Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Domain 1. Professional knowledge.

Standard 1.Know students and how they learn.

1.2. Understand how students learn.

* Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of research into how students learn and the implications for teaching.

1.5. Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.

* Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of strategies for differentiating teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.

The situation called for me to plan and put into practice a Unit of work (Artifact 1) for my Year 2/3-practicum placement and develop a class profile to demonstrate my awareness of diversity that is inherent in the cohort of learners. Having identified the diversity of learners in the classroom (Year 2/3 Class Profile Artifact 2) I applied three ‘conceptual filters’ to the information derived from the class profile to inform the way in which planning did/did not demonstrate best practice. (Catering for diversity through differentiation; Using formative assessment strategies to monitor student learning; and Teaching critical and creative thinking, Artifact 3).

The action I took was to reflect (Artifact 3, paragraph 1) on how differentiated instruction should be sympathetic to the differences amongst learners i.e. how they learn, their learning preferences (Algozzine & Anderson, 2007). Educators should pay close attention to the biological and psychological tendencies of learners and to the individual historical and cultural context of the milieus where students live (Gardner, 2004). Within the context of the unit of work I utilised a range of strategies and resources such as graphic organisers (Artifact 1, ‘Thinking tools and Teaching and Learning Strategies’) that according to Drapeau (2009) are effective instructional tools in promoting student performance. Hands on activities were another strategy I utilised to allow for differing learning styles of the students. For the learning experiences I organised the students into small groups interspersing the year two students amongst the year three learners (Artifact 1, ‘Learning Environment’). This method of grouping learners is derived from my acceptance that Vygotsky’s Socio-cultural theory emphasises co-operative dialogues between students and their more knowledgeable peers in a co-constructed process where students interact and negotiate to create an understanding or to solve a problem (Woolfolk, 2004).

The result of the process outlined above i.e. the development of a class profile to guide the planning of a unit of work; the application of the diversity filters to the planning of the unit of work as well as my reflection on how students learn (Artifact 3, paragraph 1) provided me with feedback on my professional practice and links to Standard 1: 1.2 above. In artifact three, filter two, paragraph two, I make the point upon reflection that best practice of formative assessment begins with effective planning of teaching and learning (Gipps & Pickering as cited in Arthur & Cremin, 2010). Within the Unit summary (Artifact 1) the learning intentions are clearly visible. Clarke, Timperley and Hattie (2004) state that learning intentions made clear at the planning stage of units of work will make formative assessment manageable. My teacher mentor overseeing this unit of work noted in her feedback (Artifact 3, last sentence paragraph 2) that ‘Stephen used formal and informal strategies to assess the students' learning’ (Professional experience report, 2014).

References for Standard 1.

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