



Original Article

International Journal of Educational Research and Technology

P-ISSN 0976-4089; E-ISSN 2277-1557

IJERT: Volume 5 [2] June 2014 : 09-11

© All Rights Reserved Society of Education, India

ISO 9001: 2008 Certified Organization

Website: www.soeagra.com/ijert.html

## Developing Reflection through Activity Based Learning

<sup>1</sup>Karuna Gupta and <sup>2</sup>Vinita Desai

<sup>1</sup>Ex H.O.D, P.G Department of Education, Pillai College of Education and Research, New Panvel

<sup>2</sup>Pillai College of Education and Research, Chembur

Email: guptakarunag@gmail.com, vinitavnair01@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

***"Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each." - Plato***

*This paper seeks to explore the importance of activity-based learning in Higher Education for student teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The researcher was keen on providing activities to enhance reflective practices among student teachers. The aim of this paper was to cultivate the habits of reflection keeping the students engaged in the meaningful and enriching activities.*

Received 12/04/2014 Accepted 06/06/2014

©2014 Society of Education, India

### How to cite this article:

Karuna G and Vinita D. Developing Reflection through Activity Based Learning . Inter. J. Edu. Res. Technol. 5[2] 2014; .DOI: 10.15515/ijert.0976-4089.5.2.911

### INTRODUCTION

***"We learn by doing after we have reflected on what we have done." - Dewey***

"If child is provided the opportunity to explore on his/her own and provided an optimum learning environment then the learning becomes joyful and long-lasting. If we have to train young minds, then learning should begin with the trainers themselves, the teachers.

In order for learning to occur reflection is essential. One often needs to think about an event that has occurred in his/her life, to assimilate the meaning of an activity. Encouraging reflection needs to be a conscious effort on the part of the facilitator to do more than just say "reflect on this;" it needs to be a planned activity. Providing students a platform to engage and participate in an activity enables them to develop reflective skills.

Reflection consists of those processes in which learners engage to recapture, notice and re-evaluate their experience, to work with their experience, to turn it into learning" (Boud et al.,1993). Reflection is a process that needs to be actively pursued after every learning experience and in some cases during the learning event. In the classroom, reflection can take the form of an individual activity, within small groups, or with the entire class. Engaging in the reflective process with another individual or with a small group or class can change the meanings that can be drawn from the experiential activity. Individually it might be "thinking quietly, mulling over events in our mind or making sense of experiences we have had" (Boud et al., 1985)

### NEED OF THE STUDY

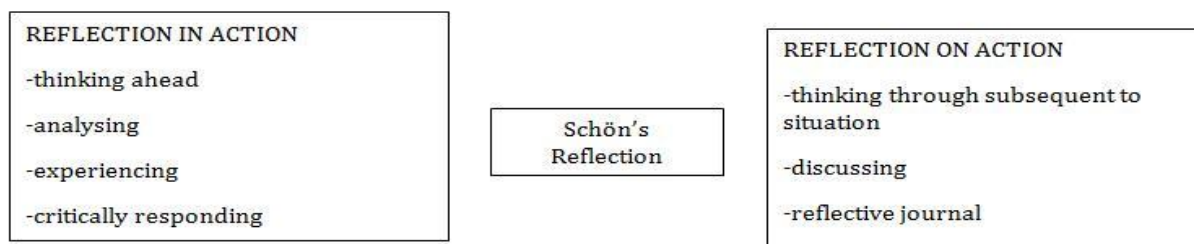
With the upsurge in technology and its adverse effects on knowledge explosion, learning has become a serious matter of concern. Today's students are presented with content-centric assignments that meet standards but lack a real-world context and opportunities for active participation. Because these assignments often fail to engage students, they can lead to uninspired work and a gradual process of disengagement.

Activity based learning is a process of having students engage in some activity that forces them to reflect upon ideas and how they are using those ideas. It aims at requiring students to regularly assess their own degree of understanding and skill at handling concepts or problems in a particular discipline. Active learning gets the students to *think*, specifically in ways that foster learning, knowledge construction and retention. It invokes cognitive processes such as mental rehearsal, metacognitive awareness, social learning and knowledge integration.

It was during the demanding time of practice teaching and internship, along with essays and an array of tasks piled up that the researcher decided to conduct a small case study on stress using activity based approach to develop reflection. It was found to be the most appropriate time as the students were going through a difficult period coping with the challenges within a given time frame.

## FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The activity was based and conducted on the premises of a **Schon's** Reflection model;



**Reflection-in-action** helps us as we complete a task. It is that process that allows us to reshape what we are working on, *while* we are working on it. It is that on-going experimentation that helps us find a viable solution. In this, we do not use a "trial-and-error" method. Rather, our actions are much more reasoned and purposeful than that. If something isn't working correctly (doesn't seem right, doesn't seem to move you closer to the goal) then you "reflect" (a conscious activity) in the action-present.

"We **reflect on action**, thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome" (Schön, 1983, p. 26).

