

University of Lapland Case Study 1

Introduction

Participant C1 is a student teacher of primary teacher education programme of the University of Lapland, Finland. C1 is a fifth-year student teacher who will complete the Master's degree in Education in Summer 2017.

C1 was selected as an example of the use of VEO for professional development purposes as part of reflection procedure that was trialled for the first time for the teaching practice. Reflection procedure address supervision task of the faculty of education, University of Lapland. It consists of seven phases which all includes reflection. The VEO app was used for self-directed, peer and supervisor-assisted, individual and social reflection. A role of a faculty supervisor was to be a facilitator of a student's self-reflection and broadening and deepening reflection. Reflection procedure includes some ready-made questions for reflection. Participants were free to use these questions as a guide for social reflection in supervising discussion and individual reflection in a reflective diary, a portfolio and a practice report.

C1 was interested in using the app, motivated to learn from it and willing to participate in VEO research. Moreover, C1 had good reflective skills and was able to analyse teaching in an analytic and critical way.

The Research Context

C1 carried out the final teaching practice, the Advanced Practicum, at Teacher training school, University of Lapland. The practice period lasted for five weeks. C1 carried out the practice in the same classroom with a peer student. Lessons consisted of approximately 20 primary school students in a classroom with internet-linked computer and interactive whiteboard.

A supervising class teacher observed teaching of C1. Feedback discussions were arranged every day between a class teacher and both students. Supervising teacher did not participate in VEO trial or research.

The VEO Story

The VEO app was introduced to student teachers as part of their Advanced practicum. Participation in the completion of the reflection procedure was compulsory for student teachers and recording videos was one of practice assignments. Involvement in VEO-related research was optional for students. C1 participated in the research voluntarily and signed a written consent form. Moreover, C1 participated in info session concerning the VEO app and trial. The info was arranged few days before the practicum period begun.

C1 participated in a pre-supervising meeting with a faculty supervisor before the practicum period begun in order to create a tag set based on personal learning aims. A supervisor observed one lesson of C1 and gave a short oral feedback after a lesson. A peer student recorded two lessons of C1, one during the first teaching period and one during the last, by using a customised tag set created by C1. C1 watched videos alone and reviewed them individually. Moreover, C1 peer-reflected on one video with a recorder during the last week of the practicum period. C1 recorded two lessons of a peer student.

During the last week of teaching practice C1 met a faculty supervisor again in order to discuss the period. A peer student attended the discussion as well. In this discussion a supervisor asked C1 reflective questions. Recorded lessons were not watched but they were used as a basis for individual and social reflection. C1 used reflection to complete a practice report and a portfolio.

In this case professional development was supported by VEO in that:

- VEO was used for self-directed, peer and supervisor-assisted reflection
- C1 was able to observe and notice things in teaching through videos and learn from that
- C1 was able to use video-based reflections as part of supervising discussion and reflective writing
- Lessons recorded, then reviewed individually and (partly) socially with a peer and a faculty supervisor (the final discussion), feeding into assignment.
- Faculty supervisor's questions helped C1 broaden and deepen reflection and see connections between teaching and students' learning

The main points and issues observed in relation to C1 were that: showed willingness to be observed and engage in reflection with no signs of discomfort at being observed. C1 was not totally satisfied with the tag set, it did not serve the student in the best way possible. C1 thought that it was difficult for a peer student to tag instances. C1 stated that when watching videos tags were located in self-evident places and they did not offer much new information. However, videos promoted reflection of C1 together with a feedback from supervising class teacher and a peer student. C1 was able to develop teaching comprehensively, not only those issues that were included in tags.

C1 saw it better if tag sets are created after teaching has begun and student have got feedback from a supervising class teacher. This is how student teachers know better what issues to focus on in their own teaching.

In order to support students' professional development by VEO tags, an attention should be paid to creation of tag sets that focus on learning areas of students. It can be useful to create tag sets one or few weeks after the practicum period has begun when students have gone through feedback discussions with their supervising class teachers and peers.

Diagram/Visual representation of the way that VEO was used

PRE-SUPERVISING MEETING

creation of a customised, personal tag set with help of a faculty supervisor

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

a supervisor observes one lesson of a student and gives feedback



SELF-DIRECTED AND PEER/SOCIAL REFLECTION

a peer student records two lessons using VEO and a customised tag set

A student reflects on lessons individually and with a peer student and selects instances for further reflection



SUPERVISOR ASSESSMENT/SOCIAL REFLECTION

a supervising discussion: a student reflects on practicum experiences with help of reflective questions of a supervisor; recorded lessons are addressed; a peer student participates in social reflection

WRITTEN REFLECTION

a student reflects on videos in a reflective journal and uses reflection to complete a practice report and a portfolio



The Customised Tag set

The customised tag set included two tags. The first tag was ‘Deviation from a lesson plan’ which included three sub-tags: ‘a creative solution’, ‘a situation continues naturally’ and ‘a deviation is necessary’. Another tag was ‘Information technology’ and included sub-tags: ‘increases interaction’ and ‘improves learning’.

