

TEACHERS' AND LEARNERS' REFLECTIVE FUNCTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPETENCY BASED EDUCATION (MODEL FOR ABRIDGED PROGRAM STUDENTS)

Summary. The article is focused on the role of reflective functions in teachers' professional development in the context of competency based education. It describes how competent teacher should be and what competencies influence on engagement of adult learners into studying process. The study examines how the teacher creates the conditions for student teachers to develop reflective functions during practical lessons. Reflective functioning gives an opportunity to think about what you are doing deeply and learn something new from your experience. The purpose of reflective functioning is to help students learn from their practical experience. In this sense, the teacher's reflective function is essential for implementation into learning process in terms of competency based approach.

Keywords: reflection, reflective function, competency based approach, teacher's competencies, learning cycle.

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РЕФЛЕКСИВНІ ФУНКЦІЇ ВИКЛАДАЧІВ ТА СТУДЕНТІВ У КОНТЕКСТІ НАВЧАННЯ НА ОСНОВІ КОМПЕТЕНТНІСНОГО ПІДХОДУ (ДЛЯ СТУДЕНТІВ, ЯКІ НАВЧАЮТЬСЯ ЗА СКОРОЧЕНОЮ ПРОГРАМОЮ)

Анотація. Стаття присвячена ролі рефлексивних функцій у професійному розвитку викладачів у контексті компетентнісного підходу. Проблема залучення дорослих у навчальну діяльність широко визнана. Мається на увазі те, що викладач не може вважатися компетентним, якщо він просто добре знає дисципліну, яку викладає. Згідно широко поширеній думці, якщо чомусь навчають, то знання автоматично відкладаються у пам'яті і тема вважається вивченою. У випадку ж, коли таке не відбувається, якщо тему не вивчено, тоді проблема криється у відповідності здатностей того, хто навчається, його мотивації чи наполегливості. Рефлексивні функції стали предметом, що викликає інтерес дослідників, які всебічно розглядають питання освіти та підготовки моряків на рівні експлуатації. У цьому дослідженні розглядається процес створення викладачем умови для викладачів-стажерів для розвитку рефлексивних функцій під час практичних занять. Великим викликом для викладачів є ставити під сумнів свою педагогічну практику для власного професійного розвитку з метою підвищення ефективності навчання студентів. Рефлексивна практика у нашому дослідженні розглядається як здатність реагувати на ситуацію під час освітнього процесу. Ключовим обґрунтуванням рефлексивної практики є те, що досвід сам по собі не призводить до навчання; важливе значення має рефлексія зі своїм досвідом. Компетентнісний підхід та комунікативні методи навчання сприяють особистісному зростанню, коли студенти обмірковують свої власні знання та компетенції, так само як і альтернативне розуміння для розширення цих компетенцій. Таким чином, стратегічно виваженим викладачем може вважатися такий, що вміє поєднувати процеси викладання та навчання і володіє навичками проектувати і управляти, у найефективніший спосіб, співвідношення навчального змісту та функцій навчання. У цьому сенсі рефлексивна функція викладача є важливою для впровадження в навчальний процес, що ґрунтується на компетентнісному підході.

Ключові слова: рефлексія, рефлексивна функція, компетентнісний підхід, компетенції викладача, цикл навчання.

Problem statement. The problem of adult learners' engagement into learning activity is widely recognized. Every year hundreds of Kherson Maritime College graduates try to continue their education at Kherson State Maritime Academy (KSMA) to get bachelor's degree. The main issue is that the system of Maritime College is customized for education and training of seafarers of operational level. Therefore, the reflective functions of college graduates are underdeveloped. Moreover, being active seafarers, this group of learners is not quite motivated for effective learning, thus there emerges a need to introduce absolutely different educational philosophy in the minds of teachers and learners.

It is not an issue that a teacher is regarded to be a good one if he knows his subject profoundly. It is commonly believed that if something is taught, then it is automatically learned. But it is not so, because if it is not learned, then the problem is pre-

sumed to lay in the adequacy of the learner's ability, motivation or persistence [7].

