Reflection Writing Assignment

Educator: Cary Laxer and colleagues from Uppsala University in Sweden, Professor and Department Head, Computer Science and Software Engineering
Context: Out of class; IT in Society/Computing in a Global Society/Cross-Cultural Software Engineering
Keywords: international, study abroad, group activity
Student Activity Time: 1-2 hours outside of class for each reflection

Students reflected on their study abroad experience working in cross-cultural groups.

Introducing the Reflection Activity

During a study abroad experience, students worked on a collaborative design project with international peers. The purpose of this design project was to provide students with meaningful international experiences. At three points in the project, students reflected on their experience working in a cross-cultural team. The purpose of these reflection activities was for students to look back on their experiences, learn from them, and be prepared for future similar experiences.

Three times throughout the quarter, students were asked to reflect on their experience working on a project in a cross-cultural team. In the first reflection, students reflected on their interests and goals within their field of study and how those connected to the course. The purpose of this reflection was to set the stage for the course and students' experiences in cross-cultural teams. In the second reflection, students reflected on how they saw the project and the intercultural collaboration, and how these related to their learning. The purpose of this reflection was for students to pause a few weeks into their work and see what they had learned and make any necessary adjustments for the rest of the course. In the final reflection at the end of the quarter, students reflected on their overall experience. The purpose of the final reflection was to support students in looking back at their experience and thinking about what they had accomplished and how it connected to their future.

After each reflection assignment was submitted, the teaching team read the individual reflections of each of the teams they were mentoring and provided feedback to that team. The reflection assignment was graded on whether the student did the assignment and on the depth of the reflection using levels of reflection by Neville Hatton and David Smith: Descriptive Writing, Descriptive Reflection, Dialogic Reflection, and Critical Reflection[1]. Students were asked to write at the last two levels (and were given indicators for each level, so they could judge for themselves). Additionally, the Rose-Hulman educator read all of

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[1] *Hatton, N., & Smith, D. (1995). Reflection in teacher education: Towards definition and implementation. Teaching and teacher education, 11(1), 33-49.*

the Rose-Hulman students' reflections because their reflections were a component of their grade for the course.

In terms of outcomes, there was potential for students to better understand cross-cultural communication. After engaging in this reflection activity, students may better understand working on a large-scale open-ended group project, and how the project benefitted the client and society.

Recreating the Reflection Activity

	Description
1	Introduce the reflection activities to the students at the start of the trip.
2	Read the reflections and provide each team with feedback.
3	Read the reflections of the students from your respective institution for grading purposes.

In the words of the Educator: Tips and Inspiration

Remind students to submit their reflections. Students often forget to submit their assignment for various reasons. It helps to remind them of the due date.

Support students' cross cultural communication. The first week of the course is spent as a cross-cultural seminar. This week sets the stage for the first reflection activity and provides students with important information as they begin their cross-cultural team projects.

Ask students to report on the team dynamics. I've frequently asked my students to give me feedback on the team dynamics. But it's only because I'm not there to observe that on a daily or even a weekly basis. I get to see the end product as a presentation in class or a project implementation or a project report, but it doesn't tell me how the team dynamics work or how well the members work.

What was the inspiration for the reflection activity? I started implementing these reflection activities because the Swedish part of the teaching team suggested these activities. They sounded like a great fit for our goals for the students' experiences.