



Professional graduate certificate in education (PGCE) (PCET)

Title: Critical reflective evaluation of the overall Professional Teaching Experience, which this portfolio applies to including any pastoral care / learner welfare duties or actions undertaken, including a critical review of your use of assessment of and for learning during your teaching practice experience.

Module: PROFESSIONAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE [ECPT 6002 & 7002]

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This portfolio applies to Critical reflective evaluation of the overall Professional Teaching Experience, including any pastoral care / learner welfare duties or actions undertaken and including a critical review of use of assessment of learning during teaching practice experience.

Introduction

Teachers play a significant role in shaping the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning practices. Research on effective teaching has shown that effective practice is linked to inquiry, reflection, and continuous professional growth (Harris, 1998). The professional development of teachers takes many forms ranging from activities set by school administration to personal reflective practices about classroom experiences. Schon (1996) defined reflective practice as thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline. For teaching, reflective practice refers to the teacher's process of studying his or her own teaching methods and determining what works best for the students. Thus, teachers' reflective practices are necessary to teach 'effectively' and they address an important issue in providing meaningful lessons to students. (FE) teachers as well as the teachers of other grades can be supported to be involved in reflective practices on their own experiences.

The goal of this essay is to investigate the reflective practices that I believe that are most likely to impact upon my professional practice in the future. I intend to exercise initiative and personal responsibility to assess my teaching practice experience and identify opportunities for personal and professional development following completion of the PGCE/PCET programme in University of Wales Trinity Saint David .

My interest in Egyptology and history has been a constant in my educational life. My interest in Egyptian history, life, geography, religion and customs began at the age of

thirteen before graduation from intermediate school. I regularly lecture to Egyptology and Archaeology Societies throughout schools, colleges and community centres in Wales. I always supported students with learning difficulties and challenging behaviour .

This year I joined Postgraduate Certificate in Education. I wanted to follow this PCET course since on many occasions I felt helpless in my work about how I should tackle students, problems that may arise from time to time and to understand better student's needs and behaviour. This will surely help me to be of better service to students and at the same time enjoy my work more, going home relaxed with less tension due to problems at work.

Working as lecturer in college fulfilled my dream, which was to teach, although not as I originally wished, but I can say that I am very happy with my job.

This is not an easy job! Although there are many ways to teach effectively, good instructors have several qualities in common. They are prepared, set clear and fair expectations, have a positive attitude, are patient with students, and assess their teaching on a regular basis. They can adjust their teaching strategies to fit both the students and the material, recognizing that different students learn in different ways.

I have identified a theory which underlines the reflection. Putting this theory into practice should be interesting and should challenge me as a professional. I propose to hone my skills in specific areas in a way which will build on my ten years of experience to date. Introducing new experiences will help me to grow as a professional. Continued learning will enable me to gain the kind of skills that assist me in connecting to the world that my students inhabit. Refreshing my understanding of fundamental concepts and mastering essential skills will enable me to enter fully into the teaching experience, enjoying the successes and finding solutions to problem areas.

Teaching ancient Egyptian history , I realized that students have some problems related to history learning and some of these problems are related to their previous learning experiences in early grades. These problems are brought to the upper grades if they were not solved in the earlier grades. It can be said that, students do not learn well and as we desire, and I believe that some of these problems are related to the teaching, in other words, it is directly related to the way we teach the ancient Egyptian history topics.

In my country (Brazil) teachers are responsible for teaching history as well as teaching other subjects. As far as I am concerned, teaching history especially to 6th and 7th grades is difficult for many school teachers. In this respect, teachers in these levels should be supported by means of a continuous program that involves several different components such as seminars, lesson observations, interviews, and reflective practices.

With the reflection from the experience in Egyptologist, it can be shown a path to another source of knowledge; this knowledge base might be called on experience or practical knowledge related considerations, judgments and actions in specific situations.

This knowledge, in fact, is part of the professional content, but is used at a largely verbal and individual level and shapes part of a professional level performance that generally is accepted as valid (Spencer, 2001)

Practical knowledge in teaching is displayed in the form of competition judgment in specific situations, understanding where units are created, based on a series of previous experiences of similar situations (Zastrow, 2009). The way of knowledge is characterized by judgment or the ability to make important distinctions. Through knowledge, the ability to make a judgment of specific situations that are equal, but not identical, can be developed.

Gibb's reflective cycle

Gibb's model acknowledges that personal feelings influence the situation and how it is reflected upon. It builds on Boud's model by breaking down reflection into evaluation of the events and analysis and there is a clear link between the learning that has happened from the experience and future practice.

