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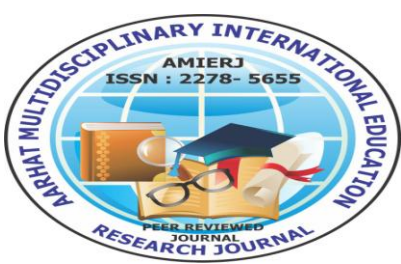
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**GROUP LEARNING STRATEGY: REFLECTIVE PORTFOLIOS ON
COMPREHENSIVE LEARNING OF CONCEPTS**

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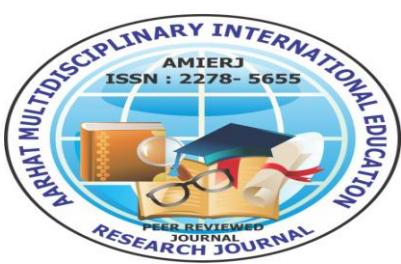
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Abstract

Higher education aims at enabling students to become autonomous independent learners. This emphasizes on a shift from teaching to facilitating effective learning and to promote the concepts of ownership and 'reflection on learning'. It is necessary to provide a framework for reflection over which students themselves have a level of control. Teacher education intends to develop the necessary knowledge and skills for transactions in future classrooms. It requires resourcefulness and collaboration. This was achieved through the development of group projects carried over through teamwork and reflections. Students were given guidelines on the above and they achieved through interactions and reflections. The researcher states the experience of a case study in this paper.

Introduction

In this challenging global employment market, it is mandatory for graduating students to equip with flexible, adaptable and prepared to take responsibility for their own learning and their own continuous personal and professional development. It is generally well recognized that graduates will be required to demonstrate high levels of proficiency with respect to the skills of problem solving, interpersonal communication, time management, team work, project management and communication and information technologies and that cognitive skills alone will be insufficient to ensure survival in a competitive work market (Harvey et al .,1997). In case of teacher education, the responsibility of teachers in higher education is doubled where other

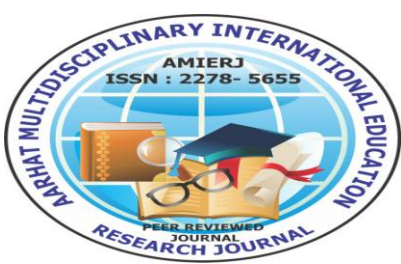


than developing disciplinary specific knowledge and understanding, teachers should develop in them research attitude, problem solving ability, critical thinking and transactional strategy application. This demands the teachers to design and adopt different teaching and learning methodologies, which actively encourage students to become autonomous, independent and self-motivated learners. This calls for a paradigm shift in the system from one of 'providing instruction' to one of promoting 'effective learning'. In the face of ongoing changes in higher education, including ever increasing class size, widening access and non-traditional students, teachers and tutors by necessity must shift their focus from teaching or providing instruction to facilitating collaborative enquiry as a means of empowering students within the teaching and learning context (Stefani and Nicol, 1997).

As a result of the shift in teaching, opportunities will be provided for students to develop a sense of ownership over their individual learning processes, to acquire the skill of self-assessment and reflecting on their learning processes and the necessary professional skills. This paper focuses on a case study developing a student-centred approach to reflective learning through a team based project work. The context for the case study is in M.Ed Teacher Education offered at Pondicherry University.

THE COURSE

M.Ed program aims at preparing the future teachers on developing research aptitude other than discipline based understanding to withstand the expectations of the future classrooms. The paper 'Advanced methods of teaching' encompasses the theories and philosophies of teaching, the teaching methodologies, strategies, tactics and assessment patterns in teaching. The teacher handling this paper should look into the relevance of today and transact the curriculum accordingly. The researcher-teacher of this paper updates the methodology every year. One such program was designed on team based project work. The program thus consists of instructional classes covering theory units; group projects on demonstration of various teaching methodologies; and an individual seminar presentation on various themes given in the syllabus.



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Other than the content of the syllabus, the researcher gave a wide perspective of teaching methodologies. The trend was perceived and intended to help them on Constructivism, Blended Learning, Critical pedagogy and Digital portfolio. The students were grouped and the choice of choosing the topic was given to them. Each group has five members. The researcher intended to develop collaborative learning, resource finding and objectivity in thinking and presenting. Students were tuned to work on the framework given to them.

