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Reflective Teaching and Learning: Why We Should Make Time to Think

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Reflective Teaching and Learning: Why We Should Make Time to Think

Summary

The demanding, competitive, and output-centred culture of higher education often trickles into our teaching where focus is on the summative product rather than the process of learning. Reflection is one means of encouraging deeper and richer understandings during the learning process, and is a form of purposeful thinking that can be used to explore complex problems, anticipate outcomes, or be used on unstructured ideas to gain clarification (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006; Ryan, 2013). Reflection can be applied in higher education to enable a learner to grow intellectually, professionally and personally (Rogers, 2001; Ryan, 2011). The process of reflection allows the learner to seek out personal meanings and identifications with the learning material and create connections with the ideas and content already known (Ash & Clayton, 2009). This process fosters further learning, as the individual develops new concepts, relationships, and perspectives and also reinforces their current understandings through this feedback system (Rogers, 2001). This workshop engages participants in a pre-facilitation activity on reflective writing used to represent the reflection process and to further illustrate what reflection is, how it can be used as a learning skill, and how it can be assessed.

Keywords

reflection, contemplation, assessment, reflective processes, deep learning

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Reflective Teaching and Learning: Why We Should Make Time to Think

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SUMMARY

The demanding, competitive, and output-centred culture of higher education often trickles into our teaching where focus is on the summative product rather than the process of learning. Reflection is one means of encouraging deeper and richer understandings during the learning process, and is a form of purposeful thinking that can be used to explore complex problems, anticipate outcomes, or be used on unstructured ideas to gain clarification (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006; Ryan, 2013). Reflection can be applied in higher education to enable a learner to grow intellectually, professionally and personally (Rogers, 2001; Ryan, 2011). The process of reflection allows the learner to seek out personal meanings and identifications with the learning material and create connections with the ideas and content already known (Ash & Clayton, 2009). This process fosters further learning, as the individual develops new concepts, relationships, and perspectives and also reinforces their current understandings through this feedback system (Rogers, 2001). This workshop engages participants in a pre-facilitation activity on reflective writing used to represent the reflection process and to further illustrate what reflection is, how it can be used as a learning skill, and how it can be assessed.

KEYWORDS: reflection, contemplation, assessment, reflective processes, deep learning

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- describe the process of reflection;
- explain the value of using reflection inside and outside the classroom for both teachers and learners;
- describe the various methods of reflection and ways of implementing reflection into their own teaching;
- evaluate the strengths and limitations of the assessment of reflection;
- incorporate self-reflective practices into their own professional development practices, and classroom curriculum.

REFERENCE SUMMARIES

Larrivee, B. & Cooper, J.M. (2006). *An educator's guide to teacher reflection*. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

In their guide to reflection for teachers, Larrivee and Cooper outline how reflective practices are critical to the development of professional competencies, and a necessity for balancing the complexities and diversities of teaching. By providing a comprehensive overview of the definitions, various types (e.g., surface vs. pedagogical), directions (e.g., in-action vs. for-action), and steps of reflection, Larrivee and Cooper provide a comprehensive understanding of how reflection can be integrated into the classroom. Larrivee and Cooper list a variety of attributes of reflective practitioners that are critical for teachers who wish to be a reflection role model and create a classroom environment that fosters and encourages reflective

practices. Teachers who imbue themselves and their classrooms with these attitudes and emotions can not only encourage reflection in themselves, but also be a reflective practitioner and foster these characteristics in their students. Overall, Larrivee and Cooper provide a succinct summation of key topics of reflection and how to integrate reflective practices into teaching and learning, and the value of teachers' role modelling the reflection process. Moreover, this article highlights the importance of workshop discussions that encourage participants to consider the value of an educator's reflective practices in their own teaching.

Moon, J.A. (2005). *Guide for busy academics No. 4. Learning through reflection*. York: Higher Education Academy.

Moon provides a guide to reflection for academic teachers and outlines how it can be valuable for their own professional development and teaching. Moon begins by defining reflection as an approach that allows an individual to generate and develop new knowledge, and has a role in many academic tasks (e.g., critical review, decision making, and self-awareness). Reflection, according to Moon, is also a critical component to academic learning, as it allows a learner to connect new concepts with information already known. This process allows for deeper learning to occur, as it slows down the process and enables a learner to consider their thoughts, access their own knowledge, and allows them time to challenge their ability to connect with the material. Moon suggests that reflection is also an aspect of professional development, as deliberate strategies (e.g., journaling, portfolios) can be integrated into the learning process that requires an individual to consciously engage with the material. Moon highlights various issues that an academic may face when integrating reflective activities into their professional practices and teaching, such as when peers and students may not understand the value or process of reflection. The article concludes by providing a variety of helpful tips to address issues of assessment. The workshop uses Moon's overview of reflection for professional development to generate discussion.

