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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH
CENTRE FOR TEACHING SUPPORT



COURSE CODE:

HET 809

COURSE TITLE:

REFLECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

LECTURER:

PROF. SAMUEL ~~ESSIEN~~ - BAIDOO

Sp. (ETS)

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COHORT:

MoH T H E 2024 BATCH 2 GROUP 2

END - OF - SEMESTER TERM PAPER

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Question 1

Introduction to reflective teaching and learning

The process by which teachers assess their own teaching methods, choices, and experiences critically in order to become more effective in the classroom is known as “reflection in teaching.” Teachers must carefully analyse the rationale behind their decisions, evaluate the effect on students’ learning, and pinpoint areas for improvement as part of this process, which goes beyond just going over lessons to determine what worked or didn’t. Reflective practice helps teachers become more self-aware, intentional, and flexible in their teaching, which eventually improves their capacity to fulfil the various needs of their pupils.

There are numerous ways to reflect, including journaling, peer review, self-evaluation, and group conversations with coworkers. These techniques offer various viewpoints on the efficacy of instruction and are crucial elements of professional development. The practice of reflection is becoming more and more important to maintaining excellent teaching standards as the educational landscape changes due to new technologies, pedagogical approaches, and learner requirements.

The Impact of Reflective Teaching on Professional Development

Although the idea of reflective teaching is not new, its importance has recently come to light, particularly in higher education, where instructors are frequently in charge of assisting students in navigating challenging, life-changing educational situations. My

growth as an educator has been greatly impacted by the course HET 809: Reflective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, which has radically altered the way I approach teaching and learning. Compared to other courses, this one introduced me to the concepts of reflective practice in a more methodical and structured manner.

I had a rudimentary understanding of reflection before to taking the course. Like many teachers, there were times when I assessed my lessons solely on how well or poorly they went, without delving further into the causes of their success or failure. This kind of introspection was frequently less proactive and more reactive. I would mentally note that I should adapt my approach the next time a class didn't live up to my expectations, but there wasn't much purpose in those adjustments. However, I discovered via HET 809 that genuine reflective practice is an intentional, ongoing, and purposeful activity rather than a random exercise. To improve their efficacy as teachers, educators must practise critical thinking, challenge their presumptions, and make evidence-based decisions.

Structured Reflection: Beyond Surface-Level Assessments

The focus on organised reflection in HET 809 was one of its most beneficial features; it enabled me to go beyond cursory evaluations. In addition to considering what went well or poorly in the classroom, structured reflection pushes teachers to consider the underlying causes of those results. For example, structured reflection encouraged me to ask more probing questions when students didn't participate in a specific session, instead than blaming it on their lack of interest or preparation: Was my method of

instruction appropriate for the material being covered? Did I convey the information clearly? Did my lesson plan contain any unintended biases or presumptions?

My teaching has changed as a result of this deeper level of reflection. I started to see how my own teaching style, communication strategies, and even my presumptions about the skills of my students could have a big impact on how effectively they engaged with the content. I have been able to confront my own prejudices and assumptions by critically analysing these elements, which has enabled me to take a more adaptable and responsive pedagogical stance. For example, after some introspection, I discovered that many students find large group talks scary, despite my prior assumption that all students were at ease in such settings. As a result, I now use interactive techniques and smaller group discussions to motivate all students to participate.

Reflective Models: In-Action and On-Action Reflection.

Learning about Donald Schön's theories of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action has been a crucial part of my development as a reflective teacher. These ideas are now crucial in determining how I approach reflection in my work as a teacher. The capacity to think quickly and make quick adjustments when teaching is known as reflection-in-action. In higher education, where classroom dynamics can quickly shift based on students' responses to the subject, this type of in-the-moment reflection is essential. In contrast, reflection-on-action is a more intentional post-lesson study in which educators examine their methods after the fact.

Applying both forms of reflection has improved my instruction in a number of ways. For instance, I now engage in reflection-in-action during lessons by changing my strategy when I observe that students are having difficulty understanding a certain idea. In one instance, I became aware that the intricacy of the subject matter was causing the students to get disinterested halfway through a lecture. Through introspection, I was able to take a time to think things through, simplify the ideas, and ask them questions to make sure they understood. This in-the-moment modification made sure the instruction continued to be effective.