However, despite the further breakdown, it can be argued that this model could still result in fairly superficial reflection as it doesn't refer to critical thinking / analysis or reflection. It doesn't take into consideration assumptions that you may hold about the experience, the need to look objectively at different perspectives, and there doesn't seem to be an explicit suggestion that the learning will result in a change of assumptions, perspectives or practice. A legitimately response to the question could be 'What would you do next time?' by answering that you would do the same, but does that constitute deep level reflection?

Alternatively, other theorists have broken down the cycle into further stages, an example of which is Gibb's reflective cycle, see Figure

Pastoral care

Pastoral care is not merely a complementary practice; it consists of policy and practices fully integrated throughout the teaching and learning and structural organisation of a school to effectively meet the personal, social (wellbeing) and academic needs of students and staff.

The health and wellbeing of students is increasingly being attributed to school conditions, school relationships, means of fulfilment, and health status (Konu, Alanen, Lintonen & Rimpela, 2002).

From this perspective, pastoral care can assist students to develop positive self-esteem, healthy risk taking, goal setting and negotiation, thus enhancing their strengths and other protective factors contributing to their resiliency as well as developing a sense of social

cohesion that together can improve their overall health and wellbeing (Nadge, 2005 and Doll & Lyon, 1998).

Quality pastoral care focuses on the whole student (personal, social, and academic) and it engages all members of the school community as providers of pastoral care. It actively involves the community in consistent, comprehensive, multi-level activities which incorporate whole-school approaches, class or other group approaches, individual programs (early intervention), and casework.

Reflection and Evaluation

Reflection and evaluation of my own practice in the classroom forms an integral part of the teaching process. These skills need to be developed during my course to ensure that the basic teaching skills that I need to possess and utilise throughout my entire teaching career. It is through reflection and evaluation that my experience of professional development enables me to become a more proficient and effective with experience.

Reflection and evaluation should be considered as positive aspects of teaching. As a teacher, reflective on practice and evaluation of my performance identifies what went well, what did not go so well, or not as planned, why, and to think up alternate possibilities and methodologies which would be more appropriate in further practice. This is not an exercise in emphasising faults or weakness but should be viewed as a way of identifying strengths together with areas that need further development.

Teachers plan and organise learning experiences which they feel will benefit their pupils. Learning activities rarely work out the way they are planned. At times they are more effective than envisaged. Teachers thus need to reflect and assess the outcomes of a learning activity and evaluate the degree of success or failure of their performance. As a teacher, this

exercise helps me in re-planning and changing my approaches as I gain experience;
subsequently my practice it will be more effective with experience

Proctor, Entwistle, Judge & McKenzie-Murdoch (1995) outline five steps in the exercise of reflection and evaluation, or as they call it, self-appraisal. These include:

1. Identification of critical incidents
2. Reflection and analyses
3. Learning about oneself
4. Application of the learning
5. Self-monitoring

Identifying critical incidents during classroom practice refers to a particular situation created in a learning context which highlights a barrier or facilitation to the learning process.

According to Tripp (1993), the significance of the incident or event makes it 'critical'.

Incidents happen, but critical incidents are produced by the way we look at a situation, it is an interpretation of the significance of the event. p.8

Self-Evaluation and Reflection

Communication

- a) This month has been a super month. I am settling in and I'm happy about it. I am happy with myself. I am in the right place.
- b) Good communication skills are an important asset which every teacher should possess, communicate with my students determines how much they learn and the type of relationship maintained with them.
- c) After my second month in the PCET program , I feel that I have acquired a few of these skills from the time I have spent in the classroom.

Attitude in class

- d) Firstly, I have found that it is important to have a positive attitude in the classroom.
Greeting the students with a smile and a joke in the morning will set the mood for their whole day. I think that this has helped me create a friendly relationship with my students.
- e) Every morning, I greet each student and ask them questions about what they did after college the previous day or if they had problems with their assignment .
- f) Once they saw that I was joking around with them, they started trusting me more and wanting to spend time with me every morning.
- g) These few minutes every morning helped students to relax which meant that when it was time to start lessons, they would settle down easier.
- h) Having a friendly attitude with students means that they will trust you more.

Non- verbal communication

- a) Apart from talking to students, non-verbal communication is also a very important skill to achieve.
- b) Things such as your position in class, movement and gestures all have an effect on the students.
- c) During the past week I noticed that the students paid more attention when I was explaining something from the front centre of the class in front of the board, rather than at the back corner of the class next to the monitor.
- d) Because of this I found myself constantly shifting between the two. If I needed to use the monitor during the lesson I would constantly go to the front of the class when explaining.
- e) I also noticed that when I pointed to things such as pictures or particular words, the students remembered them more.