Recent research and publications. Reflective functions have become an issue for concern to researchers discussing the question of education and training of seafarers of operational level. It is the great challenge for teachers to cast doubt on their teaching practices for their own professional development with the aim of enhancing educational performance of learners. Reflective functioning is the ability to respond to the situation during ongoing education process. Primary motive behind reflective functioning based on the fact that experience itself does not inevitably lead to learning, therefore thoughtful reflection on experience is needed.

Loughran J.J. in his research work states that reflective function is "...simply means thinking about something," but for some, "it is a well-defined and crafted practice that carries very specific meaning and associated action" [5, p. 48]. Schon

suggested the following format for reflective practice “is an ongoing process that involves students reflects deeply on their own experience and apply theoretical knowledge in practice during training by professionals” [2, p. 54] Gibbs’ reflective cycle suggests that learners give relevant description of their experience, describe personal feelings and thoughts, assess the most relevant and important things from their experience [2, p. 73]. While Jasper [3] related teachers’ and learners’ reflective functions with continuous training that is resulted in growing up of competent, self-sufficient and self-reliant professionals.

The recent researches show that the competencies of higher educational establishment teacher are rated by modern students in such a way:

1. competencies connected with academic honesty – 82,5%;
2. taking professional decisions and being responsible for them – 77,9%;
3. teacher’s culture and ethics – 69,4%;
4. leadership – 61,9%;
5. social position – 56,4%;
6. readiness for professional self-development – 36,6%;
7. professional competencies – 33,3%.

Thus we can see that learners are more interested in teachers’ soft skills than in their professional skills. It means the main qualities of a good teacher are as following: involvement with learners, enthusiasm, engagement in elaborate conversation with learners, attention to requests. It is more than true with the learners of higher educational establishment, which have already received their first degree at a college. The main objective of a teacher for such learners should be development of learner’s reflective functions.

The purpose of the article is to show that reflective functioning gives an opportunity for students to think about what they are doing more deeply and learn something new from their practical experience.

Presentation of the main material. Reflection during learning comprises two categories, namely, reflection on practice and reflection in practice [8]. Reflection on practice refers to making sense of past learning experiences for the purpose of orienting one-self toward current and/or future actions or thought. Reflection in practice refers to the managing of the learning process by the teacher (planning, monitoring and evaluating) while it is taking place, and constantly adjusting and changing it [1]. At the same time reflection and practice refers to developing reflective functions of a learner and cooperation with a teacher and other learners during the lesson.

Planning involves cognitive, motivational and environmental considerations regarding: setting a clear objective, selecting and sequencing strategies and procedures toward achieving the objective, determining whether the task requires a great deal of concentration and effort, and identifying potential obstacles to the successful attainment of the objective.

Monitoring also involves cognitive, motivational and environmental considerations. This refers, first of all, to the

following: an awareness of what one is doing, an understanding of where the task fits into the established sequence of steps, an awareness of whether the task is retaining the interest and attention and whether the learning environment is supportive enough.

Evaluation involves an assessment of both the process and the product after completion of a learning task in order to make modifications prior to using it with similar tasks in future. Cognitive, motivational as well as environmental considerations are involved, namely, to determine whether the strategies utilized during learning worked, whether the task was enjoyable and motivational, and whether unexpected obstacles were remedied.

A wise teacher needs to recognize that teaching and learning form a continuous loop. According to Kolb learning theory, knowledge results from interaction between theory and practical skills. This means that before students passing to the Study stage, they should be engaged into learning environment, their knowledge in applying practical experience should be activated (review of previously learned material) and on the last stage learners should plan how to apply new skills and previous experience in new circumstances. Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) contains four stages shown in Fig. 1.

Effective learning occurs when learner goes through the entire cycle, but the process does not necessarily begin at the stage of concrete experience. Kolb considered learning as a complex process, where each stage reinforces each other and becomes the beginning of the next. Learning cycle can start at any stage, but students must go through a complete logical sequence, since no single stage, on its own, is efficient for learning. Such researchers as Svinicki and Dixon suggest to use Kolb’s ELC in the background for planning learning activities, and list the examples of learning strategies that can be incorporated with all four stages of ELC for enhancing the effectiveness of learning process.

