

STUDENTS' REFLECTION ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PROMOTING TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

A POSTER PRESENTATION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Critical reflection on experiential activities can promote transformative learning by encouraging students to consider different perspectives and frames of reference (Strange & Gibson, 2017). John Dewey originally described reflection as an “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1910). Schön later expanded Dewey’s conceptualization and emphasized “reflection-in-action” or “learning-by-doing” inspiring a wave of educational research implementing reflection (Carol, 2002). Currently, higher education uses critical reflection to promote student learning outcomes. Recent research has found that college students are unlikely to reflect on their educational experiences without being prompted (Eyler, 2002), and need to be provided with clear guidelines, structure, and regular opportunities to reflect (Hatcher, Bringle, & Muthiah, 2004).

The present study aims to promote opportunities for transformative learning by prompting students to reflect on experiential learning activities. We developed reflection prompts and a developmental-stage rubric informed largely by King’s Reflective Judgement Model (King, 2000) and the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Foundations and Skills Lifelong Learning VALUE rubrics (Rhodes, 2009). The rubric underwent several revisions based on feedback from an expert panel consisting of doctoral students and faculty professors across a variety of disciplines. The rubric measures students’ ability to reflect across four developmental stages ranging from “beginning” to “distinguished.”

We piloted the rubric with several sections of a large introductory communications course at a southwestern public university. Students completed community service projects as their course assignments and were prompted to reflect on the experience through an electronic portfolio. We drew several random samples, totaling 118 reflections, for agreement analysis until we reached sufficient agreement. Two doctoral students independently rated this sample and then met to resolve discrepancies to reach resolution in ratings. Four incomplete reflections were removed from the final sample, resulting in 114 students with complete data. The sample included slightly more women (53%) and was largely comprised of freshman (28%) and sophomores (55%). The largest racial/ethnic representation was White (46%), African-American (21%), and Hispanic (18%). In order of developmental status, reflections were coded into the “beginning” (29%), “developing” (53%), “proficient” (16%), and “distinguished” (2%) stages. Additional results and examples of actual student reflections are also presented.

Future directions will engage large numbers of college students in critical reflections from a variety of courses and disciplines. Subsequently, analyses will be run on the reliability and validity on these samples in order to validate our development performance rubric. Additionally, future research will

examine the relationship between reflective learning and academic outcomes such as grade point average (GPA) and retention in an effort to improve our understanding of student learning outcomes.

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