Paul, R., Beamish, A. J., Suter, V.E.A., Ruprai, C.K., Al-Muzaffar, I., & Jiraporncharoen, W. (2013). *How to...assess reflective practice*. *Education for Primary Care*, 24, 388-90.

Assessment fosters learning and drives the process of reflection; however, assessment of reflection remains a contentious area. In the article 'How to...assess reflective practice', Paul et al. (2013) outline why assessment is important and how professionals can use both formative and summative assessments to encourage and evaluate reflection. By introducing a model for deep reflection and assessment, Paul et al. highlight the cyclical nature of the reflective process and the value of tailoring assessments to the learner's needs. They conclude by outlining obstacles and considerations when integrating reflective learning into the classroom. While the article is short, the authors condense a variety of information for the reader, which can be used to guide the development of reflective practice and help professionals address potential difficulties they may encounter. The workshop discusses in detail the TINFOIL approach to assessment that is outlined in the article.

Rogers, R.R. (2001). *Reflection in higher education: A concept analysis*. *Innovative Higher Education*, 26(1), 37- 58.

Rogers provides a critical analysis of reflection and its application within high education, and a synthesis of various reflective processes that can be incorporated into teaching and learning. Rogers outlines different techniques that foster habits of reflective thinking in students both inside and outside the classroom, and summarizes various approaches, definitions, and applications of reflection for teachers. Overall, Rogers' article provides an excellent historical and pedagogical comparison of the theoretical frameworks for reflection, and allows the reader to understand the value, process, and outcomes of reflection in higher education while considering the implications and limitations of the process. The depth of this article provides supplementary material for the facilitator and much of the workshop content.

Ryan, M. (2013). The pedagogical balancing act: Teaching reflection in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 18(2), 144-55.

In this article, Ryan outlines the application of reflection into the classroom by introducing professional practice and lifelong learning as key outcomes of higher education and reflective practices. This article provides an overview of the characteristics and levels of reflection, its theoretical sources, and pedagogical techniques for engaging students by interweaving the literature with narrative accounts of reflection in teaching and learning. Ryan introduces semi-structured interviews and focus group data from students and staff on the use of reflection in university courses. Results showed that when students were expected to reflect in class, they needed to see a demonstration of reflection and the intrinsic value of the reflective process. The article provides the reader with student perspectives of reflection, how best to integrate reflective practices into the classroom, and potential limitations or issues encountered during reflective learning. The integration of data into the literature illustrates the application of reflection in the classroom, and also allows the reader to observe the author's own reflective processes. The methods of integrating reflection into the classroom and the characteristics of reflection are discussed during the workshop.

CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

Participants will be asked to complete a reflective writing exercise prior to attending the workshop. Details are provided in the Presentation Strategies section.

Duration (min)	Subject	Activity	Purpose
10	Introduction and Ice Breaker	<p>Introduce the facilitator to the group and briefly describe the objectives of the workshop.</p> <p>Participants introduce themselves and give a sentence or two about why they are interested in reflective learning and what they hope to achieve out of the workshop. The</p>	<p>Introduce the facilitator and participants. Encourage an open, warm, and inviting atmosphere for discussion.</p>

