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A Study of Classroom Inquiry and Reflection Among Preservice Teachers Candidates

Cheryll Duquette and Leah Dabrowski, 2016

What is Differentiated Instruction?

Teachers adapt Instructional methods, resources, activities, and products to meet the needs of different learners (as cited in Duquette & Dabrowski, 2016).

What is Classroom Inquiry?

It is the process of improving teaching practices and student learning by having teachers study and reflect on their classrooms. Teachers take on a researcher role by pinpointing a problem they are experiencing, collecting observations on it, and then analyzing these observations (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Preservice teachers are most likely to engage in classroom inquiry during practice teaching (Rich & Hannafin, 2008).

The Current Study

Duquette, a university professor, and Dabrowski, a pre-kindergarten teacher (2016), further examined preservice teachers' reflection and classroom practices during a practicum.

The purpose of Duquette and Dabrowski's (2016) study was to investigate preservice teachers' experiences using classroom inquiry and reflection when implementing differentiated instruction strategies.

Preservice teachers took part in classroom inquiry by:

- Studying and reflecting on a challenge or area of concern related to their use of differentiated instruction
- Assessing the success of the approaches to student learning that were refined after reflection
- Assessing their own learning

What is Reflection?

Teachers think about previous or current challenging situations, which helps them to reframe the problem with the purpose of making changes, for example to improve student performance or behaviour (Ghaye et al., 2008). Reflection and learning can occur when preservice teachers have support structures, such as frameworks for analyzing their experiences or discussions with knowledgeable others (Gelfuso & Dennis, 2014).



Link to Article:
<http://mje.mcgill.ca/article/view/9183/7090>

A Framework for Reflection

The preservice teachers' reflection process happened individually or with the teacher educator. The process was classified using Ward and McCotter's (2014) framework.

1. Routine Reflection (i.e., self-focus and blame is placed on external factors)

2. Technical Reflection (i.e., focus is on the best way to use a technique or strategy)

3. Dialogic Reflection (i.e., account for others' viewpoints)

4. Transformational Reflection (i.e., examine beliefs to make changes in teaching and practice)

(Ward & McCotter, 2004)

Four preservice teachers (3 females, 1 male) took part in the study. The teachers were given two different support structures: daily guided questions and weekly discussions. The aim of both structures was to encourage preservice teachers to think critically about their practicum experiences (Duquette & Dabrowski, 2016).

The Preservice Teacher Candidates

All preservice teachers were completing a practicum in either Kindergarten or Grade 4. One preservice teacher took part in the first phase of the study in the fall, and the other three participated in the second phase of the study in the spring. All were given a form to complete. Sample questions included: *What went well? What needs improvement?* (Duquette & Dabrowski, 2016)

Duquette and Dabrowski's (2016) Findings

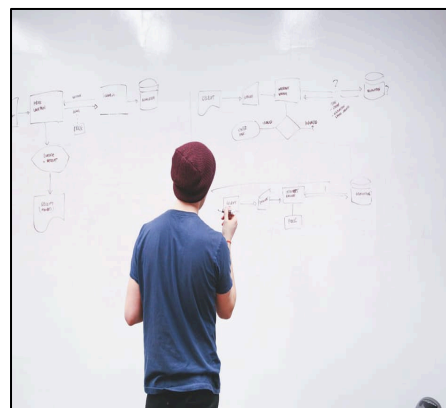
It was shown that preservice teachers:

- Were able to manage their respective challenges or concerns during practicum using classroom inquiry (3 of 4),
- Engaged in individual or collaborative reflection with the teacher educator about their concerns (3 of 4),
- Recognized when they had problems applying differentiated instruction strategies, and found it challenging to figure out how to improve the implementation of them
- Reflected at the technical and dialogical levels of Ward and McCotter's (2004) framework
- Developed informal, practical knowledge through critical inquiry and reflection.

What Does This Mean for Preservice Teachers?

Teaching quality can be enhanced:

- With the support of teacher educators
- By incorporating critical inquiry and reflection into teacher education programs (Duquette & Dabrowski, 2016).



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