Creating Space for Dynamic Reflection in the College Classroom

2017 Learning & Teaching @ UC
Susie Mahoney, Ed.D.
Annie Straka, PhD candidate
Division of Experience-Based Learning and Career Education
Background

Why are we interested in reflection?
Levels of Reflection

Level 1: **Descriptive** - acquisition of new knowledge, making sense of...

Level 2: **Empathetic** - thoughts around challenges to beliefs, values

Level 3: **Analytic** - application of learning to broader context

Level 4: **Metacognitive** - demonstrated how learning occurred
A framework for understanding reflection

- Carol Rodgers (2002) provides a framework for defining reflection based in Dewey’s (1916/1944) work.
- Rodgers identifies four problems with a lack of a clear definition of reflection:
  - Unclear how systematic reflection differs from other kinds of thought.
  - Inability to assess a skill that isn’t clearly defined.
  - Difficult to talk about it.
  - Difficult to research.
Dewey’s Four Criteria for Reflection

1. Reflection as a Meaning-Making Process
2. Reflection as a Rigorous Way of Thinking
3. Reflection in Community
4. Reflection as a Set of Attitudes
Reflection as a Meaning-Making Process

What this means:

- Reflection must orient and connect students’ learning to other experiences, knowledge, etc.
- Experiences alone are not enough - need to perceive and weave meaning through the threads

How to do it:

- Time and sequencing exercises - Journey mapping
- Imaginative, creative modes of reflection - arts-based, mind maps
- Reflective discussion in community, peer-to-peer feedback
Reflection as a Rigorous Way of Thinking

What this means:

- Different modes of thinking
- Reflection springs from “disequilibrium” and curiosity
- 6 phases of reflection: 1) an experience, 2) spontaneous interpretation, 3) naming the problem/question, 4) generating possible explanations, 5) full-blown hypotheses, 6) experimenting/testing
Reflection as a Rigorous Way of Thinking

How to do it:

- “Unpacking” strategies - identifying portals/entry points, shifting perceptions
- Felt difficulty
- Process map - set of conditions, challenges
- Alternate reality/odyssey maps activity
Reflection in Community

Team Building Activities

Compare and Contrast Experiences in Pairs
Reflection as a Set of Attitudes

Using Metaphors to open up to one’s thoughts and feelings related to their experiences...

Examples:

- Quotes
- Pictures
- Keyboard Keys
Reflection as a Set of Attitudes

Now What?: Using objects (body parts) to discuss the experience and how the experience will influence the next time.

- **Stomach**: How will you go out of your comfort zone?
- **Eyeball**: How will the experience look differently?
- **Brain**: What will you learn or enhance?
- **Smiley**: How will you continue to enjoy the experience?
- **Nose**: Something that you sense will change next term?
- **Foot**: A next step you will take in your career path.
- **Ear**: Something that you heard today that you will continue to think about.
Conclusion/ Q&A

● Dewey’s framework for reflection requires us to address the complexities of our students’ learning and our teaching practices.

● If reflection is defined, it can be practiced, assessed and perfected.

● We can reflect on reflection and use reflective practices to improve our teaching.

● We must prime the environment in order to support our students in reflective learning.

Michelle Cummings: Training Wheels
https://www.trainingwheelsgear.com/products/body-part-deluxe