		<p>facilitator should take brief notes on the overall goals of participants and whether or not they have personal or professional desires for attending. This will help the facilitator guide the discussion towards meeting participants' goals.</p>	
15	Pre-workshop Activity Discussion	<p>Participants take out the Reflective writing exercise' (Appendix A) that they completed prior to attending the workshop.</p> <p>Divide participants into pairs and ask them to discuss the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the reflective writing exercise make you feel? And did this feeling change during the process? • How did the supplementary readings aid in your understanding of reflection, and the reflective process? • Why might an educator want to partake in their own reflective practices? • How might reflecting on your own teaching practice aid students' own reflective processes? <p>Allow pairs to discuss for 5 minutes, and then bring the participants back to a large group to discuss their experience with the reflective writing exercise.</p>	<p>Share experiences with reflection, and understandings with the pre-workshop materials. Consider the impact of self-reflection within one's own teaching practice.</p>
15	What is Reflection? Why is it of Value?	<p>1. Introduce and define reflection: Highlight the following characteristics found in the literature (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Fiddler & Marienau, 2008; Larrivee & Cooper, 2006; Moon, 1999; 2005; Ryan, 2013):</p> <p>Reflection is...</p>	<p>Introduce participants to the definition of reflection, and highlight the benefits of engaging in reflective practices.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ongoing process where skills evolve over time; • A personal commitment to enhancing professional competencies and personal learning over the life course; • Thinking honestly, deeply, and critically about your behaviour(s) and the experience of reflection; • Contemplating upon the way you work, learn, teach, study, etc. in order to identify changes and development in yourself and your actions (i.e., being self-critical and a willingness to accept responsibility); • A systematic process that encourages the development of connections between what you know and what you are learning; and • Both spontaneous and planned. <p>2. Stress the importance of reflection.</p> <p><i>"If you always do what you always did, then you'll always get what you always got" - Unknown</i></p> <p>Emphasize the value of reflection inside (professional) and outside (personal) the classroom for both teachers and students (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006; Moon, 2005; Ryan, 2013) [Refer to Appendix C, Table 1].</p> <p>3. Discussion question: <i>How do you think professional and personal reflection connect?</i></p> <p>Highlight the interconnectedness of personal reflection and reflecting on workplace projects, behaviours, and/or issues. (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006; Moon, 2005; Ryan, 2011;</p>	
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		2013). Provide an example, perhaps your own, of a time when personal reflection aided your own work. Ask participants to share their own experience or opinions on how professional and personal reflection overlap.	
5	How to Begin Your Own Reflective Process	<p>A brief lecture on beginning the process of reflection: Participants raise their hands if they currently practice reflective processes (either professionally or personally). Individuals who have raised their hands briefly explain their processes or means of reflection.</p> <p>Use the “Steps for Reflection” [refer to Appendix C, Figure 1).</p>	Explain a guide to the reflective process.
10	Methods for Reflection in the Classroom	<p>1. Activities to foster reflection. Outline the variety of methods teachers can use to encourage and facilitate reflection in the classroom (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006; Moon, 2005; Ryan, 2011) [Refer to Appendix C, Table 2].</p> <p>2. Facilitating reflection in your classroom. Use the following points to describe how a teacher may facilitate and support personal and professional reflection in the classroom (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006 ; Moon, 1999; 2005; Rogers, 2001):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define reflection, and allow students to reflect on its meaning; • respect ideas and remain open to other perspectives, beliefs and experiences; • be wholeheartedly invested in your own and others' reflection; 	Highlight the range of reflective practices used in the classroom, and encourage discussion on the use of reflection in teaching.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage discourse and feedback; • plan ahead and allow adequate time; • use a variety of methods to facilitate reflection; • ensure a conducive environment for reflection <i>**You may wish to ask participants what this means to them**</i>; • take ownership of reflection, by reflecting on your own experience with reflection, and sharing your own thoughts on the process; • encourage ongoing reflection that is embedded in everyday practices. 	
15	Reflection in the Classroom	<p>Break participants into small groups and ask them to discuss their own experiences with teaching reflective practices. Encourage the groups to discuss the good and the bad about reflection in the classroom.</p> <p>Present the following questions to talk about in their groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How have students reacted to reflection?</i> • <i>As a student, how have you reacted to reflection?</i> • <i>What are some of the barriers the limits to reflection?</i> <p>Groups discuss these questions for 5 minutes, and then ask them to reflect back to the large group.</p> <p>End this component by suggesting a few tips to help students reflect (Moon, 1999; 2005; Rogers, 2001) [Refer to Appendix C, Figure 1].</p>	Encourage participants to consider the impact of reflection for students; how students may react to the process of reflective learning; and how to guide students through the process of reflection.
15	Assessing Reflection	Discuss the value of assessing reflection, and highlight how assessment helps students develop	Demonstrate the value of assessing reflection, and provide participants

