

Assignment One

Assessing Student Learning and Reflection

by

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for

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EPR200 Professional Experience 2: Teaching in Context

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Task A: Preservice Teacher Reflections

At time of writing I am completing my first placement and Darwin High School, therefore much of the reflection is considered prior to any practical experience within the formal secondary school setting. When beginning my learning journey, I had fairly well developed and defined ideas on what good teaching looks like. I was still very open to discussion and constructive criticism on how my teaching practice compared to the principles and ideals purported by tertiary educators. Through this internal reflection and comparison on my own teaching practice and the gold standard, I was confronted and challenged in my position when I realised my experience was not significantly diverse, as I completed all of my high school education at a well-known private school with limited racial and learning ability diversity.

My own experience within secondary education consisted of a very structured and well-defined curriculum. In Year 12 or SACE Level 2, I studied Specialist Mathematics, Mathematics Studies, Physics, Chemistry and English Studied. The program involved regular testing and examinations and the outline of the subject curriculum was very teacher lead, with little or no input and influence by students. I found this style of learning secure and familiar, as it was a continuation of previous years of schooling.

A number of critical points have occurred in my learning journey that have caused me to reflect on and review my own education in comparison with others' experiences. Firstly, during a lecture in EPR100, I described my high school experience to the lecturer and how that was likely to influence my teaching practice. I also followed this up with that I would need to make significant effort to reflect on this position, as it was unlikely to meet the needs of a broad range of student learning abilities, skills and attitudes.

During my first practical placement, I have been able to see the variety of students in two main areas, with some exposure to others, firsthand. Primarily, I have been observing

students in Integrated Learning Physical Education at SACE Level 1, which is a project-based unit. Some students required additional assistance with continuing assignments including explaining in detail the requirements of specific responses within the assessment. Also, my mentor teacher has been breaking down the tasks for students in these classes to achievable amounts per lesson, due to their low academic abilities and motivation. (Biesta. 2010)

Prior to this experience, I was of an opinion that if students want to learn, I am willing to teach them, but without that self-motivation, I was unwilling to provide them the time and effort to enable their learning. I realised very early in my learning journey that this was not a suitable position within any school setting. Even in higher academic learning environments, there are students that require extra motivation and attention to encourage their participation and learning. (Ng, et al. 2010. Hoy, 1968)

These preformed perceptions will continue to influence my early career phase of teaching, whilst the multitude of experience will further mould my teacher identity. My self-efficacy has strongly influenced my ability to maintain persistence when attempting to impart knowledge to students. This continues to build on my previous employment and life experiences. Additionally, my perception of the “work, life balance” within the school environment as a teacher will be skewed due to these experiences. Due to the demanding nature of my previous career and the competition between that and family and personal responsibility, I believe I will be well prepared for the demands of the classroom and the peripheral requirements at a school. (Olsen. 2016, Chesnut & Cullen. 2014)

My experience with The Patch has given me a great breadth of perspective. The Patch is a non-profit organisation that bases its programs around building and maintaining gardens that follow principles of permaculture and sustainable gardening. It supports groups of people

that have learning special needs or are living with disabilities. Specifically, the three to four boys from Sanderson Middle School, that are also part of their CLONTARF Program, participate in activities that provide engaging experiences that provide them with some skills to further their development.

Initially, my exposure to the boys was very informal. I was conducting work separate to their activities and therefore had little interaction with them. It was during this period that I observed their lack of respect for the people committing time to assist them. This was quite confronting for me, as I saw their programs as amazing opportunities to develop skills and knowledge that I never had during school. Their behaviour was poor and language was rude. When I began working with them formally, there was a lack of structure to the activities they were conducting, and many tasks were ad hoc. I believe this created additional friction between the students and carers, due to the lack of interest shown by the boys' behaviour.

