

Contents

1. Introduction	Page 2
2. Description	Page 4
3. Feelings	Page 5
4. Evaluation	Page 6
5. Analysis	Page 8
6. Conclusion & Action Plan	Page 10
7. Bibliography	Page 11
8. Appendix 1	Page 12
9. Appendix 2	Page 34

Introduction

“Reflective practice has been successful in articulating a conception of professional practice that goes beyond the application of previously mastered competences, which are then rather mechanically applied to events. Stressing the conception of ‘reflection-in-action’ this model describes the practitioners’ ability to employ professional knowledge during practice in such a manner as to devise, choose and apply an appropriate response to unexpected and complex events and situations.”

Light, G & Cox, R (2001) Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, London, Paul Chapman Publishing.

In other words we as the ‘teacher’ are not the fount of all knowledge we are merely but the ‘conduit’ to enable our learners to learn, it is imperative we realise this to ensure that learning takes place. No-longer is it so, that we can see ourselves as pouring knowledge into empty vessels and as Brookfield (1995) says ‘One of the hardest things teachers learn is that the sincerity of their intentions does not guarantee the purity of their practice’. It is to this end that reflection and more importantly critical reflection is of paramount importance to the expanding role of the teacher.

It is true that reflection in its simplest form can equate to personally reviewing ones performance during, lets say a lesson or term, and then changing many facets of ones practice, however this none-critical form of reflection does not take into account any of the numerous changing facets of both education as a whole, specific subject matter and also societies moiré’s.

To this end several educational theorists have devised schemes, which will aid the practitioner to reflect more critically upon practice, and more importantly reflect ‘in’ action instead of simply reflecting ‘upon’ action.

This, as Brookfield (1995) also says should enable the teacher to break the vicious circle of innocence and blame, to halt naivety, pessimism, guilt and lethargy. It does this by firstly allowing us to understand the considerations or the process of education and then by enabling us to challenge the assumptions thrown up by this.

Following on from Brookfield’s work Johns C.C. (1995) has devised his own reflective practice model which takes the idea of reflection in action to another level, less grounded in the theoretical and perhaps more introspective in its process. It enables the ‘teacher’ to practically reflect in a ‘thinking on your feet’ manner so that the teacher can quickly devise any number of responses or answers to any given situation. Then further to this work Gibbs G. (1998) devised his own reflective ‘cycle’, which is less grounded in the medical world than Johns’.

To sum up, reflective practise in teaching is the process where the 'teacher' in short 'thinks on his or her feet' in order to ensure the greatest learning outcome is achieved by the greatest amount of learners at any one particular time.

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

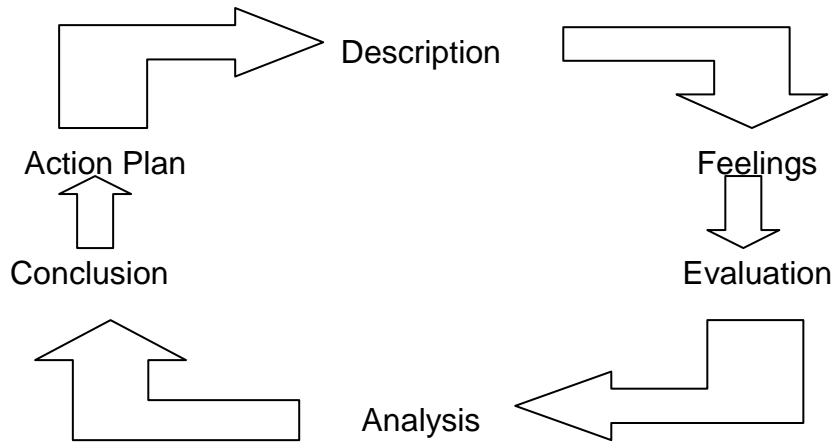


Figure 1. Gibbs, G. (1998) Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and Learning Methods, Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic, Oxford.

The above Reflective Cycle by Gibbs is the cycle I shall be using in the following chapters in order to reflect upon my own scheme of work covering the teaching I am currently undertaking at XXX. I shall elaborate further on the titles Gibbs uses during my writings.

Description (*what happened?*)

I am currently teaching adult basic literacy (on placement) at XXX, this is a low security, open prison.

I have been provided with the scheme of work we are to use in conjunction with The Student Pack (Inc. ILP), Record of Work, Lesson Plan for team-teach and Lesson Plan for Individual Tuition. (See appendices 1.0 to 1.5)

The class is of a roll-on roll-off structure with between 4 and 12 students in each three-hour session.

