

Assignment 7 Discussion – The Reflective Role

Discuss the role of reflection in student learning. Explain the rationale for e-Learning supporters encouraging regular reflection in an e-Learning course. Present your thoughts on the effectiveness of reflection in the e-Learning course you are designing.

My doctoral journey has been characterized by constant reflective moments that have resulted in acute awareness of my teaching practices. I have been identifying teaching beliefs that even when I have the best intentions, these are not yielding the most effective learning environments. Reflections have led me to many *Ah-Ha Moments* (Del Piccolo, 2002) that have transformed the way I think of what teaching and learning should be. For example, as a math educator for more than 10 years, I was certain the most effective way to learn was *learning by doing* and my teaching practices have been based on this belief. I had proudly shouted several times to students my learning motto: *the more you do it, the better you get at it!* However, I have discovered during my doctoral studies that we do not learn from just doing; instead, we learn from reasoning about what we do (Northwest Service Academy, n.d.). This discovery has led me to evaluate my teaching beliefs and practices, question them, and explore new knowledge and practices to seek personal and professional growth.

Through continuous reflection, I have been searching for connections between the theoretical conceptualization I am acquiring during my doctoral studies and the practical experiences I live every day in my classroom (Kohonen, 2005). James Zull claimed that our experiences are meaningless unless we engage our emotions in our reflections to foster deeper learning (as cited in Barrett, 2007). My passion to see my students succeed is the reason learning has been meaningful and authentic during my studies, in which I have been developing a sense of intellectual ownership and acute awareness of who I am as a teacher (Parillo, 1994).

Almala (2005) stated “Constructivism is a plausible theory for e-learning” (para. 4). Therefore, using reflection in an e-learning course is a constructivist way of learning (Mishra, 2006). Reflection serves as windows to students’ thoughts and processes and these windows are essential in socio-constructivist learning environments (e.g. e-learning courses) since learners need to know how their peers learn, for them to mimic or adjust learning based on their own processes (Leading English Education and Resource Network [LEARN], 2008). In reflective learning environments, students and the instructor share responsibilities for learning, which leads to the building of learning communities (Odafe, 2007).

The goal of the e-learning course I am designing is to prepare freshmen students for college success. My students need to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as individuals and learners to succeed in college; this requires continuous reflection. Conrad and Hedin claimed that young people seldom prefer doing serious reflection (as cited in Parillo, 1994). For such reason, I need to create a reflective classroom instead of just adding reflective components to the course (Del Piccolo, 2002). By doing this, I will be fostering lifelong learning skills to my students.

References

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