The Power of Student Reflection for Significant Learning

Doane College
28 Jan. 2014

John Zubizarreta
Columbia College, SC U.S.A.
jzubizarreta@columbiasc.edu
What is Reflection?


- Considering the process of our own learning: **metacognition**.
- **Critical** review of behavior or product.
- Building **theory** from observations.
- Engaging in personal or **self development**.
- Making **decisions** or resolving **uncertainties**.
- **Empowering** or emancipating ourselves as **individuals**.
Role of Reflection in “Deep” or “Significant” Learning


Surface Knowledge

Reflection Experience (Active Learning)

Deep or Significant Learning
Guidelines for Reflection Activities
(Bringle & Hatcher, “Reflection in Service Learning,” Educational Horizon, Summer 1999: 179-85)

Reflection activities should . . .

- Link experience to learning.
- Be guided.
- Occur regularly.
- Involve feedback.
- Clarify values.
Reflection Cycle
Helen Barrett, “Reflection for Learning”
(http://sites.google.com/site/reflection4learning/why-reflect)
Example of using Kolb's Learning Cycle

• **Experience** – You give a 5-minute presentation in class and receive low marks for presentation style.

• **Observation and reflection** – You ran over 5 minutes and kept forgetting what you wanted to say.

• **Development of ideas** – You speak to your teacher and peer tutor advice on presentation techniques. You note some ideas on how to prepare differently next time.

• **Testing ideas in practice** – You prepare your presentation in advance. You have some notes for reference. You practice delivering your presentation within 5 minutes.

The Three *W*’s of Reflective Writing

0. **what?**

1. **what next?**

2. **so what?**

[Diagram showing the three 'W's connected in a cycle]
Reflective Writing Structure

• **What? (description)**
  - What happened? Achieved? Learned?
  - Who was involved?
  - When & where? Conditions?

• **So what? (interpretation)**
  - What is most important/interesting/relevant/useful aspect of the event/idea/situation?
  - How can it be explained?
  - How is it similar to/different from others?

• **What next? (outcome)**
  - What have I learned?
  - How can it be connected/applied in the future?

Characteristics of Reflective Learners

- Self-aware and self-critical.
- Honest about themselves.
- Open to criticism and feedback.
- Objective in weighing up evidence.
- Open/prepared to try different approaches to learning.
- Curious.
- Motivated to improve.
- More able to learn independently.

http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsd/4_resource/reflective.html
And just as important:

- Reflective learning is a transferable skill
  - Across courses
  - Across disciplines
  - Across institutions
- Life-long learning habit
Levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy

Complexity and difficulty are different.

Complexity establishes the *level* of thought; difficulty determines the *amount* of effort within each level.

-From David A. Sousa, *How the Brain Learns*, 2nd ed. (Corwin, 2001)
Upon Further Reflection, a Few Random Thoughts
By SAMUEL G. FREEDMAN
New York Times 30 August 2006

• “trendiest trend in all of education”
• “the consecration of emotion and feeling”
• “process over content . . . confessional, therapeutic strain of American culture”
• “loosey goosey” substitute for “critique, evaluation, analysis [with actual] criteria”
• “fashionable folderol”
Classroom Critical Incident Questionnaire
(Brookfield, 1995, p. 115)

• At what moment in the class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
• At what moment in the class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening?
• What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most affirming and helpful?
• What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most puzzling or confusing?
• What about the class this week surprised you the most?

[Students turn in one copy, face down, at end of week as they leave class. They keep one copy to include in their learning portfolios, where they summarize and analyze record of responses and posit future learning goals.]
Reflect! Think-Pair-Share & Square the Pairs

- Reflect on a strategy for reflection.
- Pair with a colleague or peer and share/critique.
- Two pairs join to form a square.
Getting to Know . . .

Two of the following statements are true; one is not true. **Which one?**

1.
2.
3.
Fortune Cookie, “Tootsie Roll,”® or “Dum Dum”® Surprise

- Quad groups.
- Open cookie, candy, or lollipop.
- Reflect on “fortune” and share with group.

How could you use the idea to “cover content” or discuss course design, policies, expectations while building reflective learning habits and skills?
Tips for Encouraging Reflective Learning

- Journal, learning log, blog, wiki.
- SGID “Small Group Instructional Diagnosis” (Black, 1998), midterm assessments.
- “Critical Incident Questionnaire” (Brookfield, 1995).
- Online threaded discussions, listservs, discussion circles.
- Student response systems (VoiceThread, Soo Meta, Ask3).
- One-minute papers, CATS (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

What would you add?
Resources on Reflection in Learning

More Resources . . .


A couple of useful web sites:

- [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/new-to-teaching/STEM-resources/teaching-reflective-writing](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/new-to-teaching/STEM-resources/teaching-reflective-writing)
- [http://cloudworks.ac.uk/cloudscape/view/2063](http://cloudworks.ac.uk/cloudscape/view/2063)