



What kind of teacher do I want to be?

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing.

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FOREWORD

Only a forester with a sharp saw can cut enough trees to accomplish a day's work. Therefore, a wise forester sharpens his saw every morning. What applies to the forester applies to a teacher even more forcefully. A wise teacher regularly sharpens his mind.

The world changes every day and the pace of change has quickened in recent times. The children in your classroom today are very different from the children who sat in that same classroom a generation ago. You cannot teach them effectively without learning new techniques and tricks. But perhaps more importantly, you can't do it without constantly challenging your beliefs and assumptions.

Unfortunately, this business of challenging yourself will take you out of your comfort zone. It may require you to do things you have never done before in ways you have never tried before.

The Creative Guides Workbook has been prepared to make that task easier and manageable for you. It takes you through a step-by-step guide to reflecting on yourself, your work, your students, their parents, your teaching subjects and your career.

It is a part of a bigger pack:

- the Creative Guides Video (30 minutes) is full of advice from inspiring Ugandan educators
- the Creative Guides Booklet is a paper version of the video
- the Creative Guides training sessions and radio shows can bring new ideas from this workbook to any African community
- the Creative Guides Website (www.edirisa.org/creativeguides) will be your future source of updates

The workbook is divided in two parts.

Part 1, **Personal Reflections for Action**, provides you with the opportunity to reflect on yourself and your career. At the end of each section is “My Action Grid” that will help you to identify the areas where you need to take action for change.

Part 2, **Team Reflection for Action**, takes you to the next level of sharing your reflections with your fellow teachers -- to be inspired and to inspire others. The exercise is more effective if you have read the Creative Guides Booklet or watched the Creative Guides Video. Each part has lead questions and statements that require your response. Please do it with keen interest and deep reflection.

We wish you a fruitful journey into your inner world, for that is the ultimate source of our power, motivation and wisdom.

PART 1

Personal Reflection For Action

1. WHO AM I?

“Who is the self that teaches?” is the question at the heart of my own vocation. I believe it is the most fundamental question we can ask about teaching and those that teach – for the sake of learning and those who learn. By addressing it openly and honestly, alone and together, we can serve our students more faithfully, enhance our own well-being, make common cause with colleagues, and help education bring more light and life to the world.”

PARKER PALMER

Parker Palmer, the renowned educator, has argued that “We teach who we are”. Indeed, in life you can’t give what you don’t have. As a teacher, aware of it or not, you give your all, not just the subject matter. Students are learning not just about the subject you teach, but even more importantly, they are influenced by your character, values, beliefs, perceptions and frustrations. Hence, the right place to begin this reflective process is examining the tricky question: Who am I?

As a human being I believe I am

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What circumstances led me into becoming a teacher?

(was it a choice of vocation, were you a victim of circumstances, or was it a pleasant accident?)

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How long have I worked as a teacher?

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Why do I continue to be a teacher?

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What are my teaching strong points?

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What are my teaching weaknesses?

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What do I believe to be my main role as a teacher?

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What frustrates me the most me about being a teacher?

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What are the most enjoyable satisfactions of being a teacher?

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What is my greatest achievement as a teacher?

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What do I need to do in order to become a more passionate, confident, optimistic and self-motivated human being?

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What is my ultimate career vision?

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Thinking About Your Answers

Continuously reflecting on your answers to these questions will help you decide if teaching is your true vocation. Self-awareness is the beginning of discovering your ideal vocation and how best to fulfill your choice. How will this new awareness affect your relationships with your students? What are your strong points and what are your weaknesses?

My Action Grid

The 3 good practices I will adopt with effect from next term	The 3 limiting practices I will stop with effect from next term
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

2. ME AND THE STUDENTS

As a teacher, your perceptions of students determine how you deal with them in and out of class and what they mean in your personal life. They even determine the extent to which you enjoy your work as a teacher. The following statements and questions are intended to guide you through the process of reflecting on your perceptions of your students. Please take some quality time to fill them in. Reflect deeply before you start answering.

I believe that students come to school to:

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I believe the following things about my students. They:

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During the last academic year, the two most important things I learnt from my students were:

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In my view the best performing student is the one who:

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When working with my students what do I do to help each and every one of them individually?

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Outside of class, is there a conducive place where students know they can find me for personal attention at established time slots?

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What activities do I use to inspire students to nurture their potential and exercise their creative genius outside the classroom?

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When I am talking to students is my use of language appropriate? Does it give them self-confidence or does it make them feel stupid, inferior or timid?

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What do I believe is the best way to discipline students?

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What is my belief about disciplining methods based on?

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Thinking about your answers

The above-questions are meant to make you pause and reflect: do I really see students in the right way? How have my relationships with students influenced how I have perceived and treated them? What have I missed over all the years I have been a teacher? How can I see students from a better and more positive perspective?

Ideally you should feel challenged that there is much you still need to learn about students. Open your mind and start looking for knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment. These may include topical conversations with fellow teachers in the staff room, peers from different walks of life, books, magazines, newspapers, seminars, workshops, con-

ferences, etc. In life, the questions you ask determine the answers you get. Deliberately ask more questions. Remember your curiosity when you were a child – revitalize it.