Subject: Advanced Methods of Teaching

Semester:II

Group Name:

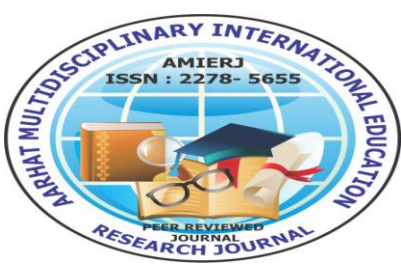
Date:

Frame work: 1

Short Term Goals	Target Date
1) Select Project Topic	
2) Go for Library resources	
3) Create and use an outline	
4) Work with your partners to research	

Frame work: 2

Long Term Goals	Target Date
1) Decide individual role	
2) Design projection map	
3) Complete final project on time	
4) Exhibition of projetct	



Burkhalter, Nancy and Shegebayev, Maganat,R(2012) recommended that teachers should embrace student-centered techniques and critical thinking methodologies, as well as shift from a fear-based, authoritarian, top-down system of relating to students and colleagues to one of cooperation, openness and fairness. Such a reform will take repetitive, intensive and experiential training as well as regular assessments of progress. The above framework streamlined their thinking on goal formation and responsibilities to carry over the team project. The goal has to be operationalized by writing journals and reading resources. They were trained on those and all their collections of materials were labeled with their reflections (along with the date) well documented.

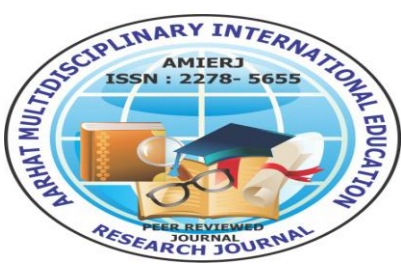
Though they worked on team, there was total distribution of work. They had periodical meetings updating their work completion along with discussion towards understanding of the theme. Peer interactions enhanced their comprehension. Moreover they share their journal writing for tracking each one's thoughts and understanding.

Journal Stems for student reflection

Stem statements:

- a) The best part about-----
- b) An interesting part is-----
- c) I predict-----
- d) I wonder-----
- e) How-----
- f) Why-----
- g) A connecting idea is -----
- h) I believe-----

As per the schedule given, they worked on their time framework and finally staged their performance. The members came to the stage and each one took a role and presented their part. They had a thread in linking and brought comprehension over what they were intended for.



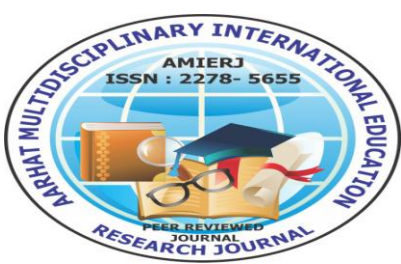
Any performance needs to be assessed for further development. Using brainstorming strategy, the researcher pinpointed the criteria for evaluation. Teacher and student audience evaluated the performance of the individuals. It was followed by open reflections for realization of the strength and weakness of every student.

It provided opportunities for students to develop a sense of ownership over their individual learning processes, and opportunities for self-assessment and reflection on their achievement such that they as learners can develop a sense of their own personal and professional development. Developing the ability to determine for themselves whether or not they have a sufficient grasp of concepts, principles or skills such that they can bring all of this to bear on new situations and problems, and the ability to decide in which ways their present competencies can suffice and in which ways they may need to acquire new skills and knowledge for new situations (Boud, 1995; Cowan, 1998).

At the end of their Group project presentation, they had mastery over the methodologies they worked upon. It helped them to gain personal skills such as resource finding, note taking, organizing the content, elaborating with classroom illustrations, sharing, communicating, reflecting and identifying one's own strength and weaknesses and professional skills such as goal-setting, scheduling, interacting, critical observation and delivery. They did reflect at the end of the course. Here are some glimpses:

- At the beginning of the exercise I was not confident of my self and was not aware of what I was doing. But now, I am confident that I am towards development.
- I am very much interested in attending the class as the classes are becoming very interesting.
- The assessment of my peer gave the confidence that I can do much better, if I am sincerely working out the reflective practices.
- It is a good exercise working in a group and it is helpful in bringing clarity and in reviewing.

As a teacher, the researcher identified the gained strength of the students as,



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- Enhancement of mean scores
- Development of awareness
- Co-operative learning and resource sharing
- Demonstrate learning
- Reflective practitioners
- Exhibition of self-criticism and self-discipline
- Objective academic writing
- Built-up self-confidence and self – esteem

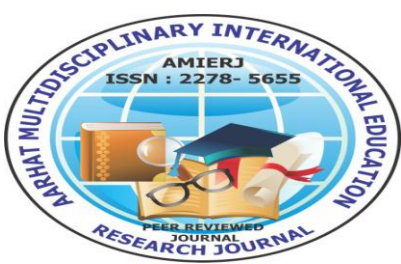
In this case study reflection on learning has been contextualized around a specific aspect of the M.Ed programme and genuine attempts have been made such that students are evaluating their performance against the framed criteria and negotiated in collaboration with their teacher and their peers. This case study has reinforced the importance of sharing an understanding of the purpose of formative feedback appeal in our goal of developing the autonomous independent learner.

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