

Reflective Summary

Reflective Summary on the 45-hour Internship carried out at Sussex College, Kiribathgoda

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Reflecting on my teaching experience at Sussex College, Kiribathgoda I define it as an exciting and valuable professional opportunity that I experienced in my life. Prior to the commencement of the teaching practicum, I was able to identify the needs of students in each class by depending on the ideas and the assumptions given by the English teachers in the school. Having pursued a TESL undergraduate program at the University of Kelaniya for over three and half years, I have received comprehensive education and training in English Language Teaching. Thus, this internship presented a valuable opportunity for me to apply the knowledge and skills I acquired during my academic tenure, thereby enriching my teaching approach under guidance. Even though I assumed the role of a teacher during my practicum, I felt a strong connection with the students I was teaching. My internship as a student teacher provided me with a deeply meaningful and invaluable experience, emphasizing that teaching is an ongoing journey of learning. Selecting Sussex College, Kiribathgoda for my internship proved to be a wise decision. I was able to get a dedicated mentorship and an infectious enthusiasm of the students I encountered. Assigned to teach multiple classes from grade 1- 10, I found myself privilege to engage with diverse students, encompassing differences in gender, nationality, and academic skills. Reflecting on the lesson materials, instructional strategies, student's responses, and the personal growth I experienced throughout my practicum, I am confident that my internship had laid a promising foundation for my future career endeavors.

Nevertheless, through the reflection of the practicum, analyzing both the effective and the ineffective aspects of the lessons, reflecting on the materials and their appropriateness with the teaching methods and also reflecting on the reactions of the students to the lessons, it becomes evident how significant professional development occurred during my experience as an inexperienced teacher.

Arikan et al. (2008) states that “the quality which distinguishes ineffective teachers from the effective ones is the latter's ability to make the most boring course interesting and important to the students” (p.43). During my time as a teacher, I put effective classroom management strategies into practice. Considering that it was my first time teaching, I believe I did a good job of fulfilling my duties. In order to create a productive and orderly learning atmosphere, I carefully planned and explained expectations to the pupils. Several things went smoothly during

the internship. There was clear engagement with the tasks and the content from the students' active participation. High levels of student participation and compliments on the relevancy of the material and the clarity of my directions were favorable aspects of teaching. Incorporating interactive activities like group activities, pair activities, and role- plays was an engaging and an interesting experience for all the students from grade 1-10. I made an effort to keep the students' enthusiasm in the learning process alive throughout my teaching sessions by showing them my admiration for their efforts through the expressions of appreciation such as “good”, “very good”, and “great”. The use of gamification increased the interaction and engagement of the students in all the classes. For example, I used the game “pass the ball” to teach “Adjectives” to grade 7 students where they were given a toy and asked them to make a circle and pass the toy by sharing an adjective to describe the toy. It was an interesting experience for the learners. Moreover, I was able to build a good teacher- student rapport by giving an opportunity for the students to ask questions freely and to solve their doubts during the lessons. The teacher-talk time and the student- talk time was balanced equally and the learning is a more student- centered learning. Then, integrating multimedia resources like videos and audios, other visual aids like flashcards, picture cards, posters, and charts enhanced the students' comprehension and retention of lessons.

However, I encountered a challenge related to time management as one period only had 35 minutes. Balancing content delivery with interactive activities took more time than expected, necessitating pace adjustments to ensure key concepts were adequately covered. Then, most of the students from all the classes seem to be distracted when they were given individual writing activities. Moreover, classroom management with the grade 9 and 10 classes was difficult as most of the students of those classes were not attentive and listening during all the periods including the English period I had to face another challenge as some of the students struggled to stay focused, requiring me to have improved classroom management skills to address varying student needs effectively. Moreover, I thought that I would become more successful in my teaching if my lesson contents were divided into small chunks instead of teaching all the concepts at one time hence, some students are not competent enough to grasp some contents at once and they need more time and practice to learn those concepts. To engage the audience effectively, I employed a variety of teaching methods, such as group activities, visual aids, and real-world examples. I learned the importance of flexibility in adapting to unexpected challenges,

particularly time constraints. In future teaching, I aim to refine my time management skills, use a diverse range of teaching methods, and focus on building a supportive and inclusive classroom community.

