

**Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal (SHE Journal)**

Volume 3 (1) 16 – 20, January 2022 | ISSN: 2720-9946(Online)ISSN: 2723-3626 (Print)

The article is published with Open Access at: <http://e-journal.unipma.ac.id/index.php/SHE>

## **EDUCATIONAL REFLECTIONS OF A NOVICE TEACHER IN A PHILIPPINE PRIVATE SCHOOL**

**Louie Giray** ✉, College of Teacher Education, Polytechnic University of the Philippines

**Abstract:** In this manuscript, the researcher aimed to understand his lived experiences, beliefs, and the culture he is in, being a novice grade school teacher in a Philippine private school. Reflection as a research methodology is utilized to make sense of the data generated. The discussion is thematically dived into three parts, namely—(1) the delivery of instruction; (2) school and classroom culture; and (3) the school community. This paper contends that reflection fosters active thought about actions and situations, making the teacher truly engaged in the course of education. Reflection can help strive toward learning and progress. It is suggested for teachers to intentionally reflect so as to invite continuous learning and progress. This especially can be a manifestation of authenticity in the business of facilitation of learning among teachers. Furthermore, reflection is a prerequisite to rethinking pedagogical styles and teaching craft, leading to innovation in the educational arena.

**Keywords:** novice teacher, education, private school, Philippines

✉ [lggiray@pup.edu.ph](mailto:lggiray@pup.edu.ph)

**Citation:** Giray, L. (2022). Educational reflections of a novice teacher in a Philippine private school. *Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal (SHE Journal)*, 3(1), 16 – 20. DOI: 10.25273/she.v3i1.11926



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## INTRODUCTION

Reflection is a very important skill in order to gain insight from a certain endeavor or situation. Through the process of reflection, we contemplate about the past happenings, the present situation, and how all these matters relate to the future (Reynolds, 2017). By doing this, we clarify our thinking, we metacognitively become cognizant of ourselves and our lived experiences. However, if we will not utilize reflection as a sense-making activity and research methodology, we shall just mechanically function as if we are automatons; we shall live our day-to-day lives in a passive, vegetative manner.

Reflection is a skill, which human beings should continually articulate and cultivate to make sense of their actions and their thinking, both in personal and professional settings. Reflection offers us learning and development. We can get to see what works well and what is not. Such awareness is a prerequisite to making necessary changes so we can strive to be successful and flourishing. In fact, a research reveals that businesses may enhance work-to-life enrichment by boosting employee reflection, and this in effect should have good consequences for both the individual and the business (Daniel & Sonnentag, 2014).

Furthermore, reflection can also give us a framework for enhancing what we have learned, allowing ideas and concepts to become established in practice while also encouraging ongoing inquiry and invention (Helyer, 2015). Reflection puts forward growth necessary in our lives. Also, reflection's value as an instrument for continual growth becomes apparent when we actively consider our ideas and behaviors (Helyer, 2015).

Additionally, reflection helps us to think critically. We get to analyze and monitor our actions and thinking. Here, we rethink our difficulties and points for improvements and so we strive to see their roots and how we can lessen them. Also,

reflection can help us realize our strengths, which can be a good strategy to fortify them. Since reflection helps us to delve deeper, the matters we think are ordinary and we commonly take for granted can have a second look which sheds new light on ourselves and the world around us.

## METHODS

In this scholarly endeavor, I utilized reflection as a research methodology. As reflection is a crucial activity to make sense of personal and professional undertakings, I see that this is pivotal to be undertaken by teachers. Practicing the discipline of reflection is essential because it enables people to engage in a mindful engagement with the world and so obtain an informed perspective about one's lived experience (Mortari, 2015).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the discussion is divided thematically into three parts, namely—(1) the delivery of instruction; (2) school and classroom culture; and (3) the school community.

### The Delivery of Instruction

Though educators know a lot, especially on their specialization, because of their pre-service education and on-going professional learning, we should understand that not all should be given to students. We should filter and screen what we teach to see whether it is appropriate in their age or not. Indeed, we should pick only the suitable part or concept that we will be teaching to students in accordance to their level.

Psychologically speaking, a student's brain is not yet equipped in absorbing so much information. Their brains have fairly limited capacity when it comes to processing. Hence, instead of helping them, a teacher could be burdening them of perplexities that are not yet suitable for

their maturity. This can drive them to mental exhaustion or demotivation.

Despite the fact that we aim them to have high expectations, it does not mean that we must overload them with so much information. That can be toxic and indeed is foolish. If that happens, negative consequences will occur. What we want them to get the mastery of their age-appropriate skills or lessons. Their brains are not simply a cauldron to be put with anything. Their minds are still work-in-progress.

As a teacher, I believe that it is imprudent to give a young child a lesson on advanced art or any very hard subjects. This is very nonsensical, I should say. They are still young, and we should give them lessons that would correspond to their juvenility. What are we they going to do with that? Our aims are to educate them foundational skills gradually, and to teach them progressively and not sloppily.

We teachers all know that in order to reach and understand a complicated skill, we should first start from the very basic before going to the intricate ones. Therefore, in that case, we facilitate their learning. This makes me remember the concept of vertical alignment in the curriculum in our school.

We chunk our lessons from simple to advance, and in alignment of their level and age. We sure that lessons progress and not remain the same in difficulty as they move forward to next grade levels. Also, through teacher collaboration, we emphasize order and coherence in learning.