The scheme of work itself is used as a generic overview of the course in conjunction with the national core curriculum document for adult literacy devised by The Basic Skills Agency. Further to this document each individual student is serviced by their own record of works and more importantly their Individual Learning Plan (ILP) where targets for their duration in 'education' while in custody are set and reviewed, along with any other parameters decided upon on initial entry assessment.

Feelings (*What were your feelings?*)

The scheme of work (appendix 1.0) is none-linear due to the nature of education in the prison environment, the simple idea of teaching within prisons being 'roll-on roll-off' does not go far enough in explaining the systems we as the 'teacher; have to deal with. Any scheme of work within the prison system must pay attention to the notion that looks can be very deceiving within prison education.

What may initially seem like a run of the mill roll-on roll-off course is further complicated by the fact that students may change on a daily basis during a lesson let alone throughout the duration of the course. And this is only the start of the issues to be encountered while teaching in the prison sector.

To this end the nature of the scheme of work attempts to focus on the needs of the learner and work towards the learners Individual Learning Plan. As a consequence it is therefore difficult to understand the very open ended manner of the scheme of work, it could be said that the scheme of work is very much 'not for the teacher' in the respect that any new teacher, be they new to the institution or indeed new to the profession would find it very difficult to ascertain what topics have already been covered by the class and more to the point what topics have in fact only recently been covered, to avoid simple repetition. Therefore the whole notion of the scheme of work being 'for' the learners needs could become a complete contradiction.

Further to this it could be said that teaching within a prison can appear easier than imagined due to the concept that there is a 'captive' audience to teach, however this captive audience is one which is constantly changing requiring considerable differentiation and when any critical incidents do occur, as can always be assured they will, these are magnified bringing into account many possible classroom management implications.

Evaluation *(What was good and Bad about the experience?)*

So far I have personally taught four, three hour classes to the adult basic education (ABE) group, these classes have been stand alone classes within the parameters of the scheme of work and Individual learning plans of the students in attendance, however they also make up only a part of the weekly scheme of work who's final aim is to allow the students to gain nationally recognised accreditation and reach the standards set down by the core curriculum, accredited through City & Guilds.

I can see many good points of the combined 'Scheme of work and ILP' system, as well as some areas for improvement.

The system does allow total flexibility for the teacher to focus on the requirements of the individual (**needs of the learner**), each student is tailored a learning plan with their own attainment targets. With this in mind the teacher is able to rely on the requirements of the individuals learning plan and the knowledge of the week's students to prepare unique lesson plans, which it is believed will guarantee learning takes place at least on a weekly basis.

However, this does create problems where there are definite areas for improvement.

One problem area where there is need for improvement is in the coherence provided by the scheme. With its heavy reliance on the needs of the learner and the use of Individual learning plan's as the basis for each stand-alone session a new teacher would find it difficult to see the objectives of the scheme in its entirety. The 'stepping stones to success' are not clearly labelled so it is difficult for anyone coming into either the profession or the establishment to continue with any work previously done by the learner or indeed pick up from any achievements previously made by the learner. As a continuation of this the next area for improvement therefore becomes the consistency of the work the learner is given and therefore the learning on offer or received. There is a fear that the disjointed content of the sessions seen in its entirety (i.e. 'the scheme of work') could lead to general apathy among the learners with a feeling that they are either simply covering old ground time and time again or in fact worse still the feeling that they are being led down a blind alley that even the 'teacher' doesn't know where it leads.

Another area for improvement in the scheme of work is that it does not provide very much ongoing assessment of the learners work. There are review meetings provided every six weeks however students may well be able to 'cover' themselves and make it appear learning has taken place where in fact it is not the case. As Petty G. (1998) says: In the right hands assessment can inspire, motivate and provide the feedback which is essential for targeting prompt corrective help. Assessment is not simply a tool for teachers to use to find out the level of achievement of an individual, this is purely the summative assessment more often reserved for the end of a course or as the aim of a scheme of work (i.e. the city & guilds certificates the course aims to achieve).

However there is little provision in the scheme of work for more formative assessment to see how the learner is developing on a more basic level and whether learning is genuinely taking place on a 'day-by-day' basis.

Analysis (What can you learn from the event?)

From working with the scheme of work provided by XXX there are many things that can be learnt. If one considers Maslow's hierarchy of needs from the perspective of them being applied to the classroom scenario it can be considered that the learners' needs are provided for by the scheme of work.