The lessons are primarily aimed to develop the language skills of the students including reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar and vocabulary through reading comprehensions, writing activities like essay writing and creative writing, listening activities, speaking activities like impromptu speeches, prepared speeches and role-plays. The efficiency of the students' learning during my teaching practicum mainly depended on the strengths and the weaknesses of materials and activities I utilized for my lessons. The lesson plans were created by depending on the data gathered through the needs analysis conducted by discussing with the English teachers in the school. The intended learning outcomes of each lesson were designed according to the Blooms' Taxonomy. Lesson planning was done following a structure where all the language skills of the students are enhanced and improved. I applied an eclectic approach of teaching with the combination of different teaching and learning methods such as behaviorism, task-based learning, constructivism, and collaborative learning are used by applying positive and negative reinforcement, giving enough tasks to apply the learnt elements, and providing a more student-centered learning opportunity for students to construct their own knowledge through appropriate scaffolding. The most prominent concepts that I used when teaching were the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) and MKO (More Knowledgeable Others) which comes under the socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky. I used those two concept by scaffolding and giving students the opportunity to construct their own knowledge by interacting with the more capable peers in the class. For example, when the class was dividing in to groups for the group activities, I used to mix the lower level students, average level students, and higher level students together by giving them the opportunity to interact and learn from each other. Furthermore, I was able to apply the PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) approach in my lesson planning procedure. Through most of the lead-in activities, I allowed the students to brainstorm and guess the lesson through eliciting. There, I only acted as the facilitator and students became the central authority within the classroom. Arendas (1998, as cited in Qin & Wang, 2021), delimits lead-in as "a technique by teachers at the beginning of a new lesson or when presenting new knowledge to prepare students to learn and establish a communicative link between the learners and the information about to be presented". Accordingly, I realized that the lead-in activities, such as language games

helped students activate their schemata, arouse curiosity about the topic by piquing their interest in the subject, get pumped up for the class, and explore their ideas before learning comprehensive grammar. After completing the lead- in tasks, the students were directed to complete the pre-tasks and the while-tasks to practice what they had learned. I applied behaviorism in most of the tasks. Before starting the games, I reminded the children of the incentives they would receive for finishing the given tasks successfully. After each game, I encouraged the students to applaud for each group who won the game as a means of peer support and encouragement. It was one of my strategies in teaching that was used to motivate the students to actively engage in the in-class activities. The post- tasks were there for the production stage where the students had to apply their knowledge gained through the previous tasks. In addition, I always attempted to make sure that my students understood the instructions clearly. Throughout the group activities and peer activities, I went to all the groups and students, monitored them while reminding the remaining time that they had to complete the tasks. Most of the time, I provided instructions for the group activities before dividing the class in to groups because when the students go to their own groups, they start to interact with their peers and might not listen to the instructions carefully.

Reflecting on the student's reactions to the lessons, most of the reactions were positive. When there were group activities, the students from grade 1-8 showed active class participation and engagement by saying "we really love to do group work". Moreover, most of the students from all most all the grades from 1-10 expressed their preference towards the game and other interactive activities like watching video clips or listening to audio clips during the lessons. They said "it was fun and interesting to do games, to watch videos and listen to songs during the English language lessons". Even though the grade 09 and 10 students were distracted during the writing and speaking activities, they seemed to be more engaged in the tasks when the teacher was using games and other interactive visual and the auditory aids when teaching.

The feedback from the two observation sessions provided an invaluable opportunity for professional growth, enabling correction of mistakes and critical reflection on lesson improvement. As a student- teacher, skills such as situational thinking, adapting to unfamiliar cultures and religious practices, understanding the unique needs and strengths of students were

emphasized. As a whole, the experience was refreshing and enlightening contributing to my development as an educator.

References

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