These tags were issues a student wanted to focus on in teaching.

Evidence of Development

C1 created a tag set based on personal learning aims. This study does not reveal to what extent C2 developed in skills concerning lessons plans or technology and this was not focus of research. C1 got a continues feedback from a supervising class teacher and a peer student and videos promoted reflection of C1 together with this feedback. C1 was able to develop teaching comprehensively, not only those issues that were included in tags. C1 observed many issues on recorded lessons, for instance speed of talking and walking in the front of the classroom. Fast speech was something that C1 had got feedback from a supervising class teacher as well. C1 noticed tagged instances but tags did not offer much further information and thus did not support development of practice in the best way possible.

The following extracts from a focus group interview illustrate views of C1:

Minna: You talked about self-reflection. You have watched your videos. Was it easy to pick up issues from videos and notice things?

C1: I think that I picked up many issues that were not included in my tag set. I watched my video, first I watched beginning of the lesson, how beginning was like, then I watched tagging, what my peer student had tagged and went back to these instances. I feel that I picked up a lot of issues, like my fast speech, I had got feedback on that earlier, it was not in my tags, I have got feedback earlier, I realised that here I talk very fast. Another thing I realised on video was that, it was my tag neither, I saw that I was wandering there back and forth, it looked very restless. I picked up all these but my tags were perhaps too obvious. When I thought if I deviated from a lesson plan or not, I was able to see it myself.

I think that it is good to watch videos because then you notice issues that you do not want to do but you still do, such as, wondering back and forth in front of classroom, it looks restless...

Minna: ...I am interested in hearing how they [tag sets] worked, or when a peer student recorded by using your tag set, were you able to self-reflect, or was there something that did not work in a tag set?

C1: ...I feel that my tag set could have been much better, I had a tag ‘deviation from a lesson plan’, my peer student observes how I deviate from a lesson plan when there comes a moment when a narrative breaks down or something I have been thinking as an idea for that lesson initially, when it breaks down, how I survive from that. It was very challenging to do with tags, I have one sub-tag, ‘a teacher makes a creative solution’ and another ‘a lesson continues naturally’, it was difficult to create tag sets that would serve a lesson at hand. I know it myself when I watch that video, those instances where I have done creative solution and instances when a narrative has broken down, perhaps they did not serve me afterwards, it was good when I watched videos, tags were there and you could see time of tagging, and click it, but I found instances on videos where I had done

something that my peer student had not tagged, we watched together, I feel that it was challenging to use this tag set. I do not know if it would be better if tag sets were created in a later phase of practice.

Minna: So you would need more time for creating a tag set?

C1: Yes, or I would say that maybe I would like to create a tag set little bit later, or I do not know if it makes a different, maybe I was meant to fail with a tag set and then needed to create a new one.

If tag sets are created, for instance, after the first week, you have discussed with your supervising teacher issues you need to develop constantly, for instance, I speak very fast sometimes during lessons, when I get excited, it would be interesting to use this in tag sets, when my speech gets too fast on my colleague's opinion, he/she can tag it. You could create a tag set after few feedback discussions, based on those discussions.

My tag set did not support me, I did not get extra benefit from it, I knew, when I watched through my lesson in a tag set's eyes, I was able to pick up instances that my peer student had tagged, that is why I did not get extra benefit.

During the last supervising discussion, a faculty supervisor asked C1 question concerning recorded lessons and the whole practicum period. Reflective questions helped C1 concentrate on key episodes of recorded lessons and expand discussion outside videos. C1 did not only looked back on the action but became aware of essential aspects of those instances, thus, a supervisor promoted meaning-oriented reflection of C1 which according to Korthagen and Kessels (2001) promotes professional development in the long run. With help of a supervisor C1 became aware of issues on videos that were remained unconscious.

Supervisor's questions guided C1 from reflection of teacher behaviour and competencies to questions of C1 as a teacher and a teacher's core qualities, those personal qualities that are important as a teacher and essential source of teacher behaviour (Korthagen, 2004; Tickle, 1999). Discussion addressed competencies and qualities that are essential in a teacher's work, such as an ability to take risks and orchestration of teaching, which means leading classroom actions so that students are able to be active. A supervisor related those issues to theoretical thinking. Both of recorded lessons were religion lessons that addressed worship service. During the second lesson C1 organised a worship together with students.

The following extracts from a supervising discussion illustrate broadening and deepening of reflection of C1 with help of a faculty supervisor:

Talking about risk-taking in a lesson where C1 organised a worship.

A faculty supervisor: I have some topics for our discussions, one of them was a risk-taking, did you think about taking a risk while planning a lesson?

C1: Yes, I was thinking that I want to do this because a textbook offered so little information about that topic, I was wondering how I am able to plan the lesson that students remember, the only thing that came to my mind was that we need to address it in some concrete way, how worship service is...

A faculty supervisor: Taking a risk was a good choice. It is good to take risks in teaching; without risks you do not get forward. When you get wild ideas in future, you should put them into practice.