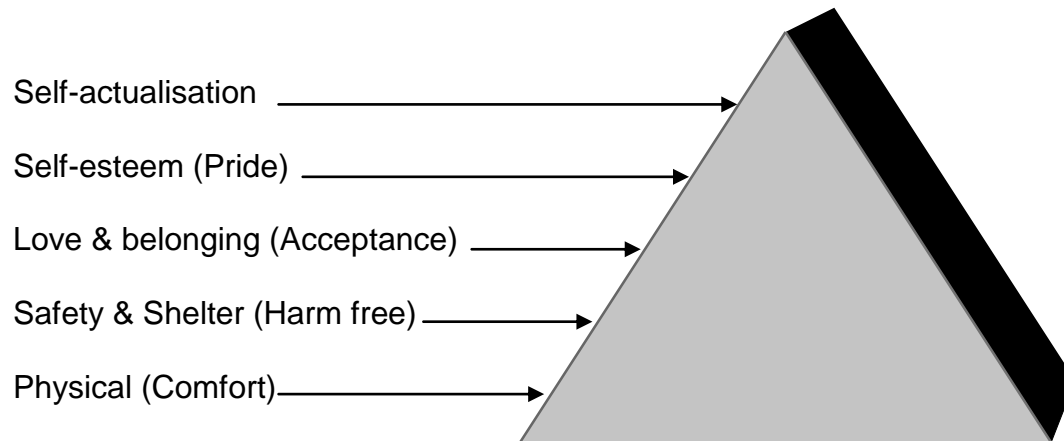
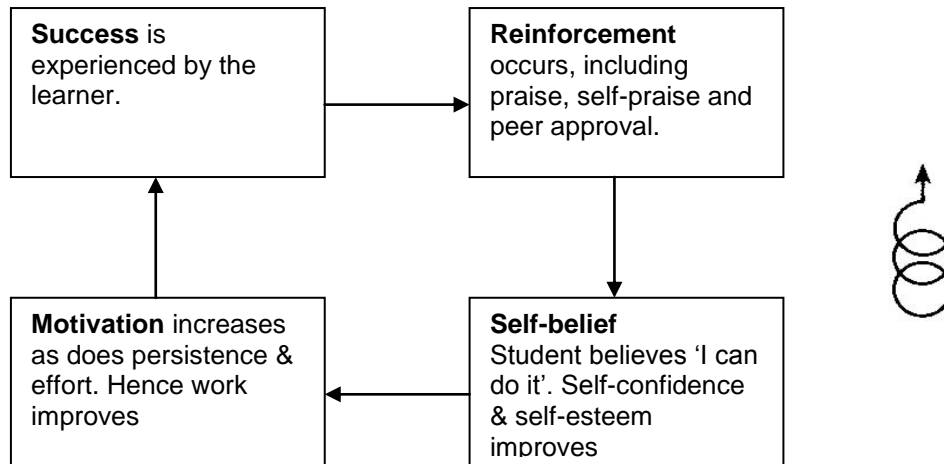


Figure 2. Maslow (1962) Hierarchy of Needs applied to the classroom. Taken from Reece I. & Walker S. Teaching, Training & Learning. Business Education Publishers Ltd 2003.

Maslow's writing, from a psychology and management theory stance, can also be applied to the classroom and Maslow believes that motivation is the key factor in successful learning. The scheme of work as it stands does provide a full guideline for all of the stages of this hierarchy to be met. From the initial aims stating that that we the educator are to "encourage students to have the self-confidence to communicate effectively both in society and in all learning situations" to the strategies including "to provide a working atmosphere which is conducive to positive achievement". In all elements of the XXX scheme of work emphasis is placed on the needs of the learners being met, from physical comfort and safety through to self-actualisation and giving the learner a sense of positivity for a future once outside the confines of the prison itself. It also is able to do this in a very andragogical manner, as is always an issue with teaching at a further education level and especially so when teaching basic numeracy and literacy. Indeed Knowles (1983) discusses, among others, one major difference between an adult and child's learning is this basic concept that an adult needs to know **why** they are learning something before they can begin, where as the child is more likely to be allowed to be guided blindly.

The scheme of work in itself also attempts very well to deal with what Petty (1998) calls the learning engine. In this it is discussed that the learner will learn at an exponential rate through positive reinforcement. To this end the scheme of work also covers those classroom management issues, which will enable the teacher to provide a happy and successful learning environment, again in an andragogical manner, so as to create self-belief in the learner.



Positive classroom management can promote a positive spiral of improved learning however negativity can create the opposite effect.

