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**Protocol Reference Number: 8**

**Developed by:** Catholic Education Flanders

**Title**

**Wonderings ripped by passions**

Ps. 'Wondering' is a term used in the USA but rarely used in the UK. So users in the UK prefer to use the term 'reflections'.

**Sources**

Dana, N., Yendol-Hoppey, D. (2009), *The reflective educator's guide to classroom research. Learning to teach and teaching to learn through practitioner inquiry* California, Corwin press

**Purpose of the protocol**

Participants discover their passion in education and delve deeper into their passion to come to a 'wondering' about their practice. The 'wondering' is the first step towards a researchable question for the practitioner inquiry of the participant.

**Materials**

Print the addendum pages here below, recto verso. Cut the frames. Make stacks of the 8 passions. Ensure that every participant has a stack with the 8 passions.

**Time**

60 minutes or even more if needed

**Roles**

Facilitator, participants

**Process**

Option 1 (bigger groups):

- group people with the same passion and make them exchange ideas on the same passion and the corresponding exercise;
- If you choose this option, you need an extra round to share your experiences with the chosen passion.

Option 2: (smaller groups – less than 10):

group people with different passions and also invite them to explain and exchange ideas about each other's passion. In this case, no extra round is needed.

1. Give each participant a stack with the 8 passions. (see addendum below)
2. Let each participant read the passion profiles and identify the passion that most accurately describes who he/she is as an educator. If several fit (this will be true for many participants), the participant choose the one that affects him/her the most, or the one that seems most significant as he/she reflects on his/her practice over time. (5 minutes)
3. (with bigger groups) Without using the number of the passion profile, participants ask colleagues



questions and find the people who choose the same profile. (5 minutes)

or

4. (with small groups) Make groups of 4 and share your passion. (5 minutes)
5. In your groups of colleagues with profiles, choose a facilitator, a timekeeper and a recorder/reporter. (2 minutes)
6. Check to see if you all really share the chosen passion. Then talk about your school experiences together. What is it like to have this passion – What is it like to be this kind of educator? Each person in the group should have an opportunity to talk, uninterrupted, for 2 minutes. (10 minutes)
7. Next, each person in the group identifies an actual student, by name, who has been affected by the group's profile. Write (in your journal) (5 minutes)
  - a. What have I done with this student?
  - b. What has worked? What hasn't?
  - c. What else could I do?
  - d. What questions does this raise for me?
8. Talk as a group about the questions that teachers who share this passion are likely to have about their practice. List as many of these questions as you can. (15 minutes)
  - a. Recorder/reporter should write on a chart and should be ready to report out to the large group. Be sure to put your passion profile at the top of the chart.
9. Read the exercise on the back of the passion. Think on how you will do this in your practice and share with the group. (10 minutes)
  - a. Recorder/reporter should write on a chart and should be ready to report out to the large group. Be sure to put your passion profile at the top of the chart.
10. Whole group debrief:
  - a. What strikes you as you listen to the passions of your colleagues?
  - b. Which of the questions generated intrigues you the most? Why?
  - c. How might you go about exploring this question with colleagues?

What would you do first? (15 minutes)

### Experiences

Wim: The 8 passions were used by me as follows: in a large group each member needed to read quickly on the 8 passions and determine which one suited him most. A certain choice needed to be made (no mixtures). Then, in smaller groups (sometimes same passions, sometimes different ones, depending on the situation) they needed to explain the reason for their choice and derive a very first wondering.

- this worked in most cases. However some teachers have wonderings that are closely related to another passion. For one participant it took two sessions before he was aware that a switch was possible. Conclusion: make sure that the passion protocol is only a guide, but not obligatory for the wondering!

- this protocol can **also be used as a group building activity as such**. Then the aim is only to explain why this passion was chosen and how it lead to engagement in education. This exchange in small groups is very rich. Then this protocol takes only 15-20 minutes. I have also done it this way 3 times with great success.

Addendum below:



ERASMUS+



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### **1: the child**

You became a teacher primarily because you wanted to make a difference in the life of a child. Perhaps you were one of those whose life was changed by a committed, caring teacher and you decided to become a teacher so that you could do that for other children. You are always curious about particular students whose work and/or behavior just doesn't seem to be in sync with the rest of the students in our class. You often wonder about how peer interactions seem to affect a student's likelihood to complete assignment, or what enabled one of your language learning students to make such remarkable progress seemingly overnight, or how to motivate a particular student to get into the habit of writing. You believe that understanding the unique qualities that each student brings to your class is the key to unlocking all their full potential as learners.

### **2: the curriculum**

You are one of those teachers who are always "thinkering" with the curriculum to enrich the learning opportunities for you students. You have a thorough understanding of your content area. You attend conferences and subscribe to journals that help you to stay up on current trends affecting the curriculum you teach. Although you are often dissatisfied with "what is" with respect to the prescribed curriculum in your school, you are almost always sure that you could do it better than the frameworks. You are always critiquing the existing curriculum and finding ways to make it better for the kids you teach – especially when you have a strong hunch that "there is a better way to do this."

### **3: content knowledge**

You are best in the classroom when you have a thorough understanding of the content and/or topic you are teaching. Having to teach something you don't know much about makes you uncomfortable and always motivates you to hone up this area of your teaching knowledge base. You realize that what you know will influence how you get it across to your students in a developmentally appropriate way. You spend a considerable amount of your personal time – both during the school year and in the summer – looking for books, material, workshops, and courses you can take that will strengthen your content knowledge.

### **4: teaching strategies**

You are motivated most as a teacher by the desire to improve on an experiment with teaching strategies and techniques. You have experienced and understand the value of particular strategies to engage students in powerful learning and want to get really good at this stuff. Although you have become really comfortable with using cooperative learning with your students, there are many other techniques that interest you and that you want to incorporate into your teaching repertoire.