Talking about activation of students' advanced knowledge. A supervisor made C1 realise ways of activation of advanced knowledge during the lesson.

A faculty supervisor: ...On your opinion, how did you succeed in activating students' advanced knowledge and comprehension?

C1: I had two religious lessons, kind of three lessons, two of them were recorded, the first lesson addressed the early church and the second a worship service. I began my second lesson, if I remember right, I am not sure, I said that the early church had worship services, I connected it to students' advanced knowledge. I said that even today people go to services and it comes from history. Then I asked students if they had ever been in worship service...

A faculty supervisor: You activate advanced knowledge at the beginning when you connect but you do it during the lesson as well. If you watch your video, you see, you ask questions when you activate their advanced knowledge, have you realised that?

C2: I have not realised it. I have to watch that video again.

A faculty supervisor: They are good tricks that connect advanced knowledge to this moment and issues on hand, and that bridge you used at the beginning of the lesson, standing, do you remember. From the first moment to a new topic through a practical activity...so you started with a practical activity which was a good bridge.

C1: Yes, I thought that it would be a funny detail for the beginning, motivation, that we do something different at the beginning of the lesson.

A faculty supervisor: For me it looked like that you made students concentrate on that moment.

C1: It was a cognitive motivation that in future we will address this topic, I wonder what I said at the beginning. It is true, students calmed down for the lesson...

Talking about a teacher's and students' roles in a recorded lessons and in general. A supervisor connects the topic to theoretical thinking.

A faculty supervisor: If we go forward, think about a teacher's and students' roles and agency, just reflect more on whole process...how do you evaluate your own role and role of students, how active could students be, in what ways did you let students be active agents and knowledge constructors?

C1: I can say for both of us that in those subjects like history and environmental studies we used quite much instructional discussion where students were able to tell about their own experiences, their advanced knowledge, their experiences. We have had a multidisciplinary leaning module project where we go through several subjects. A topic of a project came from students, history of Rovaniemi, the last hundred years, then we look from social studies' and history's point of view...when they have written, it has happened in groups, we have guided actions during the last week.

We have created aims for students' ideas, we think about issues that can be included in a project and then we create aims and make a work plan. For instance, we decided that we write a portfolio where we put everything, evaluations and self-evaluations, it can be used for planning and students can stick things there...

During the last week when we have had this multidisciplinary learning module, role of a teacher has been very guiding...

A faculty supervisor: Do you know Dillenburgh? Pierre Dillenburgh?, he is a professor who talks about orchestrating teaching, a teacher leads an orchestra, and when you addressed a worship service, I think that this happened, students had a chance to be active like they did and a teacher orchestrated everything, gave notes for that and guided, if students needed something during their learning, like giving explanations for some issues, stop and give meanings to situations, this is orchestration...this is a good analogy, I think, it makes a teacher's activity, creativity and planning possible so that student are in front...but it requires a discretion from a teacher, especially in that kind of situation where students are in front.

Talking about and reviewing a tag set

A faculty supervisor...you have [a tag] 'deviation from a lesson plan', what do you think about that?

C1: I needed to be very careful, especially with the time, if I need to change plans and how much I am able to do, I had planned beforehand that I will tell students about different parts of a worship service but I did not think that I will play the piano and these kind of things...it changed quite a much or I did quite many creative solutions in more detailed...kind of that situation made it possible for me to change lesson plan in a creative way.

A faculty supervisor: You said that it was a concrete situation and it seemed very authentic as well, one reason for that might be that students were so engaged with that and playing the piano increased authenticity.

Talking about learning from a peer student and a personal teaching style

A faculty supervisor: ...for the last thing I would like to ask you, when you have finished the Advanced Practicum, what have you learnt from each other?

C1: I can tell about something what is missing in my teaching sometimes. I tend to get excited, it is challenging because when I get excited I can talk much and fast and it might happen that if students are not interested in what I am saying and when I express it in a fanatic way, then it goes, I have tried to think afterwards when we have had discussions. When it gets excessive. [A peer student] remains as a professional presenter, she does not let her inner emotions disturb her delivery...we are quite different as teachers, so our presenting is quite different.

Data Informing the Case Study

Data	Details
Pre-VEO questionnaire	Complete 27/3/2017
Video 1	Complete 27/2/2017
Video 2	Complete 3/3/2017
Video 3	Missing
Reflection 1	Missing
Reflection 2	Missing
Reflection 3	Missing
Interview / focus group	Completed 23/3/2017
Post-VEO questionnaire	Completed 7/4/2017
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a customised, personal tag set created with help of a faculty supervisor • a supervising discussion with a faculty supervisor 23/3/2017 (reflection on teaching practice and recorded lessons)

References

- Korthagen, F. A. J. (2004). In search of the essence of a good teacher: Towards a more holistic approach in teacher education. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 20(1), 77.
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- Tickle, L. (1999). Teacher self-appraisal and appraisal of self. In R. P. Lipka, & T. M. Brinthaupt (Eds.), *The role of self in teacher development* (pp. 121-141). Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.