." idea from Japan: "the way of tea" ("Sa-doh"), "the way of archery" ("Kyu-doh"), etc. Contemplative teaching could be called the "Way of Teaching" because the outer activity of teaching is used as the framework for training the inner self. In other words, the professional activity of teaching is integrated with personal self-development.

Contemplative observation

Classroom observation, often involving videotaping of classes followed by various styles of written or oral reflection, has become common. The videotaping helps to externalise the teaching behaviours so that they can be noticed and considered. Classroom observation can also be carried out contemplatively and a method for doing this has been developed by Richard Brown (Brown, 1998). The basic procedure is to prepare to observe, to observe and to write an accurate description of the inner and outer phenomena observed as soon as possible after the observation has been done.

A teacher can observe her teaching by observing her own class in a manner that has similarities to videotaping. Just as a camera records what it sees without cognitive or emotional bias, the teacher tries to observe the class *as it is*, in an open state of mind. This open state of mind comes from first integrating the body and mind (preparation to observe). In addition to the teacher-observer being internally integrated, Brown describes a further layer of integration in his method of contemplative observation: "This method synchronizes the observer with the learning environment; awakens and clarifies the sense perceptions, thoughts and emotions; and develops knowledge and compassion" (Brown, 1988, p.1). So the teacher may be able to see the whole picture of what is happening.

Thoughts or feelings that arise are noticed but not engaged with. By observing these in a detached way, the teacher can gain an insight into what is happening in her mind, at the same time as she observes what is happening externally in the classroom or other observation setting. So it is an internal-external form of observing. Brown notes that "Observing in this way requires the disciplines of precise attention and descriptive recording of our inner and outer experiences" (Brown, 1998, p.2). "Outer experiences" include both what is happening in the classroom in terms of what students are doing, sounds inside the classroom and outside, unexpected activity (someone accidentally entering the classroom), etc. Inner experiences would include any thoughts that arise in the observer, bodily sensations such as

tightening or slackening in some part of the body, and also emotions.

Maintaining an open state of mind through precise attention is the challenge. If a student in the classroom being observed is off-task, for example, the teacher might start to feel annoyed and become caught up in this emotion, or think about ways to keep students on task, drifting off in thought. If so, she would no longer be observing. The fact that thoughts or emotions arise is not a problem; however the observer aims to distinguish between what is actually happening in the classroom and what is arising in her mind, just observing both and not adding interpretation to the observations.

An open state of mind can be aided by doing the classroom observation in a spacious way without a pre-decided focus of observation. One of Brown's student-teachers commented "I have spent many hours of observing by taking physical notes, mental notes, and following a format. I had forgotten what it was like to see without always looking for something. It really is a different story when you look just to look....I trust that I will see whatever there is to see because I am not looking for something, or trying to make something be there" (Brown, 1998, p.2). In addition, Brown notes that "a key to contemplative observation and teaching is letting our reactiveness go on the spot. We practice gently dropping our tendencies toward habit. If our "letting go" is not aggressive, then we gradually loosen the intertwined threads of our habitual perceptions, feelings, concepts and dramas. We create space to experience and think freshly" (p.4). Through this letting go, the teacher develops a mind state that is open and aware. While being "inner," this mind state has similarities with the "objective" camera recording a scene.

Developing skills for contemplative observation

The teacher-observer pays attention to information she learns through the senses as well as to what occurs in her mind. Brown suggests training the senses before doing classroom observation. The sense of hearing can be developed, for example, by practicing listening to sounds and noting tones. One exercise is to focus "on a selected sound. We listen to the sound of leaves rustling in the wind, for instance, focusing on the sound exactly as it is received by the ears" (Brown, 1998, p.2).

Grossenbacher & Rossi (2014) elaborate further on Brown's method, maintaining that "contemplative observation comprises a set of (six) trainable skills" (p. 23): noticing, slowing, reflecting, distinguishing, recalling and describing (p. 24). "Noticing" refers to explicit awareness of some part of one's subjective experience. The noticing may focus on something felt by the senses or on thoughts or emotions arising internally. "Slowing" is an attempt by the teacher-observer to relax and slow down the speed of reactions so that more awareness is possible. "Reflecting" "is metacognitive because it involves becoming cognizant of

one's own mental activity" The teacher-observer notes what thoughts arise. "Distinguishing" is important for separating what is observed from interpretation of this. Interpreting can include "assigning meaning (or raising questions) based on already established knowledge, belief or opinion". "Recalling" of events allows the observer to note patterns across various observations. Finally, "Describing" is the activity after the observation in which the observer expresses his observations accurately – orally, in written form, or some other form (p.25).

