

Reflection (2000 words) 50%

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I used the prompt(s):

1. What is the Jaspers ERAS model
2. What does the Jaspers ERAS model look like?

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Introduction.

This reflection aims to explore my professional development as a Teaching Assistant and an undergraduate student on the Foundation Degree in Inclusive Education. Its purpose is to consider my experiences, understand the reasons behind my practice, and identify areas for growth. The reflection is structured using Jasper's (2013) ERA model, which encompasses Experience, Reflection, and Action, providing a clear framework for analysis. University of Cambridge (2025)

I will focus on key aspects such as inclusive practice, professional learning, collaboration, confidence, and professional identity. I will examine how my practical experience supporting learners with diverse needs connects with my academic studies, highlighting how theory has enhanced my understanding and approach. Areas of development include adapting teaching strategies for learners with dyslexia Morsanyi et al. (2025), ensuring physical and educational inclusion, and improving communication and technology skills. Additionally, I will reflect on how university learning has influenced my confidence and broadened my perspective on creating genuine opportunities for participation and independence.

Overall, this reflection will demonstrate how my role as a Teaching Assistant complements and is enriched by my academic journey, supporting my long-term ambition of progressing into a career as a PE teacher and further developing my professional skills.

Experience

One of the most significant changes I have experienced since beginning the Foundation Degree is the way I connect academic learning with my everyday professional practice. Before starting university, I already had ten years of experience as a Teaching Assistant (TA) and had developed strategies that I felt worked well. However, studying at Foundation Degree level has encouraged me to move beyond simply knowing what to do and consider why I am doing it and what impact it has on the learner. This has challenged some of my previous assumptions and has encouraged me to evaluate whether my approaches are genuinely supporting independence, participation and progress.

Jasper's (2013) ERA model has helped me understand reflection as an ongoing process involving experience, reflection and action. My experiences in school provide the starting point, but reflection allows me to consider what those experiences mean and how university learning can influence my future practice. I can then apply new knowledge in school and reflect again on the outcome. This has created a stronger connection between my role as a student and my professional role as a TA. Rather than viewing university learning and work as separate, I now recognise that they can continually inform each other.

Reflection

My development of dyslexia-friendly practice is a clear example of how theory has influenced my professional awareness. Through my university learning, I have developed a greater understanding of the potential barriers that written instructions and processing demands can create for a learner with dyslexia. I now consider how instructions are presented before the learner begins a task and use shorter and clearer instructions, verbal explanations, visual prompts and additional processing time. Rather than seeing these strategies simply as ways of helping when a learner struggles, I now understand them as proactive approaches to reducing barriers to learning. This has changed my understanding of the TA role because I recognise that effective support is not only about responding to difficulties but also about anticipating and reducing barriers.

This has also encouraged me to critically reflect on my previous practice. Some of the strategies I used before starting the degree were based mainly on experience and intuition. Although these approaches were often effective, I did not always have the theory knowledge to explain why they were appropriate. Studying at university

has therefore increased my confidence and competence because I can now use theory to support professional decision-making. Jasper's (2013) concept of reflective practice is particularly relevant because it emphasises the importance of reflecting on professional action rather than simply repeating established routines. I now feel more able to question my practice and consider whether there may be a more effective approach.

My understanding of inclusion has developed in a similar way. I have always recognised the importance of ensuring that my wheelchair-using learner can access resources and move safely around the classroom. However, studying inclusive education has encouraged me to think beyond simply assisting the learner. I now consider whether the environment, equipment or activity itself creates unnecessary barriers and whether adaptations could increase independence. This represents an important development in my professional identity because I increasingly see myself not just as someone who provides support, but as someone who can contribute to creating a more inclusive learning environment.

My experiences in PE have particularly influenced my longer-term professional identity. Previously, I might have focused primarily on ensuring that the learner could take part. My university learning has encouraged me to think more critically about what meaningful participation means. I now consider whether the learner is participating alongside their peers and whether the activity allows them to contribute meaningfully. Adapting equipment, rules or activities can sometimes enable the learner to participate in the same lesson rather than being given a separate task. These experiences have strengthened my ambition to become a PE teacher because I have seen the importance of combining practical experience with academic understanding to create inclusive opportunities for learners.

Another important area of development has been my understanding of independence. As a TA, my natural response can sometimes be to help a learner quickly when they are struggling. However, my learning has challenged the assumption that immediate assistance is always the most supportive response. I now try to use prompts, encouragement and appropriate adaptations before taking over a task. This has helped me recognise that effective support should not simply make learning easier; it should enable learners to develop their own skills, confidence and independence.

The Professional Skills Self-Assessment also helped me identify my strengths and areas for development. I recognise that adapting activities and responding to individual learner needs are strengths that are important to my current practice. However, I need to develop my confidence in professional communication and in sharing my observations and ideas with colleagues. This is an important area of continuing professional development (CPD), as professional practice is collaborative and requires effective communication with teachers and other professionals.

Developing this confidence will allow me to contribute more effectively while continuing to recognise the expertise of others.

