



3.7. DESIGNING ACTIVITIES FOR PURPOSEFUL STUDENT REFLECTION

The basic purpose of reflection is to stop and take stock of a situation and make plans for improvement. There are various forms of reflective practice, including (but not limited to):

- informal individual (freeform, spontaneous, or in response to an open question; thought, written or verbalised)
- structured individual (e.g. written or verbal task or survey with guiding questions)
- teacher-guided (1:1, small group or whole-class)
- peer-led
- informal group / collective
- facilitated group / collective

These serve a variety of purposes and involve different levels of planning. They may also be enacted in a range of different modes and formats and be quick or more extended activities.



SCENARIO: DESIGNING ACTIVITIES FOR PURPOSEFUL STUDENT REFLECTION

Setting:

Higher secondary school subject

Problem:

A teacher implemented a structured weekly reflection activity on group project work. Initially, many students gave minimal, generic responses, like “the group work was fine,” or “I learned a lot”, or “I enjoyed participating in the activity but one aspect bothered me.”

The design of the activity prevented students from expressing their honest opinions. This could have been due to fear of being judged by peers or of how it might affect the group’s performance.

Solution:

The teacher’s solution was to redesign the activity to model specific and non-judgmental prompts and have students try out constructive feedback language. This allowed students to begin speaking more openly about challenges and seek genuine solutions.



PRACTICAL TIPS FOR TEACHERS:

1. Ensure students understand how and why reflection can be useful to them.
2. Link reflective activities to specific aspects of or stages in the learning process (for instance, you can develop questions based on the developmental assessment rubric for a task or unit).
3. Offer examples of reflection that are specific and not superficial.
4. Don't abandon reflection activities if the first attempt doesn't work.

When things don't go to plan: an opportunity to reflect

When facilitating applied learning, a challenging moment – from a design error in a project or a team breakdown – provides an opportunity for reflection. If you are encouraging students to reflect in a group, make sure the boundaries are clear and that you have prepared them with models of open-ended prompts and constructive responses.

If you are inviting students to reflect on an incident, give them some guiding questions. For example, you might ask them to answer the following questions:

- What happened? (Describe the context and the incident).
- *How* did you feel when it happened?
- *What* do you think went wrong / went well?
- *Why* do you think it went wrong / went well?
- Can you summarise what you have learned from this experience?
- What will you do if it happens again?
- What other steps can you take to be better prepared next time?

This is a moment when students can stop, observe, assess what happened and try to figure out why. They can then develop a plan of action based on what they learn from that experience. This can help students move on from a negative experience to a sense of possibility and agency.