ERASMUS+



2014-1-BE02-KA201-000432

Exercise 2:

Browse through your textbooks, your curriculum documents and your old plan books. As you browse, generate a list of topics you teach each school year that you felt uncomfortable teaching in the past or wished to enrich in some way. Next to each entry on your list, jot down a few words that describe your dissatisfaction with this unit and/or the ways the unit might be enhanced. Select one item from your list on which to focus a potential inquiry, and begin the process of brainstorming questions related to the teaching of this curriculum.

Exercise 1:

Create a list of all of the children in your class or a list of all students in one period you teach each day. As you add each student's name to the list, think about what makes that particular individual unique. Focus on attributes that your students exhibit and observations of students rather than judgments or critiques about student performance or personality. Jot down one question next to each student's name that would provide you with insights into this particular learner.

Exercise 4:

Brainstorm a list of teaching strategies you would like to try. Next to each entry on your list, jot down a few words that describe your reasoning for wanting to try this strategy. Formulate a question that connects the strategy and your reasoning for trying using that strategy.

Brainstorm a list of the most frequent strategies and/or techniques you draw on in your teaching. After brainstorming your list, place a star next to the strategies that are most intriguing to you. Jot down a few sentences or phrases next to your starred strategies that capture why these techniques are intriguing. Then, formulate a question that connects the strategy and your intrigue with it.

Exercise 3:

Make a list of topics you teach that you believe would enhance your classroom practice. On this list, circle the topics that you believe require substantive transformation or adaptation if you are to teach the content area to children.

Evaluate the materials you currently use to teach content within each subject area and unit you teach. Do these resources represent diversity of perspectives and multiple voices? Whose voices are present or missing?



**5: the relationship between beliefs and professional practice**

You sense a disconnect between what you believe and what actually happens in your classroom and/or school. For example, you believe that a major purpose of school is to produce citizens capable of contributing to and sustaining a democratic society; however, students in your class seldom get an opportunity to discuss controversial issues because you fear that students you teach may not be ready and/or capable of this, and you are concerned about losing control of the class.

**6: the intersection between your personal and professional identities**

You came into teaching from a previous career and often sense that your previous identity may be in conflict with your new identity as an educator. You feel ineffective and frustrated when your students or colleagues don't approach a particular task that is second nature to you because of your previous identity – for example, writer, actor, artist, researcher – in the same way that you do. What keeps you up at night is how to use the knowledge, skills, and experiences you bring from previous life to make powerful teaching and learning happen in your classroom and/or school.

**7: advocating equity and social justice**

You became an educator to change the world – to help create a more just, equitable, democratic and peaceful planet. You are constantly thinking of ways to integrate issues of race, class, disability, power, and the like into your teaching; however, your global concerns for equity and social justice sometimes get in the way of your effectiveness as an educator – like the backlash that resulted from the time you showed “Schindler’s list” to your sixth-grade class. You know there are more developmentally appropriate ways to infuse difficult and complex issues into your teaching and want to learn more about how to do this with your students.

**8: context matters**

What keeps you up at night is wondering how to keep students focused on learning despite the many disruptions that go on in your classroom or building on daily basis. It seems that the school context conspires against everything that you know about teaching and learning – adults who don't model the behaviors they want to see reflected in the students, policies that are in conflict with the school's mission, and above all high stakes testing environment that tends to restrain the kind of teaching and learning that you really works for the students you teach.



Exercise 6:

Write your own biography. Discuss the development of your own interests and passions. Finally, discuss the factors that led to your chosen career field as a teacher.

Design a time line of your growth and development as a person and a teacher, beginning with your birth and noting years and dates of critical incidents that impacted your personal and professional life. Follow the guide to provide a teachers coat of arms. In one space you draw a real or mythical animal that describes the teacher you want to be. In the second space you choose a real symbol or create your own design for an insigna that best describes the teacher you want to be. In space 3, choose one color in any shade – or rainbow effect- that best describes the teacher you want to be. In space 4, draw one character, real or fictional, that best describes the teacher you want to be. In space 5 choose one word that best describes the teacher you want to be. How you write that word should also help to describe the teacher you want to be.

Exercise 5:

Write a series of philosophy statements that describe your general teaching philosophy and/or creating a classroom learning environment conducive to instruction. Share your philosophy with a colleague or friend. Discuss the ways you are and are not enacting your philosophies of teaching in your classroom practice.

Keep a teaching journal for one week. Each night, reflect on one happening in the classroom that you wish you had the opportunity to repeat and react to in a different way. Note what beliefs you hold that led you to react as you did, as well as how you would react differently if able to turn back time. What beliefs undergird your alternative reaction?

Exercise 8:

Make a three-column list.

After brainstorming a list of contextual challenges, identify the frustrations that you can potentially influence at either a student, classroom or school life.

Challenge within your context	Felt difficulty	wondering

Exercise 7:

Look closely at the demographics of the students you teach. Pick a subset of them (e.g. gender, race, class or ability) and pay particular attention to them during the day. Record in a journal your general observations and emerging questions. Do these children all experience schooling in a similar way?

Brainstorm a list of units/topics you teach. Investigate the content of the resources you are using to teach these units. What perspectives seem to be present or missing (e.g. gender, race, class or ability)? Then analyze each unit by asking yourself how these resources and activities support diversity, democracy and literacy opportunities for all students.

Write down you philosophy of how you prepare your children to become democratic citizens. What role does teaching children about democracy play in your classroom? To what extent does your classroom encourage the development of participation and character traits central to a democratic citizen?