Based on his ELC, David Kolb developed four learning styles. He pointed out that each of them has predominant learning abilities in two main areas: active/reflective and abstract/concrete. Knowledge of style enables to define the preferable method of training. His learning approach is widely used while planning interactive lessons as one of its advantage is that concrete experience lies at the core of learning.

In competency based approach a learner can require reflective learning functions only through their use. Thus these functions can become their habits. Learners should receive explicit instruction in the use of these functions. Educators must

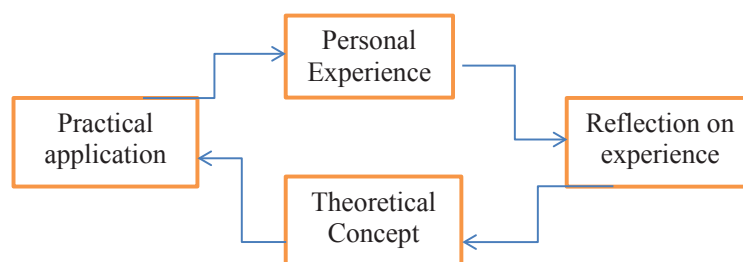


Fig. 1. Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle

Table 1

EASA (Engage-Activate 1-Study-Activate 2) lesson model

	Planning		Monitoring		Evaluation	
	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student
Engage	1. What is the objective of the lesson? 2. What are the most effective techniques?	1. What do I know about this topic? 2. What skills do I already have?				
Activate 1			1. Are the chosen techniques effective?	1. Do I understand what I'm doing?		
Study			1. Are the chosen techniques effective?	1. What skills do I develop?		
Activate 2			1. Are the chosen techniques effective? 2. How supportive is the learning environment?	1. Do I understand what I'm doing? 2. What is my level of confidence?	1. Did I achieve the objective? 2. Did I enjoy this lesson?	1. Did I achieve the objective? 2. Did I enjoy this lesson?

devote time for them and guide learners till they become comfortable with them. The likelihood of learning and the quality of the learning outcome are determined by teachers through the selective and systematic use of a range of teaching procedures to activate these learning functions [6].

There is some agreement that learners learn best when the learning functions progress from being teacher-directed, with a strong emphasis on modelling and guided practice, to being learner-directed, involving independent learning and application in content areas [4].

The best model for developing reflective functions of students obtaining bachelor's degree with reduced syllabus (abridged program), those already having first certificate of competency, is EASA (Engage-Activate 1-Study-Activate 2) model of a lesson. This can be depicted in the form of a table 1.

This table clearly shows that the educational process in competency based approach is the process of cooperation between a teacher and a learner aimed at achieving common objective.

It is agreed that teaching must go beyond memorization, conditioning and repetition, and that the powerful implications of reflection have to be explored. If learners only experience teaching as a process expecting of them to focus on fixed pre-

termined procedures of recollection and reproduction, then the aim of education is defeated. There is a need to expand teaching practices to become more developmental and to encourage a kind of self-reflection and perceptual shift that define higher orders of consciousness.

Conclusion. Teachers must take note of the powerful implications of the reflective functions during teaching and learning. Acquisition of the reflective functions has many potential benefits for learning. First of all, it enables learners to determine why they learn or fail to learn, what competencies they have acquired, and what competencies they are to develop to progress further. Next, such model allows to examine socio-cultural factors that influence personality development. In such a way witnessing one's own progress, a learner develops positive attributions of learning and obtains positive socio-emotional growth. Competency based approach and communicative techniques promote personal growth by having learners reflect on their own current knowledge and competencies, as well as alternative understanding to broaden those competencies.

Thus a strategic teacher is one who can link teaching and learning and possesses the skills to design and choreograph an effective match between learning content and learning functions.

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