- f) My voice was also something which I observed. The students have now grown accustomed to my voice. They can tell by my pitch and tone whether I am joking or if I am getting angry. They know the voice I use when I am explaining or when I am asking them questions.
- g) My facial expressions and eye contact are also something which they have become used to. Some students have a habit of asking questions when I know that they know the answer, having just explained it. They just feel the need to keep asking questions. When this happens, I usually do not answer them and from the look on my face they can tell that it is silly of them to ask such a thing.
- h) All these are different types of nonverbal communication, which although not as obvious as verbal communication, are just as important and effective.
- i) Personal qualities and attitudes of a teacher
- j) There are certain qualities and attitudes which a good effective teacher must possess. These attitudes will make the teaching job more enjoyable.
- k) I have noticed that there are teachers who come to college in the morning with a very negative attitude.
- l) I think that this is what makes their day less enjoyable. From my perspective, I have found the job to be extremely tiring but also very fun and rewarding.
- m) I look forward to the fun activities which the day holds and all the laughter I will share with my class.
- n) The lessons that is planned also have a lot to do with this. When planning lessons, one must keep in mind how they are going to be delivered and how much fun not only the children will have but also you as a teacher.
- o) These qualities and attitudes are what a teacher should seek to possess because once you have them, the job will be less difficult and more fun .

Finally

- a) At the end of my fourth month, I reflected upon these communication skills.
- b) I found that I was quite happy with the way I am communicating with my class.
- c) My tutor has also highlighted some of my communication skills and praised me for these skills which made me more motivated to keep perfecting my communication skills.
- d) I believe that good communication is what will teach the students what you want them to know. It also creates a positive vibe in the class room where the students feel comfortable speaking and being themselves

Self-Reflection

- a) I have maximized the opportunity in the classroom by constructing a PowerPoint presentation, which included links to audio and video files, providing technological support for visual learners and teaching in large-group contexts (Race, 2005, p. 121) This saved me time from writing on the whiteboard and helped me to enhance the learning environment by bringing the outdoors inside using technology and simulation .
- b) I identified Time management as a weakness in both of my micro sessions and so my failure to allocate time limitations for individual tasks resulted in detrimental effects to the student learning process. On the day of my classroom session I found that students were quite able when it came to answering questions, solving problems and finishing the tasks I set them with ease. I could have made the most of the time I had left but didn't. I did try and present quiz questions to the class, but these were answered instantly and so my session finished short. I should have quickly devised some other simple activities which would have taken little time to prepare, such as: post-it questions from the class to answer to the whole group;

the explaining of past exam questions; giving brief overviews of the intended learning outcomes for the next couple of lectures (Race & Pickford, 2007, p. 74).

- c) The lesson plan goes from individual silent reflection to individual open reflection to a group “project” of sorts to finally end with a full-class discussion. My thought was that this would help students “ramp up” to a discussion by letting them think of and develop ideas alone and in small groups together before bringing them up to everyone (and potentially having to argue over them with their classmates)
- d) I also got the impression that everyone was happy with the initial analysis and sharing activity. I feel I could have made it a bit more organized, either by literally having everyone in a circle and just sticking to the order that students are sitting in, or by being a bit more focused with my groupings of responses.
- e) I’m glad that students got a lot out of it, but I think it needs some tweaking to make it seem more cohesive and connected to the remainder of the lesson.
- f) Ultimately, I am quite happy with how my teaching presentation worked out. I think that it demonstrated the effectiveness in practice of what I had intended to do in theory when I wrote the lesson plan, combining elements of different teaching approaches into a straightforward, cohesive lesson. I also like that, as far as I can tell, the full-class discussion of a text can remain intact in combination with other kinds of analytical activities;
- g) I’m glad that students got enough out of my lesson that they feel the desire to use parts of it (e.g. the character-focused small group activity), and even more glad that other people’s presentations had elements that I’d like to adapt to my own lessons.

Conclusion

Reflective practice as a concept used in education studies and pedagogy was emphasized by many investigators. Reflective practice is 'a set of abilities and skills to indicate the taking of a critical stance, an orientation to problem solving or state of mind. This essay has attempted to take an overview of professional development through reflective practice in terms of teaching , what is meant by reflection, the key Theorists associated with Reflection, and its practical use in professional practice. Change in practice plays an important part in professional development and, while I believe that self-reflection is important, it can only be achieved by reflecting with other colleagues. Identifying discrepancies between espoused theories and theories in use will further professional development .

My personal goal is to become a role model for success in teaching and training students to succeed, reaching managerial levels and starting entrepreneurships. In order for me to remain on track I must become self-aware. Self-awareness and self-analysis are important for my own career development.

Part of my development plan is to use mock, practice sessions in preparation for real time presentations to increase confidence and improve time management. The study undertaken in the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PCET) has given me good experience and increased my confidence levels. I intend to apply for further short courses, seminars and workshops on effective teaching and quality development.

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