Examples of contemplative observation

What follows are two of my own descriptions of observation situations. I will offer fairly long sections of description to illustrate the flow of inner processes. Observation 1 includes two sections of a description of a class I observed that I normally taught myself but which was taught for that observation by a different teacher. This took place in 2004 in a public junior high school in Paris in France. I observed an EFL class of 22 13 year-old students.

Observation 1 (Post-observation written description)

Section 1

"I sit at the front of the room to one side, waiting for the students to arrive.

I look around and feel the classroom; it has a very high ceiling and the tall walls and high windows feel imposing to me. Noise pours in from the courtyard through the wide-open windows; it seems to have a chaotic tone. The room is bare; I notice that I feel an urge to add colour and vitality, and that a desire to act is filling me. But I remind myself that I am going to observe."

Section 2

"My attention feels drawn to two chairs that are empty and I recall that "Reda" and "Issa" have been suspended from school this week for smashing windows, and may be at the police station right now. I notice how my mind starts to wander along the lines of this situation. I perceive it as a tragedy and feel a heavy aching in my chest. I feel distressed that they have been involved in this violence. Some irritation arises in me as I have the thought that things had seemed to be going well in the class the previous week. My mind turns to sifting through possible causes as to why these 13 year-olds now have a criminal record. Drawn in to these thoughts, my attention is no longer on the classroom but on examining reasons – neglectful families, the stark, concrete school and the fact that the students originate from various colonies of France. My engagement with these thoughts deepens. Moving away from the cases of "Reda" and "Issa", my mind is moving rapidly towards the whole context. Questions arise: why do children from Cameroon and Morocco and Mali have to sit in this Paris classroom forced to read in English about British students at a summer camp? More irritation, bordering on anger, arises with this question. Like this, my mind mushrooms and I start to feel powerless as

the thought occurs that the problems extend far beyond English class. What can I possibly do? Even as I write this, I notice that my neck and shoulders are tightening as I feel desperation again."

Comments on Observation 1

This observation took place in an extremely problematic school in which violence among students and even among teachers was common. I have chosen it because it illustrates the reality of teaching; while we might want to focus only on aspects of subject teaching, what we are confronted with first is human beings and wider social situations affecting them. It represents one of my early attempts at contemplative observation.

I begin in an open state of mind, noticing several characteristics of the classroom. It is the bareness that strikes me, triggering "an urge to add colour and vitality" and "a desire to act." But still, I stop myself from getting carried away in thought: "But..". However, this does not last long. After the students enter the room, the "two empty chairs" trigger a chain of thoughts which I am unable to contain and I become completely lost in thought, no longer observing the situation.

The thoughts take over in a way that leaves me doubly powerless: I am no longer holding my awareness of the situation being observed and my mind moves as it wants, away in thought. In addition, the thoughts become entangled with emotion as well (anger) and strengthen. The thoughts move from the particular students in the class, Reda and Issa, to the larger situation of immigrants in France and their education. As the thoughts escalate, I feel more and more powerless, culminating in actual bodily sensations: "my neck and shoulders are tightening."

The sense of powerlessness grows, causing me actual physical pain. This observation description expresses how my ability to observe contemplatively, i.e. to pay attention and hold my mind steady while observing, was only in the very beginning stages at that time.

Observation 2 (Post-observation written description)

The description below was written immediately after an observation done in my classroom in a university EFL class in Japan in 2019. The class consists of 24 first-year Japanese students in a compulsory reading and discussion class held once a week. It is quite difficult to observe a class while actually teaching it, particularly in a contemplative way since it is hard to relax. However, this observation took place for about 20 minutes during the class when the students were interviewing each other in pairs and then moved into small groups to discuss the points gained. I had divided the students in half, mixing them up to separate them from close friends in order to promote more speaking in English.

"I ask the students to find a partner on their

side of the room and to start the interview. I pull the black swivel chair over to the teacher's desk at the front of the class and sit down, perching on the front of the seat. It strikes me that this is unusual. I recall that I never sit down on this chair except for during a written test. I do not feel comfortable. The thought arises that perhaps I am not teaching properly. There is an uneasy sensation in the upper part of my body at the same time. My back and the tops of my legs are tense as I maintain an alert, upright position on the seat.

I look around the class for stray students. But they are all gradually finding a partner and sitting down together and starting to talk, holding their interview sheets. Everyone has found a partner.

I continue to look around the classroom.

