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IMPROVING ACADEMIC STANDARDS IN ELT THROUGH REFLECTIVE LEARNING

TO

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Hello Dr Pawar,

In response to your query regarding the improvement of academic standards in ELT CLASSROOMS, I am extremely happy to share with you some of my research work and practical experiences in ELT classrooms. Reflective learning is a simple but effective strategy that I used in the English classes for

nursing students while I was working with Ministry Health, Oman. Presently, I am using this method effectively with the undergraduate students of Dhofar University, Salalah, OMAN. I'm sure YOU WILL ALSO FIND this method very effective with your students. In any learning activity, the attitude of students and their involvement in the learning activity are key factors responsible for the IMPROVED learning outcome. These twin objectives can be met by implementing Reflective learning in ELT classrooms. It can be used effectively in all classrooms with visible improvement in all sort of learning activities. I can explain briefly how teachers can implement reflective Learning in their classrooms by making use of the last 10 minutes of their classes. The activity will generate motivation and involvement in students in their learning activity. The detailed research on reflective learning along with student satisfaction survey was presented at the international ELT conference held at Sultan Qaboos University Muscat, OMAN. However, I can share my experience with you for the benefit of the teachers in your college.

My best regards to you and your College

Dr Thomas Baby

Dhofar University.

A BRIEF OUTLINE FOR IMPLEMENTING REFLECTIVE LEARNING IN ELT CLASSROOMS

The practice of writing a reflective journal by the students is intended to instil in them scientific temper and to develop their skills for independent enquiry and critical thinking. At the end of each unit taught in the class, the students are required to reflect on a few critical questions and write down the reflections in their journals. The questions are: What did I learn in this unit? Did I have any difficulty? How Can I improve? When learners try to find answers for these questions, they transform themselves into critical thinkers and consequently begin to figure out their problems in learning. Initiating this process effectively in a class compels the learners to look for and find solutions to their specific learning problems.

It is imperative that students should develop reflective learning strategies in order to become better learners. Keeping a reflective journal is the first step of becoming a reflective learner. It will help them to recapture their learning experience, think about it and evaluate it (Boud, 2001). The practice of keeping a reflective journal can be done in a variety of ways. There are mainly three different forms of journal writing practice commonly used in reflective learning

1. Double-entry Journal
2. Stream of Consciousness writing
3. Mind Maps (**see Appendix1**)

In order to simplify the procedure of keeping a reflective journal, the students of the Foundation Programme at the Ministry of Health are required to do only subjective reflections on three simple questions based on the learning activity in the class.

What did I learn in this unit?

Did I have any difficulty?

How Can I improve?

The procedure of writing the journal in the class is closely related double-entry journaling style. It is usually done at the end of each class session. Ten to fifteen minutes are allotted for the purpose. At first, the students' responses to the above questions were not clearly defined and focussed as intended. However, the intervention of the teacher through feedback and follow-up mechanism gradually changed the perception of the learners. When students were given specific instructions on how to initiate the thinking process in an analytical manner in relation to their learning activity, they became more aware of the learning process and began to get actively involved in journal writing activity. In order to assess

the effectiveness of journal writing activity 43 students of the foundation programme at North Batinah Nursing Institute were interviewed specifically through the instrument of 5 open-ended questions.

1. When do you usually do reflective journal writing?
2. Do you think writing a reflective journal is useful?
3. What are the benefits of writing a reflective journal?
4. What are difficulties in completing the task?
5. Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
