Facilitating Quality Peer Feedback for Mini-Lesson Presentations in a Teaching Methods Course

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Introduction/Need for Innovation

In the AGED 4044 Methods of Teaching Agriculture course, clinical practice in lesson planning and teaching is included as a method to allow preservice teachers to gain experience presenting a lesson in a controlled environment prior to their student teaching internship. Peer feedback as well as individual reflection were used to refine the students' skill in planning and delivering their lessons. However, the written comments form that was traditionally used for peer feedback in the course was often lacking adequate and actionable feedback to the presenters regarding their lesson effectiveness. Often peer review comments on the students' lessons were brief statements that were overly generalized (ex. You did a good job on this lesson.) or even sarcastic and negative. Although the expectation was for the students to provide constructive feedback and a grade was given for the quality of feedback, a change in the feedback process was needed to help the students expand the depth and breadth of their comments.

Paulsen, Clark, and Anderson (2016) recommended implementing a lesson tuning protocol for peer feedback with student teachers earlier in the teacher education curriculum. The tuning protocol used by Paulsen et al. (2016) was adapted from Easton (2009) and provides a social constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978) context that can enhance collaboration and reflection among students sharing the teaching experience within the course.

How It Works

Students in the teaching methods course were assigned to small groups with approximately 4 students per group after all students in the course had presented their clinical teaching lesson. The groups used Paulsen's et al. (2016) modified lesson plan tuning protocol adapted from Easton (2009). Each group's members used the lesson tuning protocol to provide peer feedback for lesson critique. Each round of the tuning protocol was limited to a total of 20 minutes, and the time for each round was divided into specific timed segments accordingly to facilitate the peer-review: (1) five minutes was given to the presenter to allow them to describe the lesson they presented, mention any issues that they would like to discuss, and provide any other relevant information regarding the lesson they taught; (2) after the presenter explained their lesson, two minutes were allowed for clarifying questions from the group (during the clarifying questions segment no advice was to be given by the group); (3) following the clarifying questions, the group was given three minutes for silent idea generation; (4) once the group had generated their ideas for lesson improvement, the group was given 8 minutes for group discussion to offer feedback and suggestions to the presenter (the presenter remains silent and listens to the group during the group discussion); (5) the final two minutes of the protocol is given to the presenter to react to the suggestions offered by the group. After the completion of each 20 minute round, the presenter rotates to become a member of the group and another group member presents their description of their lesson. This cycle was repeated until all four students

in each group took a turn presenting the description of their lesson, totaling approximately 90 minutes for the entire activity (including minimal transition time).

Results to Date

The tuning protocol was implemented four times over the course of the fall semester in AGED 4044. The peer feedback to each student was given in more detail and provided actionable suggestions to improve teaching practice in comparison to the former method of peer lesson review that utilized written comments for each lesson. Although anecdotal, the students in the course appeared to implement the suggestions more readily and their lesson delivery improved much more quickly than in previous versions of this course. Students also commented that the tuning protocol offered more useful information and allowed time for discussion.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

Our future plan is to implement the tuning protocol as the standard format for lesson feedback in agricultural teacher education courses at Arkansas Tech University. We would advise instructors planning to implement the lesson tuning protocol to keep the timing as close as possible to the recommended 20 minute format for each round. The first time the tuning protocol is implemented, students may have difficulty filling the time in each segment of the protocol. In particular, the 8 minutes for group discussion may be difficult for students to fill with discussion. However, if the expectation for time and quality of discussion is maintained, the students will eventually make use of the entire time allotted. In addition, we would advise the instructor to act as a facilitator rather than contributing to the discussion. The tuning protocol allows the students to apply their knowledge as they discuss each other's lessons. If the instructor is overly involved in the discussion, students may not feel the need to express their ideas as completely in the discussion.

Cost/Resources Needed

The monetary cost associated with implementing the tuning protocol are minimal. However, time is a valuable asset in any course. Face-to-face class time is necessary to take advantage of the tuning protocol. If students are assigned in groups of four, the tuning protocol will take approximately 90 minutes of class time to complete four rounds and provide for transition time.

References

Easton, L. B., (2009). *Protocols for professional learning*. Alexandria VA. ASCD

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Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.