

Essay on a self-reflective essay about my experience of the practicum

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Rationale

The purpose of this essay is to reflect upon my experiences whilst undertaking the practicum. In the process of reflecting on my progress, I will demonstrate my new-found understanding for the national teaching standards whilst demonstrating how I have put a large number of them into practice. I will also briefly assess my ability to understand and utilise the teaching standards specifically created for the state of Arizona. My reasons for referring to these explicitly is because they are the standards by which a trainee teacher is expected to conduct themselves and their practice, and in reflecting upon my experiences, I must naturally demonstrate my undertaking of these standards in turn.

This essay will specifically focus on my understanding of assessment and how it directly informs instruction; to reflect upon my experiences and progress and to evaluate my practice in terms of the aforementioned standards, and to evaluate my learning in terms of my experience, my ability to administer assessment and utilise student and class data, to assess the impact of specific activities I carried out during the practicum, and my ability to collaborate with teachers, parents and students alike. My reason for discussing these particular areas is that they are the central areas of concern that were addressed during the practicum and, indeed, during the average teaching career.

A Self-Reflective Essay About My Experience of the Practicum.

During the course of the practicum, I was able to experience a whole host of new practices whilst developing my pre-existing skills in turn. The purpose of this essay is to reflectively consider my experiences and evaluate my learning in the following areas: my learning experience, assessment administration, data analysis, the specific activities I carried out, my progress, collaborations with the classroom teacher, and my reflection on how assessment guides instruction.

The practicum posed a huge challenge for me: the course is an intense one which required a massive amount of commitment from all of its students. As the course progressed, I became much more acutely aware of how to adapt my practice to meet teaching standards. For instance, prior to every lesson now, I am capable of assessing the learning needs of my students through the analysis of their class data and the prior learning (Standard 4. 31). I have learnt that, in doing this, I can cater for my class' needs more accurately and completely. Also, as a plus, the lesson is inevitably more enjoyable for both me and the students: if a lesson is pitched correctly, the behaviour of the class is significant improved.

If I learnt one key element of teaching during the practicum, it is that good teaching is based around assessment. Without assessment, we would not have data and would not be able to target the students' individual learning needs. The word ' assessment' does not necessarily have to refer to an in-depth written essay or exam; instead, it can refer to a simple answer and

question session within a lesson. It is this form of pedagogy that allows me, as a teacher, to reflect on whether my class is learning sufficiently, whether all students are progressing at the same rate, and whether I need to adapt my practice to best meet their needs. (Standard 4. 33) Assessment administration, whilst quite a mundane task, is one of the most important aspects of good practice: assessment is a teacher's bread and butter and without it, we would be fundamentally unable to approach a class' learning accurately. By keeping on top of marking work and books, the teacher is able to know exactly who is struggling (Standard 8. 33). In doing so, the teacher is able to monitor their own practices and behaviours to best engage a class (Standard 8. 35) On-going assessment is vital for an efficient teaching practice and I quickly learnt to utilise classroom interaction, students' books, discussion with parents and their usual teacher (Standard 4) as a way of assessing the student progress on both a class and individual level (Standard 8. 31 & 8. 21).

This ties in neatly with the idea of data analysis, which I have already touched upon briefly. The sorts of data that can be used when planning a lesson or judging whether a class is working to the correct level, are previous exam or assessment data (which works as a good measuring stick for how much advancement the class has made); family data which can signify a number of behavioural and academic factors in a child; and finally, the data concerning the special educational needs of a class: do they require extra assistance or do they require an extra push – are they low ability or high ability? The use of such data, in these circumstances, can mean the

difference between a class missing their target grades or exceeding them. The use of data is essential in creating target-driven lesson plans: without a learning goal, neither I, nor the class, are able to learn effectively: learning goals provide foci to a lesson and indeed, an entire unit of work (Standard 4. 31). Part of the process of using and analysing data involves adapting your practice accordingly: by utilising a class' data, the teacher should be able to adapt their practice accordingly both, during and prior to the lesson (Standard 4. 33). In a number of lessons, I have explored the class data beforehand, during the planning process, and have felt confident that the data accurately reflects the level of ability in the class but, upon actually carrying out the lesson, it is clear that the class are struggling to progress. In these types of lessons, I have found that it is best not to panic and to develop a quick, seamless way of adapting, on the spot, to the students' needs – usually by re-wording a definition or a question, or even by going back a couple of steps to affirm their knowledge once again (Standard 4. 35). Often, I have found, that this can involve varying my role within the room: sometimes, it is a confidence issue, and the children simply need a coach to urge them on and give them a gentle push in the right direction; other times, more able children need a facilitator to ask them the right question to get their mind working; other times, I have found that I need to take a step back altogether and simply observe and monitor them – for instance, during a dramatic presentation, the student needs to be in control of their own creative output and it is important that the teacher takes a back seat to allow this to happen (Standard 4. 34). Also, it is vitally important that the teacher feels able to adapt and adjust their practice to student feedback:

often, before moving on to the next part of the lesson, I will ask the class for a show of 'thumbs' to demonstrate their understanding (thumbs up if they're happy with their learning; thumbs down, if not) and in these situations, it is important to adjust your practice according to their feedback (Standard 4. 33).

