Reflective journal assignment

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Reflect on your portfolio of professional development in order to demonstrate how your practice has developed across the year. BY PhDKaur Reflective Journal Assignment 3 i) Reflect on your portfolio of professional development in order to demonstrate how your practice has developed across the year. it) Reflect on the GTC research 'How does collaborative Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers of the 5-16 age range affect teaching and learning? " Reflect on the role of the professionalteacherin the light of the GTC professional standards and the National Standards for

Qualified Teacher Status. You should link this paper to reading on teacherprofessionalismand opportunities for professional development. Professional Tutor: word count: 2000 Part 1 Introduction The challenge of achieving progression for a group of students, each representing individual learning backgrounds and different levels of ability, has been an area of considerable professional development. If students are expected to make different rates of progress, then their experiences in the classroom must be tailored to their individual learning n pupil learning. Thus, differentiation arguably nas the greatest impact on

My teaching groups represent a diverse range of abilities and needs including English as an additional language (EAL), disabilities, oracademictalent. Differentiation is synonymous with the umbrella term 'personalised strategies for learning' and encompasses Assessment for Learning (AFL) and inclusion. Convery and Coyle (1993) demonstrate the significance of differentiation as the entitlement of every learner to have his/her individual needs and abilities catered for, and the

teacher'sresponsibilityto find effective ways of managing those needs matching them to appropriate teaching and learning styles.

However within the currenteducationsystem, individualised learning for all in a class of 30 pupils is compounded by inadequate behaviour for learning and constrained resources. Professional development My initial perception of the purposes and strategies of differentiation consisted of an expectation that all learners were expected to achieve the highest levelled learning objective, through a system of differentiated instruction. I struggled to understand what differentiation meant in practice and where it aligned with my personal perspectives of education and classroom values.

The lack of clarity around regarding my expectations of differentiation meant that although I planned for progression in lessons, I failed to appreciate its value in learning for the individuals in the class. In practice, differentiating by outcome involved whole-class activities, with prior assessment data determining pupils' individual targets. Pupils expected to achieve the 'most' learning outcomes did not, as I focused on supporting pupils of lower ability, thus different groups of pupils did not make sufficient progress.

The dynamic model of learning processes (O'Brien and Guiney, 2001) greatly nfluenced my philosophical and professional perspectives of differentiation. This 3D model encompasses a holistic view of the learning process, where pedagogical, emotional and cognitive factors must be synthesised in order to enable the learner to develop autonomy and self-awareness. The model states that differentiation should not be construed for pupils with SEN, nor

should it be a purely reactive response, with teachers intervening when learners experience difficulty.

I adopted the model as a framework for my planning, a key strength being the goal in achieving autonomy for the learner, as differentiation targets the development of elf-awareness. In practice this meant providing challenge and choice-making opportunities, through problem-solving activities, questioning knowledge as objective truth and reflecting upon the answers that students can or cannot give when confronted by uncertainty.

The model suggests that questioning their own beliefs is most likely to be achieved through interaction with others, a beneficial approach as the pupils at Highbridge Academy needed to develop social skills such as team work. Shitting my tocus trom a 'pupil-labour premium' mindset to gauge the success ot learning activities i. e. he pupils were able to achieve the task set, towards an attitude whereby I consciously planned the development of pupils' self-awareness was a crucial step in my professional development.

An example of where this belief was put into practice was a lesson developing the concept of density with a Year 7 group. Students were given a list of possible activities they could complete to learn about density. The activities included: using a water table to explore properties of various objects, measuring the volume and mass of objects and calculating their density, reading about density in the textbook and watching a video showing density xperiments. The activities were based on visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and tactile learning styles.

Students had to choose and complete a minimum of two activities, from two different learning styles. These 'choice boards' were organized so that students chose options focusing on several different skills. Reflecting upon the lesson it was clear that the 'buzz' created in the classroom was not entirely due to the novelty of the lesson format but due to the structured activities encouraging independence and self-realisation of their own skills. Some pupils, whose prior data indicated they would not achieve the higher level learning bjectives, were able to achieve higher levels than expected.

The following lesson, I used a similar format, grouping pupils together and observed that many pupils naturally gravitated towards certain roles (e. g. recording, observing, organising). In order to develop team-work skills and awareness of how teams work it was important that I made pupils aware of these roles, especially those that did not come naturally to them. The creation of anenvironmentinvolving mutual support of each other's learning was a turning point in shaping my classroomculture. Upon reflection it is obvious that this insight required me to move onto less didactic ethods of teaching.

Schon (1983) values the capacity of teachers to 'step away and undertake 'reflection-on-practice', enabling teachers to gain confidence and intuitively respond to needs by reflecting. Following a series of 'choice board' lessons in the 7K Forces unit I consciously planned activities which encompassed the wider skills, knowledge and understanding ofscienceand pupils'learning experience. Thus my view of differentiation developed to encompass a long-term goal of enabling pupils to become confident, self-aware learners.

Conclusion Many views of differentiation are teacher-centric, viewing the process as created by he teacher.

My study of Wgotskys zone of proximal development (the gap between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with peers) reinforced the need to plan the teacher-student dialogue in order to focus on emerging skills and abilities and to give students control in shaping their learning experiences. (Ugotsky, 1962). The teacher- student relationship and the pedagogical environment created, shape the quality ot learning experiences for the learner, now and in their future.