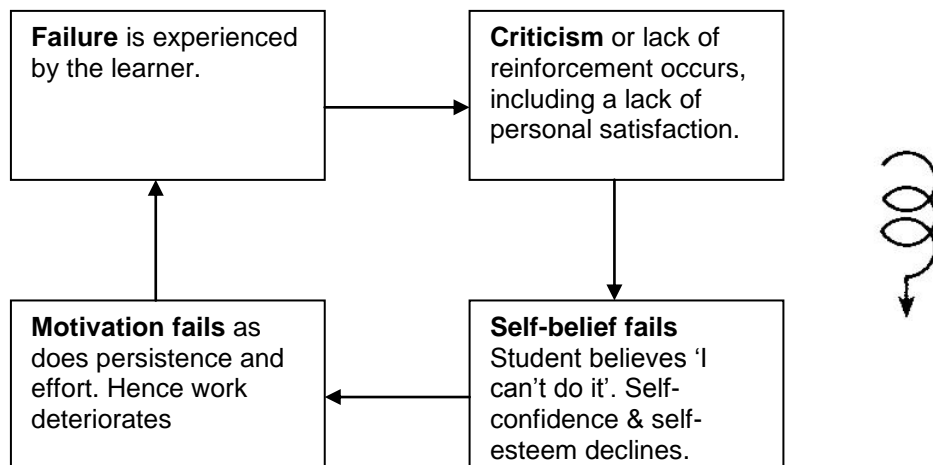


Figure 3. The Learning Engine. Petty G. (1998) Teaching Today. Nelson Thornes Ltd.

Conclusion *(What could you have done differently or in addition?)*
And Action Plan *(if it happens again what would you do?)*

From my reflections, I feel I would add to the scheme of work the critical identification of the objectives needed to pass the City & Guilds certificates that the learners are aiming to achieve. It is simply not good enough to state that the requirements are in the adult literacy core curriculum document; for several reasons.

Firstly this document is a government document so therefore has all of the associated issues with ease of understanding and what is specifically meant by it, secondly this document may not be available at hand to any new teacher or substitute teacher required to take a class and thirdly the adult literacy core curriculum document is a 150 page document and it would be churlish to expect every teacher teaching on the course be that permanently or on an 'ad-hoc' basis to have complete extensive knowledge of it.

To this end I have identified key requirements needed by the learner, which can be added to the existing scheme of work to be utilised in conjunction with the individual learning plans already in operation. (See appendix 2.0)

This however does not negate the major constraint, being that we cannot control the students' diversity within the classroom on a near daily basis. It will always be so that within prison education the Inmates although physically 'captive' are not a 'captive audience' for the educator. Inmates will always be required to go for visits to governors, probation and parole boards, family visits and sundry other visitors as a precedence to the education service, which although there are absentee's in all walks or life in further education, it is to nowhere near as large an extent as in the prison sector. Add to this the fact that inmates due eventually leave on the whole, sooner rather than later in an open prison at least, the population which needs to be addresses by any scheme of work is very difficult to control.

Further to the key requirements document (appendix 2.0) it is also crucial to have prepared suitable resources for use. There is once again a large issue in the teaching of adult basic education when it comes to resources. The skills agency are attempting to address the issue of the pitching of teacher handouts in the adult basic education field as previously all basic literacy and numeracy worksheets had been pitched at the child learner for obvious reasons however as it becomes more and more apparent that there are great numbers of adults requiring basic literacy education there is therefore a requirement for material to be used which takes into account andragogical learning. This then goes, in itself, to help satisfy motivational issues which can arise should an 'adult' learner feel patronised by subject matter.

Bibliography

Armitage et al (2003) Teaching and Training in Post Compulsory Education, 2nd Edition, Buckingham: Open University.

Brookfield S. (1995) Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher, San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

Gibbs G. (1988) Learning by Doing; A guide to Teaching and Learning Methods, Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic, Oxford.

Johns C. C. The value of reflective practise for nursing, Journal of Clinical Nursing.

Knowles M. (1984) The Adult Learner; A Neglected Species, Gulf Publishing.

Light G & Cox R. (2001) Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, London, Paul Chapman Publishing.

Petty G. (1998) Teaching today, A Practical Guide, Nelson Thornes Ltd.

Reece I & Walker S. (2003) Teaching, Training & Learning, A Practical Guide, Business Education Publishers Ltd.

Appendix 1.0

XXX Scheme of Work

Appendix 1.1

Learning Pack (Inc. ILP)

Appendix 1.2

Record of Work

Appendix 1.3

Lesson Plan (Team Teach)

Appendix 1.4

Lesson Plan (Individual Tuition)

Appendix 1.5

Examples of ILP's