Whilst teaching, I carried out a wide range of activities that were designed to enhance learning and engage the students with the lesson (Standard 8. 31). These different activities usually link in effectively with the on-going system of assessment which is implemented during and throughout every lesson. The key word, I have learnt, is 'assessment.' Without it, the teacher would be unable to justify their class' progresses. As a specific example of one such activity, I asked the children to draw a face in their books, at the end of the lesson. If they drew a happy face, it meant that they were pleased with their progress and had understood the lesson, if they drew an unhappy face, it signified that they felt as though they hadn't understood the lesson and were not pleased with their progress. They were also allowed to draw a face somewhere in the middle of the two. When marking their books, I was able to see whether my teaching was pitched at the correct level and I was able to adapt it accordingly. As a teacher, I have learnt that it is more important to enable a student to think for themselves rather than just constantly telling them all of the answers – as teachers, we must encourage critical and creative thinking skills (Standard 4. 11). Each lesson must involve a series of assessments which fit and target specific learning goals and outcomes (Standard 8. 12) and to do this, the teacher must always keep in mind the

limitations of specific forms of assessment, as well as how that data can best be used (Standard 8. 11). In lessons, it is very easy to be swept along with a class' enthusiasm or even by their bad behaviour, but it is important to maintain the impetus of assessment – I learnt this lesson quickly because, without it, the lesson loses focus and so do the students. Whilst keeping in mind the importance of encouraging independent thinking skills, I try to utilise at least one form of self or peer assessment in each lesson (Standard 8. 33). The example I gave earlier in this essay of giving a thumbs up or a thumbs down, is a simple form of self-assessment, but I have carried out activities such as asking the students to each write one thing they have learnt during the lesson on a post-it note and then sticking it on the board under either a happy or unhappy face, to signify how well they feel their learnt during the lesson. It is a simple method but the result is an easily quantifiable set of data and feedback from the students that can allow you to plan their following lesson effectively and with their prior understanding in mind.

I learnt quickly that, to be a successful practitioner, it was vitally important to be a collaborative one also. This means working closely with other teachers, individual students and the parents (Standard 4). A prime example of this was with one boy who seemed, externally, to be quite lazy but, after talking to his parents, I was able to ascertain that often, his inability to complete the task is due to his lack of comprehension of what was being asked of him: he would say he understood to cover up his embarrassment. By discussing this with his parents, I was able to collaborate with his form

tutor, discuss the matter with his other teachers and generally enhance his school experience. In my experience of the practicum, I collaborated with teachers on a daily basis: the discussion of students is an imperative part of working as a team, and it leads to great behaviour management strategies and an invigoration of imaginative ideas. More specifically, I worked with my classes usual teachers in my discussion of ideas and concerns: with one class, I felt concerned that they and I were not 'gelling' with one another and their behaviour was suffering as a result. I discussed my concerns with their usual classroom teacher and collaboratively, we constructed a number of strategies which allowed for my relationship with the class to grow and did, in turn, improve their behaviour and ultimately, their grades too.

It is massively important to recognise that assessment guides instruction. Ultimately, the school system is characterised by the ability to get the students a qualification at the end. These qualifications are largely gained by regurgitating information that they have learnt in lessons (the ability to think critically and independently is a life skill, in my opinion), and to ensure that the students are gaining and retaining information, it is important to constantly assess and monitor their learning (Standard 8. 21) through in-class assessments, written work, examinations and general discussion with the student – a range of all of these must be used to gain a holistic view of the student's progress (Standard 8. 11). Ultimately, lessons must be planned with an end goal in mind – that being the assessment and the ultimate grade or qualification. When teaching a lesson on George Orwell's Animal Farm, I encouraged the class to write a detailed response to the question 'What is

an allegory?’ Prior to their responding, we discussed the exam grading criteria so that the students were able to see exactly what they needed to do to reach their target grade. When writing their responses, I asked them to do it under exam conditions as experience and on the whole, they produced work which was infinitely more detailed than usual and for the majority, they reached their target grade. Teachers must teach to assessment requirements and therefore, assessment guides instruction directly.

I feel as though my progress during this practicum has happened in leaps and bounds. Initially, and upon reflection, my lessons were quite directionless because I did not fully understand the importance of assessment, data and monitoring progress. It quickly became apparent that it is impossible to teach without the use of data and assessment: teaching is far easier when there are goals and targets in sight. I feel proud of the progress I have made during the course and look forward to implementing my knowledge and developing further in my future work.