As I continued to work with them, deeper structure was also developed and I continued to demand that project-based work was employed that also had small, visible and achievable goals, in order to further encourage them. Further the use of these projects gave them greater ownership and self-determined responsibility, as at each attendance they continued with the same activity until its completion. An example of this is when they were directed toward building possum boxes. This gave me the opportunity to teach skills in woodwork and design that could be used in future life. I also used the exercise as an opportunity to test the mathematic skills when measuring and marking the wood for the possum boxes. (Fisher & Frey. 2013)

As we made the boxes, the boys' enthusiasm, interest and focus fluctuated. Whilst this was frustrating at times, I was determined to maintain my efforts to ensuring they gained the best experience possible by remaining calm, professional and persistent. This proved invaluable throughout the project, as it ensured that the boys were able to continue with the

exercises when they were present and wanted to continue with their work. I also presented them, as often and practicable, problems to solve within their abilities. For example, we had not given them a method of securing the possum boxes to trees. Therefore, it was up to them to design something to complete that task. We had given them tools and materials that was needed to be able to fix the boxes to a tree and guided them towards a solution. This allowed them to take further ownership of their project and develop greater understanding and learning within its scope. (Chu, et al. 2011)

Whilst conducting my placement at Darwin High School, I observed a whole of faculty staff meeting. As this was on the first day of my placement, I was unable to readily relate this to the school culture and values at the time and much of the context was unavailable. However; a single point made by the Principle left a resounding effect on me and what I expect of a school and its leadership. The message was with regard to COVID 19 and the effects on teachers. Whilst this was a follow-on comment from the health and well-being of students, in particular their mental health, it was no less impactful. The Principle made it clear that if a teacher was feeling overwhelmed by the stressors of the COVID 19 situation and that they did not feel able to teach a classroom at the time, they were to take personal time to ensure their well-being was a priority of the school's leadership.

An informal mentor, within the same cell as my own mentor, reflected these comments and was obviously pleased that the school had formally and vocally recognised that the teachers' and staff's mental health was of concern. This was further reinforced when both my mentor teacher and the aforementioned informal mentor had taken leave for personal reasons. Further, the Principle had also come to the faculty cell on the day these teachers had leave to confirm that the remainder of the staff were also coping with the added stress of reduced staffing.

The comments made and the actions of the staff gave me a greater reassurance that school leadership was actively concerned about the well-being of the staff and therefore the student's well-being and the quality of learning they receive. This occurrence was, broadly, in contrast to Achinstein, et al, (2004) that discussed the perpetuation of inequity of school leadership to classroom teachers. It is clear, however, that when teachers are and feel supported in their decisions and actions in and out of the classroom, they have higher levels of self-efficacy, are more likely to communicate with school administration and build stronger and more trusting bonds. This also extends to professional development and promotion or expansion of responsibility, if it is suitably cultivated by school administrators. (Balyer, et al. 2017)

Before beginning my first placement, I believed that I was very likely to show considerable bias towards more athletic students and, generally, toward male students. This is commonly a consideration for, particularly, teachers of health and physical education type subjects. Students often feel discriminated against by teachers when or if they have less athletic ability. Further, female students face greater barriers through stereotypical perceptions, clothing worn, either uniform or otherwise, and typical responses by these teachers. The expectations and encouragement used by teachers when considering female students' performance tends to be more generalised and less specific. It also focuses less on performance, as it is typically compared with male student performance. (Laar, et al. 2019. Watson, et al. 2015)

When two of the staff were on unexpected leave, I had the opportunity to take a double period of Year 10 Physical Education Studies. As I had little to no time to prepare, I was required to think quickly and was unable to plan a lesson. Instead I referred to a lesson that had been discussed in another lecture and I had played in high school. Upon later reflection on the lesson, whilst I had not expressed as much encouragement as I would have preferred, I

do not believe I expressed any gender biases. The teams were self-selected by students and whilst some competition was one-sided, this was not due to over representation of one gender in any team.

