Using Student Journals to Increase Critical Reflection Skills

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May 3, 2007
Background on Critical Reflection

- Process usually tied to problem-based learning
- Little research; mostly qualitative
- Different component analysis, few useful models
Purpose of the Study

- Develop a framework for increasing the components students incorporate into their reflection process
- Reflection process is viewed as a way to support students’ critical thinking around required reading and course content
- Develop an understanding of the components of reflection
A critical reflection process refers to a statement containing an identified topic, description of what is known about the topic, analysis of new understanding of topic, and plan for how the information will be used or further developed.
Participants

- Participant A: 23 year old, female; second year graduate student
- Participant B: 26 year old female; first year graduate student
- Participant C: 22 year old female; first year graduate student
Baseline

- Participants completed two reflective learning journals as part of course requirements.
- No guidance provided on the reflection process.
- Topics had to be relevant to course content.
**Reflective Practices Rating Rubric**

Date: ___________  Participant Identification Number: _______________  Journal Entry Number: ______

Rater: _______________  Initial Rating: ______  Inter-rater Reliability: ______  Score: _______________

**Directions:** After reviewing a reflective journal entry, rate on a scale from 1 (minimal presence of a reflective process) to 9 (complete reflective process present) based on the criteria below. If rating criteria from more than one column is selected, use the number presented in between to determine the final rating. For example, if criteria are found in both column 3 and column 5 in the participant’s journal entry, then the final score would be a 4.

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<td>4. Description of the Topic:</td>
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<td>7. In the journal entry, the participant has only one of the required four domains and more than two elements in domain:</td>
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<td>8. Determined a Topic:</td>
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<td>10. Defines the purpose for focusing on the topic:</td>
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<td>11. Topic is followed throughout the entire journal entry and the focus of</td>
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**Score:** ______
Intervention Phase

- **Intervention Phase 1:**
  - Participants were provided with the reflection framework with a scripted presentation.
  - Students completed two learning journals a week, submitted electronically to course instructor.
  - The reflections were evaluated using the Reflection Rating Rubric two a week.
Intervention Phase

- Intervention 2:
  - Participants and the instructor reviewed the use of the reflection framework
  - Participants were provided feedback focusing on identifying the components they included in their reflection process
A Framework for Reflection

Determine a Topic
Based on the information presented or discussed in class or your readings, determine a topic to focus your reflection.

Transformation of Information
- How has this information benefited me?
- How will I use this information?
- Plan for how you will apply, or might apply this information
- Plan for how you will answer any questions you still have about this topic

Describe the Topic
- Highlight main points that were featured around the selected topic
- If possible answer the following question types:
  - What is the purpose and intent of the topic?
  - Who should use it?
  - Who should benefit from it?
  - How do you apply this topic in practice?
  - Is there an evidence to support the effectiveness of the topic?

Analyze the Topic
- What assumptions did I have about topic before class or reading?
- What did previously know about this information?
- What new understanding have I developed?
- How do I feel about this new information? Is it inline with my belief system?
- What or other’s thoughts our options about this information
- What questions do I still have and how can I answer them?
Increasing Components of Reflection

Journal Entries

Rubric Rating
Limitations of the Study

- Selection of participations
- Researcher familiar with course content and participants
- Requirements of learning journals
- Measure
Discussion

- Measure
- Low inter-rater reliability (.65)
- Inability to capture the entire reflection process within one journal entry
- Unable to identify consistently the components utilized by the participants