The thought arises that there might be students talking in Japanese. Maybe I will need to remind them to use English? My body tenses a bit and I scrutinise the pairs, sitting taut on my seat. As I look at each pair and strain to listen to their conversation from my static position at the front, the sense comes over me, little by little, that each pair is talking in English. The thought that "there is no problem" arises and I let out a slight breath.

I sit further back on my seat, swiveling a little to the left and right, to confirm that the task is being carried out. It is. The thought comes up that these are Level 5 students so "of course they can do this." I feel a slight sense of guilt at not totally trusting them.
I look around again and feel that there is nothing particularly outstanding happening. It looks even. There is a fairly constant sound of voices all talking at a similar volume. I realise that I am expecting there to be more difference in the room, more variety, more animation. It strikes me that the two students absent that day are the most orally active girls. It feels strange not to hear their voices.

The students' voices I am hearing sound earnest to me. I sense that the students have a deeper than usual interest in the topic (fast food). We have just watched some sections of the film, "Supersize Me", and I have the thought that the film may have provoked some deep reactions in the students.

Student "K" on my left is asking his partner a question about the meaning of "ban" on the interview sheet. His partner points to this word on the blackboard. "K" nods and they continue speaking together in English.

I see that the two male students sitting at tables to the right of the room are talking and laughing. They appear concentrated, looking straight at each other. One of them, "S", is holding his sheet nearly at eye level and asking his partner questions. His eyes focus on his partner. I feel surprise. I recall that he tends to chat in class in whole class teaching situations. I thought he was very distractible, but now he looks efficiently on-task and also helpful; I hear him rephrasing a question for his partner.

Two students stand up, looking around at other pairs. I feel the urge to stand up straightaway. I guess they have finished their interview together and want to form new pairs. But the other pairs are still talking. I stay seated. They stand, waiting, still looking around.
Some irritation arises within me that I did not specify a time limit for talk with each partner. I think anew that this is necessary. Another pair finishes and looks at the pair standing. New pairs form. I sit back more comfortably on the seat. The other pairs finish and gradually regroup. This movement feels a little slow but it happens. The thought occurs to me that the students are fine and there is no need for me to say anything."

Comments on Observation 2

Observation 2 presents a contrast to Observation 1 in that I was able to pay attention to the class in a sustained way throughout, noting observed inner and outer phenomena while continuing to observe. I had no major lapses into a thought or emotion so was able to maintain a fairly open state of mind and awareness. However, I was not so relaxed, as is evidenced by my sitting posture ("perching on the front of the seat" and "My back and the tops of my legs are tense"). Brown 1998 advises being as relaxed as possible and letting go in order to observe as openly as possible. This was difficult, however, in the situation of self-observation in my own classroom since I was still the teacher in charge and felt I could not detach completely.

Discussion – Contemplative Observation and Self-Development

Observation 1 was carried out without clear follow-up reflection. Cirocki & Farrell 2017 note: "reflection has three component parts: 1) experiences that teachers go through, 2) reflective processes that provide a platform from which teachers can learn and 3) action that materialises from the new prospects that come into being. This "action", though, may be cognitive as in a greater level of awareness rather than behavioural" (p. 6). So clearly a further process is required to absorb any insights gathered from the observation description and to move towards some action. This could be a further written reflection some time – days or weeks - after the original post-observation description has been done. Insights can arise at any time afterwards. Even now, 15 years later, as I re-read Observation 1, the experience comes vividly to mind and I realise how deeply I was affected by the school context and how I started to feel that context should not always simply be accepted and worked within. This is a deep reflective theme for me beyond surface classroom teaching that has remained with me.

The value of Observation 1 for myself now is in revealing my rather unsteady state of mind at that time. This no doubt would have affected my teaching if I was likely to lose my open state of mind and begin reacting to thoughts or emotions

triggered by events in the classroom. If I had been able to do further reflection on my observation and description then, I might have been able to see that I needed to try to maintain a steadier focus in the classroom and not follow the emotional volatility that was already being generated by the students. Given the rather overwhelming situation, it was helpful to have supportive conversations with fellow teachers at that time.

This Observation indicates that psychologically difficult situations can arise when we look at ourselves and our teaching. Watanabe (2016) in her study of reflective practice using journals, focus groups and interviews with six high school teachers in Japan also noted this point. One experienced teacher, "Mr Sato" commented: "I think this type of self-development is good, but it becomes more difficult as we get older. We have all those years of experience behind us, and they come out. ..we do not want to inquire after ourselves very deeply, we want to leave some aspects fuzzy for ourselves" (p. 25).
In the case of contemplative observation, physical sensations are observed and so this could affect a teacher even more deeply than a style of description that focuses only on cognitive reactions. The physical sensations stimulate the recall of the event as a lived experience.