However, during the classroom digital technology lessons, I noticed I was internally critiquing students' physical appearance, including posture and fat and muscle mass. Whilst many of these students will be unaware of my instinctive observation of physical characteristics, I feel the need to continue to monitor this behaviour and ensure it does not affect my teaching and relationship with students. All the students' performance, within the digital technology classes, was independent of their physique. I do still believe I will have a unique opportunity to educate higher academic students with lower athletic ability regarding the importance of physical activity and healthy lifestyles. However, I do not believe I am at a point where I can do this considerately, where students do not feel attacked.

Whilst I have little practical experience in my learning journey, I have been able to identify key areas where I have had or currently have beliefs that may be contrary to effective teaching. This will continue to evolve as I continue to learn through lectures and whilst on placements. I will continue to persist in the pursuit of knowledge by observing mentors, formal and informal, and gaining information from them through questioning and receiving critique. I also intend on continuing critical reflections during this journey.

Task B

Subject: Health and Physical Education

Title: Promoting Healthy Behaviours Presentation

Type: Summative

Grade Weighting: 25%

Content Descriptors

- Plan and practise strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing (ACPPS054 - Scootle)
- Propose and apply movement concepts and strategies with and without equipment (ACPMP063 - Scootle)
- Participate in physical activities designed to enhance fitness, and discuss the impact regular participation can have on health and wellbeing (ACPMP064 - Scootle)

Summary of Task

During this semester, students learnt about the health benefits of physical activity and lifelong physical activities. There was teacher led discussions and the exploration of current media campaigns to improve the health and well-being of young people.

Students were given a week long log sheet to log the amount and type of physical activity, to assess and analyse these activities and finally assess and analyse a fictitious student's activity.

This assessment task relates to the focus area: health benefits of physical activity.

Overview:

Students determine how much physical activity they participate in each week by completing the 'Physical Activity Record' and compare this to Australia's Physical Activity recommendations for 5–12 year olds. They evaluate their level of participation according to current physical activity recommendations for children (minimum 60 minutes of accumulated physical activity in a day) and establish goals and strategies to maintain or improve their physical activity levels.

Students are also to analyse and assess a Year 6 Physical Activity Observation. Students will be presented an example of the physical activity level of a student of similar age and are to present a critique and recommendations of their behaviour.

Students will be given a handout to complete, with writing space for their reflection and critique.

Student submission assessment

Jesse,

The level of activity you have logged in your diary is more than the recommended amount of daily activity for children between the ages of 5 and 12 years old. It is also good to see that you have participated in a wide variety of activities. It is important to keep your exercises different each day.

Your self-reflection illustrates the positive changes you have made to your behaviour, such as reducing the amount of screen time you have. You have also importantly, identified the future results of your actions, if you maintain these activities as you get older.

You have accurately identified where the example student can improve their behaviours to live a more active and healthier lifestyle. The alternatives you have proposed are well thought out and make good use of their current situation. Next, you can further explore

individual situations, like why the student in the assessment is driven to school and why they are bored every weekend.

Excellent work.

Self-reflection.

I believe I have provided too much information for the student to comprehend in the critique of their work and possibly used language that does not meet the abilities of the student. As I develop as a teacher, I intend to build relationships with students to understand their individual abilities and match my assessments and feedback to those abilities.

Marking Rubric

Marking Criteria	Not yet meeting expectation	Mostly Meets Expectation	Fully Meets Expectation	Exceeds Expectations
Level of exercise	Student achieved 60min/day on 2 or less occasions	Student achieved 60min/day on 2 - 3 occasions	Student achieved 60min/day on 4 - 5 occasions	Student achieved 60min/day on 6 or more occasions
Self-Reflection	Shows little critical assessment of performance	Shows some critical assessment of performance.	Shows some critical assessment of performance. Adds method for improving.	Shows critical assessment of performance. Adds method for improving and how this will affect performance.
Critical Observation	Shows little critical assessment of performance	Shows some critical assessment of performance.	Shows some critical assessment of performance. Adds method for improving.	Shows critical assessment of performance. Adds method for improving and how this will affect performance.
Organisation	Information presented is difficult to understand and requires additional information.	Information is mostly clear with little need for additional information	Information is clear and easily followed.	Information is clear, concise and comprehensive.

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