My development has also been personal as well as professional. Balancing university, work, family and hobbies has been challenging, but I am proud of the resilience and determination I have developed. Feedback from Senior Lecturer at UWTSD, regarding my development in confidence, resilience and determination has encouraged me to recognise the progress I have made. I have learned that professional development is not only about gaining knowledge but also about developing the confidence and resilience needed to apply that knowledge.

Actions

Overall, my professional identity has developed from being an experienced TA who relied mainly on practical knowledge to becoming a more reflective practitioner who can connect experience, theory and evidence. The Foundation Degree has encouraged me to question assumptions, evaluate my practice and recognise areas for continued development. It has shown me that CPD is an ongoing process rather than something that ends when a qualification is completed. Moving forward, I want to continue developing my professional communication, inclusive practice and knowledge of PE so that I can build on my existing strengths and progress towards my longer-term goal of becoming a PE teacher.

My reflection has identified three main areas for future development: continuing to apply inclusive and dyslexia-friendly strategies, developing my professional communication and leadership skills, and developing my knowledge and experience in inclusive PE as I work towards my longer-term ambition of becoming a PE teacher. These priorities will support my development as an LSA/TA, improve outcomes for learners and help me make effective use of my remaining time as a university student.

My first priority is to continue developing my knowledge of inclusive practice and assistive technology. The knowledge I have gained through the Foundation Degree has already changed how I support my learner, particularly through my use of dyslexia-friendly strategies. Over the next six to twelve months, I will attend or complete relevant CPD where available and research strategies such as speech-to-text, text-to-speech, accessible digital resources and adapted equipment. I will discuss appropriate approaches with relevant staff and consider my learner's individual needs before introducing them. I will measure my progress by recording which strategies I have explored, seeking feedback from colleagues and reflecting on whether the strategies improve the learner's independence, engagement and confidence. This will help me provide more personalised support and ensure that I continue applying academic learning to my professional practice.

My second priority is to develop my confidence in communicating and collaborating with colleagues. I recognise that I have valuable observations because I work closely

with my learner, but I can sometimes feel hesitant about approaching colleagues with ideas. Over the next six to twelve months, I will aim to contribute more actively to professional discussions, share relevant observations and suggest strategies when appropriate. I will seek feedback from colleagues and reflect on my communication after meetings or discussions. I will measure my progress by identifying situations where I have contributed, recording feedback received and considering how my confidence develops over time. This will help me become more confident as a member of the wider professional community and prepare me for increased responsibility and potential leadership opportunities in the future.

My third priority is to develop my knowledge and experience of inclusive PE. My longer-term ambition is to become a PE teacher, so I want to use the remainder of my Foundation Degree to develop this area further. I will look for opportunities to observe PE teachers, gain experience of adapting activities and research inclusive approaches to PE. I will consider how equipment, rules, instructions and activities can be adapted without unnecessarily separating learners from their peers. I will also explore relevant CPD and consider what further qualifications or training I may need to progress towards teaching. I will measure my progress by recording observations, training completed and examples of adaptations I have considered or used. Developing this knowledge will benefit me personally by bringing me closer to my career goal while also helping me provide more inclusive opportunities for learners.

Time management will be important in achieving all three priorities. Balancing work, university, family and hobbies is one of my biggest challenges, so I will continue using planning strategies to manage deadlines and responsibilities. I will break larger university tasks into smaller stages and plan study time around my existing commitments. This will help me maintain a realistic balance and continue progressing towards completing my degree in 2028 without neglecting my other responsibilities.

I also intend to continue using reflective practice throughout my professional development. I will use experiences from school as opportunities to consider what happened, what I learned and what I could do differently. I will seek feedback from colleagues and tutors, engage with relevant CPD and use academic learning to inform future decisions. This will create an ongoing cycle in which university learning influences my practice, my practice provides new experiences to reflect upon, and reflection identifies further areas for learning and development. In the longer term, I hope to progress towards becoming a PE teacher. My ten years of experience as a Teaching Assistant have given me a strong understanding of individual learners and inclusive support, while the Foundation Degree is helping me develop the academic knowledge and critical thinking needed for further professional development. I want to continue building on both areas so that I can eventually combine my passion for PE with my understanding of inclusive education.

Conclusion

Using Jasper's (2013) ERA model has enabled me to reflect on the relationship between my professional practice and my learning as an undergraduate student. The most important learning I have gained is that my experience as a Teaching Assistant and my Foundation Degree are closely connected. My ten years of professional experience have developed my practical knowledge and understanding of supporting learners, while university study has helped me understand the theories and reasons behind the approaches I use.

My understanding of inclusive practice has developed significantly, particularly through supporting a learner with dyslexia and adapting activities to meet individual needs. I have become more confident in using strategies such as clear instructions, visual prompts, verbal explanations and additional processing time, as well as adapting PE activities to support participation.

I have also developed personally as a student, demonstrating resilience and commitment while balancing my studies with work and other responsibilities. Reflective practice has helped me recognise my strengths, identify areas for development and consider how I can improve my future practice.

Going forward, I will continue to engage in professional development and lifelong learning by building my knowledge of inclusive education, communication and PE. My long-term ambition to become a PE teacher will be supported by continuing to connect academic learning with practical experience and using reflection to inform my professional growth.

References

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