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**Sample Reflection: Pedagogy & Assessment in a Grad. Dip. Education Unit**

My expectations of student's written tasks in a Graduate Diploma literacy unit have not been met. Specifically, the task required the identification and justification of a relevant literacy issue for action research in a classroom. My assumptions about students' capabilities in expository (essay) text writing were based on the entry requirements and high demand for the course. I found that the capable demonstration of key academic writing skills was not evident across the student cohort. Academic writing skills, particularly in expository styles, are crucial for success at university (Bruce, 2008), as demonstration of discipline knowledge and understanding are often expressed in written form.

My awareness, as a literacy educator, of the necessity to scaffold students as effective writers for particular purposes, disciplines and audiences (Freebody, Maton & Martin, 2008) is paramount in my pedagogical approach. Similarly, my knowledge of the importance of catering for diverse needs in my class influences my pedagogical strategies. Prior knowledge and experience is the foundation on which to build new knowledge, concepts and ideas. The development of critical analysis skills and opportunities for creative knowledge application should connect to students' current understandings (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). Unfortunately my inattention to students' academic skill levels resulted in poorly structured written submissions. The research assignment was undermined by the lack of expressive resources demonstrated by a large number of students.

After considering the disappointing textual competence in the first assignment, I decided to explicitly scaffold students to reflect on the purpose of their writing and the requirements of the criteria sheet for assessment. According to Christie and Dreyfus (2007), writers can be taught to write successfully with careful attention to linguistic features and reflection on what can be improved. Thus, I asked students to identify and annotate the key features of expository text in their assignment. This was a powerful self-assessment exercise which resulted in action plans for improvement.

In the context of a 1-year graduate diploma, I have realised the value of gathering information about the nature of students' undergraduate degrees, the text types that they feel competent to write, and the text types for which they require additional support. As my unit is focused on English and literacy pedagogy, I will be able to provide some support for text types in relation to pedagogy and curriculum. However, referral to Academic Skills Advisors will also be important.

As a consequence of this assessment incident, I plan to restructure my unit so the introduction of expository text types (English curriculum) occurs before the first assignment is due. By teaching students how to introduce this text type to their own students, I will be able to reinforce the structure and key textual features of the genre. Next time I teach this unit, I intend to make explicit connections between this work and its application in their own assignment writing. An understanding of the proliferation of expository text types in school and university assessment tasks will also enable these future teachers to understand the importance of providing solid literacy foundations in primary school. I aim to show students how to apply their new English curriculum knowledge to their written assignments at university for more successful outcomes.

#### References

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