The assumption in contemplative observation is that the teacher wants to clarify her own mind and behaviour in order to improve. If that willingness is not there (as might have been the case with "Mr Sato"), self-observation can be painful. Even if it is there, as was my own case, an extremely problematic teaching situation can generate very deep feelings that, if not addressed, could lead to very negative states of mind. Care is needed to avoid this.

In Observation 2, the inclusion of the observation of bodily sensations provides a vivid mirror to my teaching stance that I would not necessarily have noticed in, for example, a videotape of the class. Several of my observations - "perching on the front of the seat" and "my body tenses a bit and I scrutinise the pairs, sitting taut on my seat" and "I feel the urge to stand up straightaway"- all suggest an unnecessary level of tension. Various concerns that I had (could the students form pairs in the first place? Were they talking in English? Were they on task?) all proved to be unfounded. Even during the writing of the description I was aware that I was not trusting the students appropriately: "these are Level 5 students so "of course they can do this." I feel a slight sense of guilt at not totally trusting them to do this."

Doing post-reflection on this description, I would ask myself about this level of trust. One reflection is that it relates to teaching other classes of students of a much lower level than the students in Observation 2. I retain strong memories of classes in which students took inordinate amounts of time to form pairs or could not stay talking in English for more than a very short time leading to little or no learning. I reflect

that I need to aim to approach each class from a more open standpoint, laying aside memories of previous classes, and viewing a new class, simply as it is. Secondly, the type of tension could be reflected on. In some cases, I think it was related to the fear of an activity not going smoothly. In other cases, it was a kind of over-eagerness to help the students. The latter relates to my beliefs about the role of a teacher. She is there to "help." However, the best ways to "help" students could be reflected on further. Should I always react immediately or wait a little? Do I need to simply allow students more time to do something themselves?
Many more points come out of Observation 2 but I will omit them here for lack of space.

Conclusions

The above descriptions and examples of contemplative observation are introductory. However, this is a technique that brings together the inner and outer aspects of teaching in a clear form that could be used for teacher reflection and self-development. Farrell 2015 describes a comprehensive framework of five stages for teacher reflection that he says is "a response to a recent widely cited criticism of the narrowness of many of the approaches used to encourage reflective practice ... that have often viewed reflection and reflective practice solely as a one-dimensional, intellectual exercise, while overlooking the inner life of teachers where reflection can not only lead to awareness of teaching practices but also self-awareness for a more holistic view of reflection and reflective practice" (Farrell 2016, p.224). The framework does not look purely at what a teacher is doing in a classroom during a particular lesson recorded on tape, for example, but takes the teacher as a person with a history and background, ideas and beliefs and experiences, and attempts to be a way to offer a fuller picture of what a teacher does and why she does it. This kind of approach is similar to contemplative pedagogy in trying to move towards a whole picture, instead of offering only a small window into an isolated slice of a teacher's teaching. Even so, Farrell's framework seems to rely mostly on "thinking" and in this sense, the more raw experience delivered by contemplative observation could make the reflection more truly whole.

Videotaping of a class can capture many behaviours of a teacher. However, it cannot capture internal thoughts, emotions or bodily sensations unless these are somehow shown visibly. It is often these observations that reveal to a teacher exactly what her actual teaching stance is, and may also trigger a sense of the causes. Any experience of pain, for example, would indicate a problem. It is possible that videotaping of classes with peer observations or simply self-observation could be fruitfully used in combination with contemplative observation.

Teachers today are in challenging settings due to educational policy, decision-making at levels far above the level of the teachers, the common situation of part-time work, short-term contracts, etc. Hence

the teacher needs to juggle more and more factors and is likely to experience increasing mental and emotional challenges. Takiguchi (2015) points to this as a particular problem in university EFL classes in Japan due to greater numbers of less able students being admitted. This may also be giving rise to the situation where teachers have a weekly schedule of classes with students of vastly different levels of English. This situation can create a confused teaching style. Contemplative observation could therefore be especially useful for in-service teachers to view their own teaching when they may have gained habits they no longer question. It can be done alone, which makes it useful given the increasingly busy schedules of teachers. Reflections could also be furthered in collaboration with other teachers using this method.

The prevalence of short-term contracts may also mean that teachers may have trouble feeling a sense of progression over their careers. Contemplative observation is a technique that a teacher can use throughout her career, that could create a continuous path for professional and personal development.

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Note: the author studied and practised contemplative education originally as part of the M.A. in Contemplative Education at Naropa University, U.S.A. from 2004~2007.