My experience shows hat responding to learner's needs intuitively is a key component of AFL and differentiation. Differentiation should not be considered a concession to lesson planning, but underpin an entire teaching approach. It is equally the responsibility of the pupil and the teacher, as pupils must be prepared to identify when they need support in their learning to become independent learners. However, in order to contribute to the end of having learners become self-determining members of their community at the levels they are most capable of achieving, then they require opportunities to exercise choice in their learning choices. art 2 The GTCE's 8 codes of professional practice highlight a series of aims that distinguish the teaching profession' (GTCE professional standards, 2009). Initially, I associated being a professional with a pre-determined product and brand image than with pedagogy. My superficial interpretation of teacher professionalism comprised of adopting behaviours in accordance with a 'paradigm' of teaching that I assumed was expected from me from my peers

and mentors. The QTS standards were a reference guide but provided a purely mechanistic outline of accomplishments validating my aptitude to teach.

Current research regarding effective CPD Researching other viewpoints of professionalism and my experiences over the training year has shaped my professional ideologies and perspectives. Fundamentally, teaching centres on the concept of the 'reflective practitioner'. Schon (1983) called it the knowledge acquired through 'reflection in action', and my experiences have highlighted four essential characteristics: competence, craft, collaboration, and continual reflection.

These are reflected within mygoals, abilities, standards and the development of the these qualities will directly impact the effectiveness of my teaching, Pratte and Rury (1991, p. 2) defined teaching as 'a craft profession, built on a conscience of craft, rather than a conventional ideal of professionalism'. They argued that teachers need embodied knowledge to perform their Jobs, 'something that they learn by doing and that is experientially learned, rather than acquired in a systematic, highly formal fashion'.

However, research has shown there should be a personal entitlement to professional development throughout a teacher'scareer, one that is not link 2005). ed solely to school targets but personalised and structured (Cordingley The use of the term 'reflective practitioner' logically entails that CPD must also be ooted in extended reflection. However, Schools often rely on 'one-off workshops to achieve these aims, a shortcoming highlighted in an Ofsted 2009 CPD report. These approaches to CPD appear insufficient to

foster learning which fundamentally alters what teachers teach or how they teach (Boyle, Lamprianou and Boyle, 2005).

To support effective CPD and to ensure that acquired knowledge and skills are consolidated, implemented and shared with other teachers, research advocates collaborative CPD programmes. Sharing the expertise, knowledge and skills of teachers in the same school, in other schools and using consultants to provide in- chool programmes of support can tackle specific needs (Ofsted, 2009). Levin and Rock (2003) claim that teachers involved in collaborative CPD can become more reflective, critical and analytical when they think about their teaching style in the classroom.

Little (1993) lists four categories of professional interaction that builds a culture of learning in practice where teachers: Engage in focused discussions about teaching and learning Observe and evaluate the teaching of their colleagues Engage in collaborative planning and design of lessons Actively teach each other and takeleadershiproles offering workshops This distinguishes a professional culture, where it is the responsibility of the community administrators to assure quality of the teaching staff, from that of a bureaucratic culture where administers are responsible.

One of my professional goals is to strive for innovation in my practice. Collaborative CPD has been shown to foster an environment of active risk-taking where teachers try new ways of working, moving beyond the safe and familiar' (Humes 2001). This can often be stressful when confidence is undermined by a lack of experience. Cordingley et al. (2005) suggested collaboration provided 'moral support to teachers s they work through

making difficult changes'. In order to adapt and learn from experience, essential for developing the capacity to bring about purposeful change, higher order thinking is required.

Resnick (1987; cited in Land and Jonassen 2008) stresses the importance of the social setting to cultivate the disposition to engage in metacognitive strategies, closely aligned to Wenger's (2007) concept of a 'community of practice' a notion of teachers' adapting and learning from experiences gained through the actual practice of teaching and their mutual involvement in 'study groups'. Such study groups would encourage risk- taking and provide an effective locus for learning about and inquiring into the teaching of thinking and related topics (what Shulman and Sherin (2004) refer to as a 'big idea'). Cordingley et al.) recommend the use ot research literature as a springboard for experimentation within CPD groups carrying out exploratory lesson planning. This promotes understanding and use of the relationship between abstract theoretical knowledge and experiential knowledge gained through direct classroom experience. Crucially, this 'big idea' connects to the broader professional concerns and rofessional lives of teachers. It provides a platform where teachers can become more knowledgeable about the theory and practice of learning and teaching, motivation, and contemporary issues in education beyond their academic obligations of the PGCE.

Additionally, teachers maintain an awareness of educational matters beyond the immediate scope of teaching. In light of this research and my experiences I have identified the following key areas for professional development next year. Firstly, I will develop self-evaluation, observationand peer review skills, professional dialogue and feedback. Secondly I ill dedicate

an hour a week to reading professional Journals and texts. This can have very beneficial results, especially if what is read is reflected on in peer discussion.

Thirdly I will focus on developing resources with colleagues, which should guard against isolation and repetition of ideas and work. I believeresearching existing effective practice will help me as an NQT, to keep an eye on the wider world of education. In conclusion, effective CPD requires structured, peer-centric reflection. This does not depend solely on the school's provision but my own efforts in reviewing my progress and targets throughout the formative NQT year.