I could do a more thorough analysis of the lesson later on using reflection-on-action. In order to find any gaps in my explanation and modify future lesson plans appropriately, I looked at the reasons why students had initially found the content difficult. In addition to making the lesson better right away, this reflective method helped me approach related subjects in the future and made sure that my instruction changed to meet the needs of the students.

The Role of Feedback in Reflection

In reflective teaching, feedback from peers and students is essential. The workshop reaffirmed how crucial it is to use both official and informal feedback in order to understand how effective a teacher is. Surveys, casual talks, or class discussions can all be used to get input from students. This technique offers educators insightful

viewpoints that enable them to view their instruction from the standpoint of the students. Students frequently don't connect with what teachers consider to be productive in the same manner.

For example, after asking my students for input, I discovered that one of my strategies—using in-depth theoretical readings—was not interesting to all of them. Some students, especially those who were more used to applied hands-on learning, found it difficult to relate to the content. I was able to realise from this feedback that my presumptions about the learning styles of my students were preventing me from being a successful teacher. In order to accommodate a greater variety of learning styles, I updated my lesson plans to include more varied resources, like case studies and multimedia content.

Peer review has been just as beneficial. I've gained different viewpoints on my teaching methods via having conversations with colleagues. For instance, I became more conscious of how I could modify my delivery and pacing to keep students' attention after seeing a peer's classroom and considering how our teaching philosophies differed. Through these exchanges, I've come to see that introspection is not only a personal practice but may be substantially improved by group efforts.

Learner-Centered Teaching and Active Learning Strategies

My opinions on learner-centred teaching have also changed as a result of reflective teaching. Examining how reflective practices might complement active learning techniques and a learner-centred approach took up a large amount of HET 809. The

teacher is frequently the main character in traditional lecture-based training, imparting knowledge to obedient students. Reflective teaching, on the other hand, pushes teachers to put the students before themselves, encouraging critical thinking and student engagement.

A range of active learning strategies, including problem-based learning, group projects, and flipped classrooms, were presented to me. By putting students at the centre of the educational process, these tactics empower them to take charge of their education. I've used similar strategies in my own classroom by giving students pre-class texts and videos to see and interact with before class. We next concentrate on implementing the content in the classroom through cooperative problem-solving exercises, case studies, and group discussions.

Both my students and I have changed as a result of this move towards learner-centred teaching. Students are now active participants who meaningfully interact with the content rather than passive consumers of knowledge. This method not only enhances learning results for students but also cultivates critical thinking, teamwork, and self-directed learning.

Integrating Technology into Reflective Practice

The use of technology in the classroom is unavoidable in the current digital era. The course placed a strong emphasis on how technology might improve student learning and reflective practice. Technology is now a vital instrument for promoting accessibility, participation, and cooperation in the classroom rather than merely an add-on in contemporary education.

I gained knowledge on how to use a variety of technology tools during the course, including multimedia materials that accommodate various learning styles and online learning platforms that facilitate collaboration, such as Google Classroom or Blackboard. For example, I started utilising multimedia presentations and interactive tests to interest students who might otherwise find it difficult to follow standard lecture forms and to provide them quick feedback. For visual and auditory learners, who gain from a more dynamic presentation of information, this has proved very beneficial.

Technology facilitates reflection by offering channels for ongoing self-evaluation and feedback. Outside of class hours, students can use online forums to ask questions and reflect on their learning, which gives them important insights into what they've learnt. Furthermore, I now evaluate student performance and engagement using teaching analytics offered by learning platforms, which allows me to modify my instruction in reaction to data in real time.

The Lifelong Journey of Reflective Practice

The fact that reflective teaching is a lifetime process is arguably the most important lesson I took away from HET 809. The practice of reflection is an ongoing process of learning, growing, and changing; it doesn't stop after this course is over. An effective teacher must be adaptable and constantly looking for new methods to improve their methods.

To sum up, my teaching style has been greatly impacted by HET 809: Reflective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. I have developed into a more thoughtful

and flexible teacher by embracing structured reflection, integrating technology, adopting learner-centred practices, and incorporating feedback. My dedication to continual professional development guarantees that I will develop further and continue to give my pupils the greatest learning opportunities.