Teachers may think that the more we talk, the more the students learn. Actually, that premise is very unreal and untruthful. Why did I say so? It is because based on my firsthand experiences of teaching in this school, I got a sagacity that students learn best when they are in-charge of their own learning. Basically, students are the learners. It is unwise for a teacher to let his students be an inactive receptacle of information.

Hence, we should design and provide ways on how they can grow through their own learning. We are here only to facilitate.

Psychologically speaking, more neural connections form in their brains when they are active in contrast to passively listening from teachers. Therefore, student activities play a very crucial role in their development and education.

Repetition is imperative to retention of learning. The more that an individual repeats a certain skill, the more he becomes good at it. Therefore, the adage, “practice makes perfect” is evident in this discussion. In our school, since we adhere the mastery learning, we give them enough ways and time to repeat a certain skill. When I talk about repeating, it does not the uninteresting, boring, and mind-numbing repetition. I refer to the reiteration of a skill through different media and styles, so that I help them reinforce their learning.

### **School and Classroom Culture**

In our school, we design the curriculum and learning experiences of the students in line with our school mantra, which is holistic education in coordination with the concept of close home-school collaboration. This is similar to Ignatian pedagogy. Therefore, we aim the complete development of the student—academic, physical, social, spiritual, mental, etc.

Activities that promote holistic education range from, but not limited to, sports, spiritual formation, mentoring sessions, and class discussions. In order to evaluate if a certain student is getting a holistic education, it should manifest in action—thinking, words, deeds. Through action, ingrained in the reflection on experience, a student develops perspectives, gets to be aware about self and others, and learns to understand his role in life.

As a teacher and agent of the propagation of student’s total formation, I deliberately provide my students ways toward holistic education in my humble ways. I need to fit the curriculum, the resources, and experiences of students toward the attainment of this goal.

Moreover, I respect my students as a person, child of God, and citizen of the Philippines. I do not use my authority as a teacher to treat them inferiorly. Our school is a wonderful community. All of us—staff, teachers, parents, and students—breathe like a family air. We collaborate together for the benefit of each other. We continue to develop collegial and harmonious relationships. We value each other.

The classroom culture and the learning environment of students are set by teachers. Teachers should not be seen like someone who is very unreachable or someone who lives in an ivory tower.

However, it is not wise as well to befriend students without limitations and without professional delineation. I should say, therefore, that we put it in balance, wherein students can still talk to us without fear and hesitation. We should be acquainted with their experiences so that we can guide them, and that also can be used as a springboard for lessons.

In our school, we teachers set a positive and conducive learning environment for students. We discipline them in a fatherly figure. Discipline should be taken negatively, because in its very nature, discipline is not actually vicious. It is an assertive way of management, and that we are not lenient or aggressive. Here, we sincerely care for students and their development. We set the environment like a home, and not a cold building.

### **The School Community**

Students will learn best, I think, if teachers act as their true friends of learning. I mean that teachers should not be ostentatious, pretentious, or ill-disposed, and that teachers should have enthusiasm, sincere concern, and love for students. The relationship between teachers and students play an indispensable role in the culture not only of the classroom, but also of the school.

Hence, in our school, we—teachers, administrators, parents—are very vigilant on how we present ourselves for, implicitly

or explicitly, we contribute to the entirety of the intricate school culture.

As a teacher, I do my best to be a model of positive behavior for I know that many eyes are watching me, and that they try to emulate me. Indeed, if I present an untoward attitude, their innocent minds may copy it. Later, they may think that it is correct. Hence, I know that there is a need for me to continue reflect and to scrutinize my character.

The school community ideally should be full of teachers who believe in their students, and who commit to aid them with their very best. We believe in each student's abilities and potentialities. Therefore, we do not degrade or demoralize them if they are having a hard time with some skills or lessons that they need to learn. Varied styles of learning are appreciated. Preferring certain intelligence over others is not advocated. Heterogeneous grouping is accentuated. We believe that each child is unique, and each should be supported.

Our school values collaboration over individualism or competition. We want them to learn to interact with other people through cooperation and harmony. We want them to realize not to rely on oneself only, and that we have fellow individuals who can help us in life. We teach them that communities, just like our school, should be inclusive and not divisive.

### **CONCLUSION**

When teachers just go with the flow of the busy-ness of teaching students, checking assessments, and other affairs related to their work in schools, the tendency is that we lose the *spark* we once had when we started earlier in this profession. This means we just get into the daily grind of work cycle that alienates us from our reflective selves, making us function in a mechanized fashion. Lugubriously, this causes a huge problem to us and to our profession. First, this can make us stagnate. Without reflection, we become reactors and do not become cognizant of our situation and our activities. This is very unfortunate

because it can translate negatively to our learners.

In this paper, I offered some of my reflections of me as a novice teacher. This reflection makes me realize why I do the things I do. It also helps me understand my educational philosophies and beliefs. I also get to dig deeper on my how my current school has influenced my *professional self*. This reflective process may be daunting at first but is a worthwhile activity. I see that it fosters active thought about my actions and situations, making me truly engaged in the course of education. Reflections helps me strive toward learning and progress.

Therefore, it is fitting that in the teaching profession that we get to intentionally reflect. Reflection should be indispensable to this profession. If facilitation of learning is the business of teachers, it is appropriate that we walk the talk and that we too should apply it to ourselves. This can especially be done through reflection. It helps us to become more actively engaged and mindful of the affairs in teaching. After that, we can start to rethink our styles and our craft, leading to innovation in the educational arena.

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