**In the Present Study Students were made to reflect on their past experiences to understand how different situations caused stress and how they could have dealt such situations otherwise. They were allowed to explore different sources for additional information and ideas. In the initial phase, as a part of classroom discussions, the students were asked to reflect on their personal lives and life around them to understand stress and its repercussions. Following which they were asked to collect relevant pictures, further information on the content etc and journal them up.**

**Objectives of the study:**

- ❖ To explore the various factors causing stress in Student Teachers' lives
- ❖ To implement an activity based approach '**Pastiche**' in a group environment
- ❖ To Study the effect of activity based approach on student teachers to engage in reflective practices

**Research questions:**

- RQ1. Did the activity facilitate student participation?
- RQ2. Were the objectives of the activity met satisfactorily?
- RQ3. To what extent did the activity help to reflect upon personal life of the students?

## METHODOLOGY OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Since the researcher conducted the research in a activity oriented setting and each group were studied, a **Qualitative Case Study** method was adopted. The data was collected in the form of Verbal descriptions i.e. reflective experience narratives, Posters, Jingles, Stress Buster games and Concentration techniques.

The student teachers were asked to prepare small booklets relating to strategies/mechanisms used to cope with stress. Researcher also asked them to give a feedback giving their introspection and reflection on the activities. Thematic coding was done for data analysis.

**Sample:** 75 student teachers of Pillai College of Education And Research, Chembur were selected.

**About the activity:**

The activity was named '**Pastiche**' a **French word** which symbolizes **eclecticism in arts**. The activity was based on the theme '**Stress and Me**'. As 'Pastiche' symbolizes, students were asked to present a poster on stress along with creative jingles and activities for the same. Posters were prepared on the spot.

**Procedure of the Study**

Students were divided into five groups and each group was asked to make posters on their concept of stress. Students reflected on their personal lives to make posters. Thus the causes and effects of stress were depicted in a visual form through posters. The group reflected on the personal life experiences of stressful events and depicted them through a musical form, jingles and in an activity form through stress buster games. The focus of the workshop was to indulge the students in more than two forms of learning complying with Gardener's theory of Multiple Intelligence.

**Data Analysis**

Each group reflected on their group discussions and explained the effect of their activity. The Researcher categorized their experiences and reflections and summed up the discussions. Data was analyzed for each activity grouping them into themes like;

1. **Posters** –which were categorized on the basis of the different stages of human life i.e.
  - Childhood
  - Adolescence
  - Adulthood/Youth

- Old age
- 2. **Musical Jingles** – which were based on the stressful situations in a person’s professional front presented in the form of advertisement rhymes.
- 3. **Booklets** – were prepared based on stress buster activities and its effects were analyzed through the introspections and reflections into **Reflection – in- action** and **Reflection – on- action**.

## FINDINGS

**RQ1.** Student teachers’ explored the causes and effects of stress in the various stages of their personal lives. Discussions – when asked to reflect, student teachers’ were able to recollect the events which were stressful in the different stages of their personal lives. They were able to identify the factors that caused stress and were able to categorize them into aspects based on avoidable and unavoidable ones. As they trickled down their memory lanes they were able to recall the signs and symptoms exhibited during such stressful periods. They were also able to retrospect and understand that many a times in ones’ life, some if not all situations if attended to at the appropriate time, could have been partially if not completely averted.

**RQ3.** It was found that effect of Activity Based approach i.e. Pastiche paved way for effective reflective practices i.e. Reflection- in- action and Reflection- on-action. They were coded in the following manner;

<i>Reflection- in- action</i>	<i>Reflection- on-action</i>
Achilles’ heel	Comfort Zone
Struggle	Preparedness
Real ‘Me’	Resilient

Most of the respondents interpreted their feelings and thoughts which were coded and placed in the above mentioned themes.

## CONCLUSION

Stress is like spice - in the right proportion it enhances the flavor of a dish. Too little produces a bland, dull meal; too much may choke you. Life in metros is indeed stressful. In fact, with the upswing in technology it is true to say that stress begins from womb to tomb. An unborn experiences stress right from his mothers’ womb, be it the thrust of vehicular sounds or loud music, the rays of those powerful lights or the heavy metal, the machines, the people and many more to contribute. Even before one can come to terms and accept reality he/ she face several challenges in every stage of life.

Hence it is important for the teachers to bring about awareness in their students about life around them and its impact on their personal life. Students need to be prepared to meet the challenges of life and this need to begin early at life as stress is today an innate factor.

Developing reflection through retrospection enables students to be better prepared for their future. It will also allow them to think critically and act accordingly. It will equip them to deal with life more effectively and develop problem solving ability. They will be able to introspect and gain insights to the true self.

While retaining the attention span of learners’ today is one of the most challenging task for a teacher, providing opportunities to learn through activities or experience based learning is probably the most constructive ways to enhance learning.

***"What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others."***

***-Pericles***

## REFERENCES

1. Rober, A. Baron (2001). Psychology, 5<sup>th</sup>Edition, Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt Ltd, New Delhi.
2. Gaynor, G. MC Tigie (2003). 100 ways to Stress Free Life, Jaico Publishing House, Mumbai.
3. Elizabeth Hartney (2008). Stress Management for Teachers, Continuum International Publishing Group, NY.
4. C.V Narasimham (2007), ‘Stress Free Learning’, Edutracks, Vol 6(No:10) P22. . .’
5. Schön, D. A. (1987). Teaching artistry through reflection-in-action. In Educating the reflective practitioner (pp. 22-40). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
6. [http://users.ugent.be/~mvalcke/LI\\_1213/experiential\\_learning.pdf](http://users.ugent.be/~mvalcke/LI_1213/experiential_learning.pdf)
7. <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
8. <http://online.sagepub.com/>