

Script: stimulate learning through evaluation and reflection

Hi and welcome in the video about “learning through reflection and evaluation.” In this module, we are going to dive deeper into these two concepts, explain why they are an integral part of the learning process and how to use them in your classroom with your students. Reflection and evaluation are words you may hear a lot and we will begin by making sure that they are each understood. Let’s start with reflection.

Reflection

Reflection is a mental activity we engage in daily. When we reflect, we consciously observe and think about our own learning, experiences and behaviours and the experiences we share with others. We reflect when we consider questions such as: how am I feeling about what just happened? How was my thinking impacted by this experience? How did I respond to that situation? Reflection is a meaning-making process which can be done both individually and in a group.

Evaluation

Now what about evaluation? Evaluation means determining the merit, worth or value of a result or process. For this, it is important to collect and analyse relevant information about what is being evaluated and formulate a judgement based on pre-determined criteria.

For example, if a group of children evaluate a poster, they made to raise awareness in their school about a societal issue, they can say “it’s good!” but it’s different if they are more specific and look at criteria like is the message clear? Is any text supported by proper images? Is it attractive for the viewer? etc. For this, they can collect opinions of group members, but also of parents, and based on this data they can evaluate the poster in a more relevant way.

Evaluative thinking

To collect this information and analyse them, evaluative thinking is necessary. This kind of thinking involves thinking processes such as questioning, observing, comparing, prioritizing.... Evaluative thinking processes teach students how to evaluate, and it is a powerful way to create a culture in classroom where evaluation is valued explicitly. In this way it becomes a part of their learning.

Why reflection and evaluation?



They are fundamental to the learning process and allow students to transfer their learning to multiple contexts and across various topics. Tightly intertwined with learning through thinking, reflection and evaluation gives students the opportunity to explicitly internalize their learning. Reflection makes them more aware of what they learned, when, and how they learned it. Once they practiced evaluative thinking on something because they understood what it entails, they can apply a similar process when evaluating something else, for example, when evaluating different options, to make a decision.

Additionally, evaluation is important because as it enables learners to use and develop their observational-, analytical- and critical thinking skills to evaluate situations, options, behaviours, beliefs, things, or end-products of their own activities.

Remember that an ESD learning environment is a safe and open space in which students practice using societal issues to think, listen, consider, and re-consider their opinions. To do that, they have to engage in both reflective and evaluative processes to deepen and internalize their learning. By doing so they engage in meaning-making, and are thus empowered to act as conscious citizens, who make their own choices and create a society that they themselves envision.

How do you get to work?

As a teacher, you can sit together with your students and reflect on societal issues together to learn from each other's perspectives and experiences. But how? To teach students to reflect, you must approach it as a systematic, rigorous, and disciplined way of thinking. Just like teaching thinking, teaching reflection in a purposeful way is essential for students to adopt a habit of reflection, at school, at home and elsewhere.

Example

Imagine that your students have just engaged a think, pair, share activity about homelessness in their city. They have had an opportunity to think for themselves on the topic, they have shared their thinking, heard the thinking of a partner and they have presented all their thinking to the class.

Now you want to invite them into a reflective practice about the activity. For example, your students reflect on the process of using a think, pair, share method, or they reflect on how their thinking and ideas were impacted by hearing other people's opinions. You can offer them a choice of these, or you can make the choice for them. You can give them time and a method for the reflection depending on their age and their experience. They can write in a journal (real or digital); you can offer them a digital white board to share their reflection

anonymously and publicly; they could draw a picture, make a video, create a podcast – let yourself be creative, the options are endless. Have fun with them!

To evaluate your students, you need to predetermine evaluation criteria. Those criteria need to be explicit and well understood by all. Those can be made by you as a teacher and then reviewed with your students or you can develop the criteria together. Just like in the example about reflective practice, your students should practice evaluating both process and thinking as well as content learning and task production.

As a teacher, you should also be involved in the reflection and evaluation of your students. This process can give you great insight into their growth and development. Most importantly, you should, both reflect on your own actions, evaluate your students, and thus build an evaluative and reflective practice. By doing so, you can use all this information to adapt your future instruction to the needs of your individual students.

There are numerous ways to approach evaluation and reflection in the classroom. We have developed learning materials to help both your students and you to reflect and evaluate. Want to learn more about those learning materials? Check them out below!