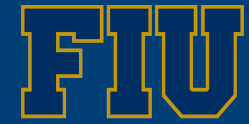




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A Framework for Assessing Learning Assistants' Reflective Writing Assignments



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Descriptive Writing

- Writing assignments that only included details about or descriptions of the teaching
- **This is not reflection.**

I only had one section for the second week so far, because I have another one on Fridays. The topic of the tutorial was velocity and graphs of velocity vs. times and position vs. times. I found out that students had some difficulties when they had to draw the graphs. Sometimes they confused the velocity with the speed, but I explained [to] them that the speed is the magnitude and the velocity also indicates the direction of motion according to the sign. Fortunately, I did not have any problem at the moment of explaining something. I think I did it well.

LAs writing at this level are usually provided with questions to begin reflection:

- Why do you think students confuse velocity with speed?
- How do you determine what strategy to use in assisting students with their difficulty?

Dialogic Reflection

- Writing that includes **consideration of multiple reasons and weighs them against each other.**
- Hatton and Smith* describe this as being a kind of conversation with one's self.

... some of the students that I'm tutoring got terrible scores while using proofs that I showed them. ... the way they used them was incorrect. During the tutoring sessions, I don't write down every single detail on the board, but I verbally explain things as I write them ... The problem with this is that the students only write what I write on the board, and they end up using what I write as their own answer on the test. So, ... they're leaving out huge chunks of the argument. ... I could remedy ... this by writing everything on the board, but I don't know if this addresses the real problem ... The goal should be for the students to understand the argument and be able to reproduce the argument, ... I think I should start ... [getting] them more involved by having them do the proofs themselves and then letting them know what they are doing incorrectly.

Students at this level are encouraged to continue engaging in this kind of deep reflection. They are also encouraged to allow this reflection to impact future action.

- Good job with this reflection.
- I look forward to reading about how things turn out when you try this new method.

Framework for Assessing Reflection in Writing*

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Descriptive Writing	Descriptive Reflection	Dialogic Reflection	Critical Reflection
No reflection; description of events without reasons or justifications	Description of events with reasons/ recognition of alternate viewpoints	Discourse with self; exploration of the situation	Consideration of broader historical, social, and/or political contexts

Descriptive Reflection

- Writing that includes the details of events during the teaching experience
- Also must **provide reasons and justifications for the events**

In my recent labs, students were finding it difficult to make connection between velocity and position. They would remember it for a second or two then forget about it, probably thinking they won't need it again. I used what I learned from my reading to my lab. I made connections from what they already knew about slope, and used it in these motion graphs. It was also hard for me to know what the students understood and didn't understand about the topic. I tried to get an idea of this by asking them questions, and seeing where they struggle. Some of the groups had the correct answer but when it came to explain why they drew it [the graph] one way and not the other, they were clueless.

This student would likely receive feedback encouraging him to consider alternatives.

- Could there be another reason why students are forgetting the relationship between velocity and position?
- Is there another method or strategy you could use to determine student understanding of the topic?

Critical Reflection

- Critical reflection goes **beyond surface considerations of events.**
- According to Hatton and Smith* critical reflection "demonstrates an awareness that actions and events are not only located in, and explicable by, references to multiple perspectives, but are located in, and influenced by multiple historical, and socio-political contexts"

... On the basis of these sort[s] of experiences, I have been thinking for the past few weeks that a PhD in a particular subject isn't enough to qualify someone to teach a subject. ... I think its unfortunate and unnecessary that so many students should suffer the consequences of having to learn from a PhD who was never trained to be an educator. I also think ... that it's pathetic that our country does not give its highest efforts in an educational system to empower all Americans. To me, it seems only natural that you'd want one of your most valued assets to be the academics in your country. It is unfair that different Americans receive a different standard of education –not by fault of the teachers but because of the higher level administration, who decide the curricula. As a result of this, I'm starting an FIU Society for Critical Pedagogy along with two other students.

Students writing at this level are encouraged to continue with this kind of reflection.

- I look forward to reading more about your thoughts on the American educational system and your class.
- I look forward to reading about how things go with your FIU Society for Critical Pedagogy.

References

Hatton, N., & Smith, D. (1995). Reflecting in teacher education: towards definition and implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11 (1), 33-49.