If you have watched the Creative Guides Video or read the Creative Guides Booklet, ask yourself: in what ways do the ideas presented challenge me as far as my perception and treatment of students is concerned? What can I do about it?

My Action Grid

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2.	2.
3.	3.

3. ME AND THE PARENTS

The role of parents goes far beyond paying school fees, providing scholastic materials and school uniforms. Unfortunately, few parents appreciate or understand the support they can give to their children's education. Some, for a variety of reasons, don't play a normal parental role; they leave parenting to the school, which it cannot always provide. As a result, it is the students that suffer most, while teachers struggle to provide. However, experience has shown that schools can implement small innovations to bridge some of the gaps left by parents.

Please respond to the statements and questions below to guide your reflection on how you can complement the role of parents.

I believe the following things about parents in my school. They:

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What parental roles do parents in my school not fulfill that negatively impact on students' learning and lives?

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What activities am I implementing to fill the sensitive gaps left by parents?

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What am I (is my school) doing to help parents appreciate and understand the positive educational support they can give their children?

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How often do I get the opportunity to interact with the parents of the students I teach to discuss matters affecting their child?

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Thinking about your answers

Students spend more time at school with teachers than at home with parents. A significant part of their life is formed at school. If you have watched the Creative Guides Video and/or read the Creative Guides Booklet, you will see that there is a lot that individual teachers and schools can do to complement the role of parents. Reflect on how you can initiate some activities in your school to complement the role of parents.

One extra hour of work by a teacher can mean so much and have a powerful impact, not only on the life of a child, but also for the whole nation. As a teacher you have so much power and knowledge in your head, heart and hands to make a difference. Will you choose to use that power and knowledge for the betterment of students – the nation’s next generation?

My Action Grid

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3.	3.

4. ME AND THE SUBJECT

“I have no question that students who learn, not professors who perform, is what teaching is all about: students who learn are the finest fruit of teachers who teach. Nor do I doubt that students learn in diverse and wondrous ways, including ways that bypass the teacher in the classroom and ways that require neither a classroom nor a teacher!”

PARKER PALMER

Why do I teach the subjects I teach?

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Do the students I teach like the subjects I teach?

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How do I know?

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Are there any signs that some students don't like my subjects? If so, what are they?

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Why do I think that these students do not like the subjects?

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Which (if any) inspiring stories about the subjects I teach do I tell students during classes?

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Which (if any) personal and group activities do I use to intensely engage students while teaching my subjects?

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Do I sometimes give students the opportunity to teach each other what they have taught themselves about the subjects? If so, how?

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Do I give students tasks that encourage them to think independently and creatively without necessarily resorting to pre-determined answers from school books?

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Describe the most memorable time where one of your students surprised you with a very creative piece of work beyond your expectation.

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Describe the most memorable time when you learnt something new about the subject you teach from one of your students.

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How many hours a week (or month) do you commit to learning something new about the subjects you teach?

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How many hours a week (or month) do you commit to learning something new about other subjects outside of what you teach?

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During school holidays do you actively research your subjects and revitalise and renew your courses? If so, how?

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During term-time, how often do you bring outside experts to talk to your students about the subjects you teach?

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Have you made a list of the career possibilities of the subjects you teach? Do you use it and the lives of inspiring achievers to stimulate students' career visions?

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Which of these sources do you use every week to get real life examples relevant to your subject: Newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, Internet?

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Apart from tests and exams, what other strategies do you use to inspire students to learn and explore their potential to the fullest?

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Thinking about your answers

Students are not empty tanks to be filled by the teacher (like a fuel pump attendant). We learn through discovery, not through facts being pumped into our heads. For this reason, the best teacher is the one who creates the conditions that enables students to continuously discover their identity (Who am I?) and their environment. Teaching is much more than lectures. Sometimes you can teach by just accompanying students on field trips, saying nothing and letting them observe, discuss and ask questions.

As a teacher you don't necessarily know everything your students need to know, even about the subjects you teach; some of them might even know things that you don't. Your ultimate role is teach students how to learn independently, so they can keep learning on their own for the rest of their lives.

My Action Grid

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PART 2

Team Reflection For Action

To enable you to get the most out of the Creative Guides Pack, we encourage you to watch the video and/or read the booklet with a small group of other teachers.

Below you will find questions for reflection and suggested actions linked to different video and booklet sections. It is important that you spend time on these questions, both individually and in a group. You will learn by trying out new ideas. You will gain confidence and support by sharing in a group as well as inspiring each other.

We strongly recommend that this be done at school or departmental level where staff commit to meet regularly, say once in a month, to share each others reflections and experiences on implementing innovations to each of the issues raised in the Creative Guides. Utilising the Creative Guides pack in this way could turn out to be a simple way of bringing about fundamental transformations in the teaching and learning processes in your school or department.

CHALLENGES

What has changed in your country and society since you were at school?