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Question 2

A personal statement outlining one's values, beliefs, and methods for teaching and learning is called a teaching philosophy. It displays the teacher's perception of their role, their goals for the pupils, and the strategies they employ to establish a productive learning environment. Key topics including the teacher's approach to student involvement, classroom management, evaluation, and the development of abilities and knowledge that equip students for future problems are usually covered under this philosophy.

I had a quite conventional teaching perspective before to taking the course HET 809 Reflective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. What I observed my instructors doing while I was in elementary school had a major impact on this teaching method. My teaching perspective was formed in part by those experiences.

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My teachers' techniques of instruction were less learner-focused and more teacher/facilitator-focused. These teaching strategies included subject-centric instruction with little to no opportunity for application, rote memorisation, quiet classroom rules, a rigorous authoritarian attitude to discipline, etc. My teaching

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perspective and ideals as an educator have significantly changed as a result of this reflective practice training.

Teaching Philosophy Statement

My dedication to creating a vibrant, welcoming, and student-centered learning environment is the foundation of my sophisticated teaching philosophy. Education, in my opinion, has the most influence when it encourages students to be curious, think critically, and become resilient, enabling them to take charge of their own education. Teaching, in my opinion, is about establishing an environment where students feel inspired, appreciated, and prepared to interact profoundly with the subject matter and with one another. It is not only about transferring information.

The Idea that every student brings a distinct collection of experiences, abilities, and viewpoints to the classroom is at the heart of my worldview. In order to give every student the best chance of success, I try to create my courses in a way that can be adjusted to fit a range of learning requirements and styles. This entails using a variety of instructional techniques, such as group projects, practical problem-solving activities, dialogues, and technology-enabled resources. For instance, students who might be more reticent in a traditional setting can engage in active and meaningful participation through the use of digital tools like online discussion boards or interactive presentations. I assist students in connecting with the content in ways that are relevant to them by offering a variety of engagement paths, which promotes motivation and a sense of ownership in their learning.

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I try to foster an atmosphere in my classroom where students are at ease confronting, questioning, and investigating novel concepts. Since learning is a social and cooperative activity, I support candid conversations and respect different points of view. Because of this, I try to include group projects and peer-to-peer learning whenever I can so that students can benefit from one other's perspectives and experiences. In addition to improving the educational process, this cooperative method fosters the development of critical abilities including empathy, teamwork, and communication. Students who collaborate with one another develop the self-assurance to voice their opinions and learn to value different points of view, both of which are, in my opinion, essential for their own development and for equipping them to thrive in a variety of professional settings.

A fundamental component of my teaching philosophy is reflective practice. I constantly review and modify my teaching strategies in response to peer observations, student input, and self-evaluation. For instance, I frequently ask students for input on particular projects or class activities so that I can determine what works for them and what may require improvement. I also record my reflections on my lessons in a teaching notebook, highlighting my accomplishments, difficulties, and opportunities for development. I can better understand my prejudices, be open to fresh perspectives, and adapt my methods to fit the evolving requirements of my pupils thanks to this process. Because each class is different and may need a different strategy to promote effective learning, reflection also serves as a reminder to me to be patient and adaptable..

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Including real-world links and 21st-century skills in the curriculum is a big element of my ideology. Students need more than just subject-specific knowledge in today's quickly changing environment; they also need skills like flexibility, problem-solving, digital literacy, and ethical awareness. These competencies guide my class planning, and I regularly incorporate exercises that push students to think critically, make choices, and investigate links between the material and contemporary world challenges. For instance, I might give students case studies or project-based learning assignments that call for them to examine real-world situations, come up with answers, and then explain what they have learnt. This method not only improves their comprehension of the material but also equips students to handle challenging situations in their future employment.

Developing kids who are not just academically proficient but also considerate, caring, and prepared to be lifelong learners is my ultimate goal as an educator. When they graduate from my class, I want them to feel confident in their talents, eager to learn more, and have the knowledge and abilities necessary to contribute significantly to their communities. I want to enable students to become involved, knowledgeable citizens who are prepared to face the demands of the world with integrity and a sense of purpose by creating a learning environment that emphasises inquiry, introspection, and inclusivity. Knowing that the example I set is equally as significant as the knowledge I convey, I constantly work to live up to these ideals in my teaching.

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PAGE 9



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