

Strategic Reflection: Implementing a Shared Department Protocol

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Introduction/Need for innovation

Balancing the time associated with teaching classroom routines and the need for opportunity for students to reflect was the impetus for this innovative idea. Several faculty at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo have shared a common routine for student reflection across many courses in the department. This practice has established a simple routine that allows for learner reflection that faculty believe is crucial, while reducing the amount of time students would spend learning different routines in different courses. The critical reflection protocol discussed in this innovative idea is based in the Rolfe (2002) hierarchy of evidence, where personal knowledge is the *what*, experiential knowledge is the *so what*, and propositional knowledge is the *now what*. Each area reflection prompt is defined in the following section.

We argue that implementing critical reflection as a protocol across a department for undergraduate and graduate level courses promotes motivation and learning within diverse populations of adult learners that is supportive of literature from learning, motivation, universal design, and culturally responsive teaching. According to Wlodkowski (2008), student achievement is positively linked to learning and motivation. Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009) provide a motivation framework for adult learners that well aligns with other widely utilized conceptions of best practices for adult learners such as the perspectives of andragogy outlined by Knowles et. al (2015). The Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009) model includes the motivational considerations of *inclusion, attitude, competence, and meaning* that work together to promote motivation. The critical reflection protocol, when used as a personal reflection, addresses the consideration of attitude by promoting personal choice, meaning, and competence by challenging learners to connect their learning with the real world by developing a personal action plan. While this innovation supports many Universal Design for Learning (UDL) checkpoints, the checkpoint of 9.3 - developing metacognition and 7.2 - personalized context are primary drivers for the implementation of this innovative idea (CAST, 2018).

How it works

To implement the critical reflection protocol idea across multiple courses, it is important to collaborate with faculty who intend to utilize the protocol. Suggested steps include:

- (1) Establishing a definition for each of the three focus questions to clarify the expectations. We suggest the following:
 - *What* – a statement of what the big ideas and/or lived experience are.
 - *So, what* – a discussion of why the big ideas and/or lived experiences are significant or impactful.
 - *Now what* – based on the responses of the first two questions, a personal plan for action moving forward.
- (2) Develop a rubric to communicate success criterion to learners. Individual teachers may like to make personal adjustments for their courses to align with their grading philosophy including considerations for traditional points-based grading, skills based, or point-less grading.
- (3) Identify critical points within the content of each course where critical reflection would allow learners to pause to document what was learned and plan for their future.
- (4) Create a plan to communicate the protocol and rubric to learners for each course.
- (5) Review students' submissions and provide feedback on the rubric.

(6) Faculty reflect on the process and adjust as needed.

Results to date/Implications

Over the 2023-2024 academic year, within the Ag Education and Communication Department, three faculty members have utilized the critical reflection protocol in courses for teacher preparation, leadership and program management, with over 100 undergraduate and graduate students combined. Courses include a wide range of offerings from graduate level seminars for preservice and in-service teachers, undergraduate teacher preparation, and leadership courses.

While narrative responses to the questions is an easy way to implement this critical reflection protocol, it has been implemented by the faculty members in other formats to allow for learner agency in expression of their learning. These alternative formats have included learning expression choice boards (Ray & Strong, 2022), sketchnoting, and summary tables reminiscent of those promoted by Windschitl et al. (2020).

Participating faculty note that undergraduate students can struggle to identify meaningful next steps, whereas graduate students that are engaged in clinical practice student teaching, in service teachers, and also graduate students employed in industry jobs, tend to provide more thoughtful and robust plans for how they will implement what they have learned or their plan for how they will improve the practice.

As with establishing any classroom routine, timely and frequent feedback helps to establish a routine in the course. When routines are established, faculty members have found that students often require little feedback to meet the success criteria of the rubric.

Future plans/Advice

Advice – A clear rubric based on the content is imperative. This rubric should be discussed/reviewed early in the course, and learners should have multiple opportunities to pause at critical points to document their reflections. When possible, faculty should consider the opportunity to provide options for choice in learning expression, hence the rubrics focus on the content of the questions, not the delivery of the format of the produced reflection. Examples of sample rubrics will be included with the poster.

Plans for this innovation include continuing to work with additional faculty within the department and college to look for opportunities where learners would benefit from critical reflection. Future plans for this innovation include suggested research on learners' impressions of the protocol and how learners' conception of reflection may be impacted after their program completion and into their careers.

Costs/Resources

Direct costs associated with implementing this innovation are negligible and related primarily to faculty work time if the work of collaborating and developing the rubrics is done outside of the traditional scope of work. The indirect costs associated with this innovation may include faculty work time to update syllabi and course learning management systems (if applicable), and additional time to review students' submissions and evaluate them on the rubric.

References

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