What changes do you think there may be in the next 10 years for children who are at school now?

How true is it that, as parents and teachers, we are failing to prepare children and young people to adapt and play an active part in a changing world?

What is hindering good learning in our educational system?

PROPOSAL 1: MANAGE BIG CLASSES EFFECTIVELY

Recall how you felt being part of a large class in primary or secondary school. How did it affect your learning? What were the problems of being in a large class?

Think about your own teaching situation. How can you divide your class up and give them different tasks?

Action:

Plan one lesson or topic where you divide the class into groups and ask them to do different activities. Afterwards, reflect on what went well, how the students responded, what you learnt and what you will do differently next time.

PROPOSAL 2: DARE TO DO MORE

Have you ever done something that has made your subjects more interesting to your students? What did you learn from the experience?

Action:

Plan a lesson or topic with reference to your students' daily lives, situations and activities. Afterwards, reflect on what went well, how the students responded, what you learnt and what you will do differently next time.

PROPOSAL 3: PROMOTE LEARNING BY DOING

How true is the Chinese proverb (I read and I forget, I hear and I remember, I do and I understand) for you? How much do you remember of what you read in a book or newspaper two weeks ago? How much do you remember of the last sermon you heard in church or speech at the last event you went to? How much do you remember of the last journey you made or what you were doing on the last election day – Do you remember how you voted?

Recall when you learnt to do something through trial and error or by experimenting.

Action:

Plan a lesson or topic with a practical activity. If it is not possible in class, think of something to ask your students to do after school and then get them to show or talk about it the next day. Afterwards, reflect on what went well, how the students responded, what you learnt and what you will do differently next time.

PROPOSAL 4: PROVIDE GUIDANCE

How do you feel about the idea of not using the word “teacher”?

As someone who is helping young people learn, what word would you like to be used for your profession and why?

Can you ride a bicycle? If so, how did you learn to ride it? Did someone teach you in a class? Can you learn how to ride a bicycle without getting on one – and falling down sometimes?

Action:

Plan a lesson in which students have a formal debate on the subject: “Most of the time at school should be devoted to helping us choose the best careers”. Get three people to volunteer to argue in favour of the subject and three to argue against it, alternating one in favour and one against. Limit their time to two minutes each. Get the class to respond and ask questions. Then ask them to vote on the best arguments, most convincing speaker, etc. Finally discuss possible future debate subjects with them.

PROPOSAL 5: COMPLEMENT PARENTS

Did you receive any help and encouragement when you were at school? If so, who helped or encouraged you the most and how did they help and inspire you? What difference did it make to you then and in later life – or what would have helped you more?

As a teacher, how much help or influence do you want from parents and in what ways? How could you get them involved more in their children’s education?

Action:

Organise your students to run a short workshop for their parents and guardians about some topic they have been learning about. After the workshop, share examples of how parents can help support their children’s learning. Ask what help they need themselves. Would they like to come to more workshops like this one? Consider offering to organise a regular workshop on educational support for parents.

PROPOSAL 6: BE SELF-AWARE

Which teacher had the greatest influence on you or whom you respected most when you were at school? Why was this teacher so special? How did his or her influence affect the way you teach and relate to your students?

Which teacher did you fear most when you were at school and why? What effect did he or she have on what you learnt in their classes? What can you learn from this for your own way of teaching and relating to your students?

Action:

Plan how you can make yourself more approachable and available so that students can come and talk about the subjects you teach or any personal problems. Can you make yourself available at a certain time each week for students to come with questions or problems?

PROPOSAL 7: CELEBRATE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

What signs of transformation have you seen in any of your students recently? How and why did you make a difference? How does it make you feel?

How do you think your students see you? How would they describe you? How do you think they will remember you when they are grandparents? How would you like them to remember you?

Action:

Write out a list of all the ways in which you think your students would describe you or how they will remember you when they are grandparents. Then write a list of all the things you would like them to remember about you as their teacher. Now choose one or two ways you can do something to change now, to develop your positive attributes and eliminate bad practices.

CONCLUSION

Is there any subject or aspect in this workbook missing?

What have you learnt from the exercises as an individual? As a member of a discussion group?

Has it inspired you to teach more effectively?

Has it inspired you to teach more enthusiastically and joyfully?

Action:

Please try to send your answers to the Conclusion questions and any other feedback you may have to Studio Edirisa, P.O.Box 77, Kabale, Uganda or creativeguides@edirisa.org. For further information regarding any aspect of the Creative Guides or getting Creative Guide Packs, do contact: +256 75 2558 558 and www.edirisa.org/creativeguides.

PARTING THOUGHTS

Teachers that will be remembered positively will be those who not only love the subjects they teach but can impart them effectively and enthusiastically – they are the true inspirers of the next generations, some of whom will become teachers themselves.

Fulfill your potential because the legacy that you can leave is a gift without price.

CREATIVE GUIDES

a workbook prepared by Studio Edirisa with the support by the United World College of the Adriatic, the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy), the Community Outreach Department of Kampala International University and iYES.

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