

A Qualitative Study on Student Reflections during Early Childhood Education Placement

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Reflection is a daily requirement for kindergarten teachers. Although there are different approaches or formats the purpose of reflection is to enable teachers to understand children's learning status, in order to adjust their teaching strategies and feedback to curriculum design. In addition, teachers can note the difficulties that children encountered in the learning process, and take prompt follow-up action for children in need. "Reflections allow inservice teachers and pre-service teachers to participate in the conversation connecting theory to practice..." (Ulmer & Timothy, 2001), "...it is good practice to encourage teachers' written reflections as a way to analyze and improve one's own teaching..."(Tankersley, 2010). As an important institute providing professional and quality training for pre-school teachers, the Child Education and Community Services Discipline of The Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Sha Tin) always advocates the importance of cultivating the students' spirit of reflection, where students in each on site placement in the preprimary institutions, need to write detailed reflection reports for activities they lead, in order to enhance their competence in self-reflection as well as encouraging them in continuous self-improvement and enhancing the effectiveness of teaching. This research involved the students who are supervised by the researcher. The study was conducted through qualitative research methods, including literature analysis and interviews. The research was aimed at firstly, exploring students' reflection on how to improve their teaching skills and strategies during work placement periods. Secondly, at understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the current reflection model, and how they can be revised in the future for further improvement. Students' reflection reports were examined from different perspectives, such as reviewing the learning objectives, teaching strategies, setting of the learning environment, interaction between teachers and children and so on. Furthermore, face-to-face interviews were conducted with students and front-line teachers to understand their

views of such reflection arrangements. After completing the process of data analysis and drawing of conclusions, initial findings were, firstly, interviewees appreciated the in-depth and holistic reflection of the students which were valuable and constructive for improvement in their lesson planning and teaching. Secondly, the reflection should be more concise, and focus on teaching objectives, children's reaction and teaching materials. . Thirdly, concrete personal experiences should be included, instead of abstract and general descriptions.

As Cook (1998) claims, "Reflection is a cyclical process through stages." While it is expected the results of the study will advance and strengthen the placement mechanism, it is suggested the reflection approach be reviewed from time to time for continuous improvement.

References :

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