		<p>the capacity to learn through the reflective process (Moon, 1999; Paul et al., 2013). You may wish to mention that most students pay attention to what is assessed, which means that if reflection is not assessed, it is most likely to be neglected.</p> <p>1. Assessing reflection- brief lecture. Briefly discuss <u>summative</u> assessments of reflection, which occur at the end of the process and measure the outcomes of reflection; and <u>formative</u> assessments, which can be used during the process of reflection for continual improvement (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Paul et al., 2013). Emphasize that assessment of reflection is often more valuable when it is incorporated at the start of the process and integrated (and adapted) throughout (Ash & Clayton, 2009).</p> <p>Display the following points to participants using a visual aid and have them reflect on individually for 2-3 minutes (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Moon, 1999; Paul et al., 2013):</p> <p>(A) Assessment implies an external <i>objective</i> standard to measure outcomes against. Therefore, how can the <i>subjective</i> nature of reflection be assessed?</p> <p>(B) Assessment implies <i>planned</i> learning with specific outcomes; however, reflective learning is <i>emergent</i> and leads to evolving outcomes. How does one develop a rubric for this process?</p> <p>(C) How do you clarify what is acceptable reflection without</p>	<p>with guidelines to integrate the assessment of reflection into their own teaching.</p>
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		<p>suppressing a student's personal opinions, beliefs, or experiences, especially when they are controversial?</p> <p>In a large group discuss if participants have experienced any of these obstacles, and if so, how they addressed them.</p> <p>2. Models to help with assessment.</p> <p>Ash and Clayton (2009) suggest creating a rubric that expresses the various levels and quality of reflection in order to help guide students during the reflective process. Introduce possible rubrics for assessment such as Bradley's (1995) levels of reflection, which is designed to help gradually move students to higher levels of reflection.</p> <p>Finally, explain the <i>TINFOIL</i> method outlined by Paul et al. (2013; pp. 389) as guidelines for integrating assessment of reflection into their teaching.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train the trainers - Instructors must understand the principles of reflection and how to assess reflective practices. • Improving the process, will improve the outcome- Practice makes perfect. • Needs assessment - Consider what the needs are of the students when choosing the method of assessment. • Focus on the process of reflection, and not the outcome. 	
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes of reflection should be linked to the method of assessment. • Iterative process - Reflection development should be a continuous process. • Link to literature on reflective practice and assessment. 	
10	Summary	<p>1. End the session by again highlighting the benefits of professional and personal reflection. Emphasize that reflection is not just for learners, but also for teachers, and that as a role model for reflection, a teacher should integrate reflection into their everyday practices and self-development (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006; Ryan, 2013).</p> <p>2. Before ending for questions, ask participants to do a short post-workshop reflection once they leave. Suggest that they take a few minutes to write down 1 - 3 ideas that they will take away from the workshop, and to think about how they may integrate them into their own practices and/or classrooms.</p>	Summarize the workshop, and encourage participants to apply the knowledge and discussion from the workshop to their own teaching and professional practices.
Total Time: 90 minutes			

PRESENTATION STRATEGIES

Pre-Workshop: At least a week prior to the workshop, provide a handout (see Appendix A) that includes an overview of the workshop goals, supplementary information, and a brief reflective writing exercise. The exercise asks participants to engage in a short reflective writing piece prior to the workshop. Many participants may not have engaged in reflective practices prior to attending this workshop; encouraging them to participate firsthand in the process of reflection will provide them with contextual experience, and allow them to actively engage and share their experiences during workshop discussions. Encourage participants to bring their written work to the workshop, and emphasize that participants may wish to share their writing with others, but that it is not required.

Workshop: This is an interactive workshop that uses a combination of small group, large group, and reflective exercises. The lecture components of the workshop should be supported by visual aids (PowerPoint slides and the workshop handouts in Appendix B) in

order for the necessary content to be conveyed. The richness of the workshop comes from participants' interactions and reflections with and on the material. While the activities can be modified and changed based on the participants and facilitator, I encourage a significant emphasis on sharing and reflection during the workshop. Additionally, as the workshop highlights the teacher as a role model for reflection, the facilitator is encouraged to participate in his or her own reflection before and after the workshop, and to share this experience with participants. This will demonstrate the importance of educators modelling the process for students, and the value of reflection to the development of teaching practice.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

- Ash, S. & Clayton, P.H. (2009). Generating, deepening, and documenting learning: The power of critical reflection in applied learning. *Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education, 1*, 25-48.
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APPENDIX A: Pre-workshop activity

Taking Time to Learn

Why we should make time to think.

This discussion will focus on understanding the benefits of reflection. Specific focus will be on:

- Defining reflection;
- The integration of reflection into learning, and why it is a valuable life skill; and
- How to develop, practice, and assess reflection.

During the discussion we will be participating in reflection activities, so please come prepared and open for discussion!

To help prepare, here are a few readings to provide you with supplementary information:

- 1) *Guide for Busy Academics No 4.: Learning through reflection.* Found at:
<http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/researcher-development/students/resources/pgwt/learningthroughreflection.pdf>
- 2) *Meditation in higher education: The question of change, a current problem, and evidence towards a solution.* Found at:
http://www.contemplativemind.org/enewsletter/2011_Summer/Napora-biofeedback.pdf

Here are a few additional readings that are not required, but may be of interest to you:

- *Opening the contemplative mind in the classroom.* Found at:
http://www.mindfuleducation.org/Hart_Opening_Contemplative_Mind.pdf
- *Reflection and learning: Characteristics, obstacles, and implications.* Found at:
http://spuedudoc.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/denton_20092.pdf

Reflective writing exercise

(Excerpt and adapted from:

<http://www.contemplativemind.org/archives/socialjustice/practices>)

To prepare you for the discussion, please participate in this short exercise. If possible, bring the piece of writing to the workshop, and consider sharing a small piece of your writing, and your experience with the group.

- Find a comfortable and quiet place where you will not be disturbed or distracted.
- Do a short and simple breathing meditation to help clear and focus your mind and to encourage awareness (Here is a short 90s video to help you with this process <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BthDBVx048>).
- *Optional:* To help guide you through this process, you may wish to write a question or a statement you would like to reflect on (a project question, or complex problem you are having trouble solving at work). Focusing on one question can help with you clear your head of busy thoughts, and centre your writing.
- Start writing without thinking, let whatever comes to you flow onto your page. **Do not think** about what you are writing, and **do not judge** the content, style, clarity or quality of what is on your page. If you get stuck, admit it to yourself and write it down. The important thing is to always **keep your pen moving!**
- Write for 5, 10 or 15 minutes. You will know when you are finished.
- When you are done, read through what you have written **out loud**, and note how it makes you feel. Record these feelings. You may even want to reflect on them and write more!

APPENDIX B: Workshop Handout

Workshop Worksheet

Throughout this workshop, try and fill in the answers to the following questions.

1. What are the characteristics of reflection?

2. What is the difference between 'professional' reflection, and 'personal' reflection? What are some benefits of both types of reflection?

3. What are the 4 key steps in the reflection process?

4. How can reflection be used in the classroom?

5. What are some of the benefits and limitations to reflection in the classroom?

6. What is the TINFOIL method used for? And what does the acronym mean?

APPENDIX C: Facilitator’s Guide- Supplementary Material

Table 1. The significance of professional and personal reflective practices.

Professional	Personal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to deeper learning • Revises understandings • Helps identify the learners needs and areas of improvement • Prompts thinking about complex ideas • Promotes collaboration • Self-empowering • Plan for future action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhances capabilities • Refreshes what you know to be true • Fosters desirable attributes (e.g., adaptability, imagination, confidence) • Prepares students for success in future learning • Self-aware & self-critical

Figure 1. Steps for reflection

1. First you must slow down and make an active choice to examine yourself, your work, and/or your surroundings.
2. Look back at the event, idea, or object, and begin to ask yourself to describe it. You may wish to use the following probes:
 - *Describe the problem?*
 - *What do you know about the situation/problem?*
 - *Who is involved?*
 - *What did you learn?*
3. Begin to analyze or interpret it from various perspectives; but remember, you want to be honest with yourself, not offensive or overly critical. You may wish to use the following probes:
 - *What are your feelings, thoughts, or perceptions about the problem?*
 - *What are your beliefs about your knowledge of the problem?*
 - *What are others' expectations and/or beliefs about the problem?*
4. Think about the outcomes, and what you have gained as a learner from the experience. You may wish to use the following probes:
 - *Are you able to solve the problem?*
 - *What did you learn?*
 - *What could have been done differently?*
 - *What needs to be improved upon and how might you do this?*

Table 2. Modes of reflection for the classroom

Reading	Literature, case studies, and examples of critical reflection in practice.
Writing	Learning portfolios, journaling, narratives, blogs, wikis, online discussions, and creative writing (e.g., poetry, short stories).
Doing	Group work, simulations, art (e.g., photography, painting), professional learning experiences, action research, meditation, and mindfulness.
Speaking	Discussions, focus groups, teaching, one minute presentations, mentoring, and performing arts.

Figure 2. Tips for guiding classroom reflection

- Use **open** questions;
- Do not assume they will be good at it! Give them opportunities to develop reflection skills;
- Be **clear** with your expectations and goals;
- Show them the value of reflection;
- Be **consistent** with asking them to reflect;
- Suggest students include other media into their reflection for **prompts**
- Post aside regular **time** to discuss their reflection (Best done at the start or end of a class);
- Provide reflection **examples** for comparison.