



Reflective Practice: The What, the Why and the How, of Reflection?

by Lynn McAllister

*It is not by muscle, speed or dexterity that great things
are achieved, but by reflection, force of character, and
judgement (Cicero)*



REFLECTIVE PRACTICE


The what, the why and the how, of reflection?

**It is not by muscle, speed or
dexterity that great things
are achieved, but by
reflection, force of character,
and judgement (Cicero)**

Lynn McAllister – eLearning
Services QUT




Introduction

- Concepts of reflection
 - Background - the rise of reflective practice
 - Purposes for reflection
 - Scaffolding reflective writing
 - Activities for getting started
 - Developing the critical approach
 - Examples
 - Questions!
- 


Getting to know you!

- What is your concept of reflection?
 - Why did you come along to a reflective practice session?
 - What are you hoping to find out?


 - I will be disappointed if I don't/can't/still am not sure about???????
- 



What is reflection?


- Remembering
 - Keeping a diary or journal
 - Exploring our feelings and beliefs
 - Looking backwards and thinking about what we have experienced with a view to understanding its application for future action
 - There are many different terms for reflection.....
- 

Everybody Reflects.....


- Reflection is a survival skill and a way of thinking
 - Historically, reflection has been the central activity of diary and journal keeping.
 - If we didn't reflect we wouldn't be able to get to work every day
-so perhaps we are talking about something slightly different when we mention reflective practice
- 



...the trend to reflection for learning


- Government agenda for a skilled and flexible workforce
 - Bologna process extended this to personal development as well as the needs of employers
 - Graduate capabilities or generic skills vs soft skills
 - Employer expectations for a job ready graduate
 - Through reflection students/trainees develop new knowledge and are aware of the parallel development of discipline and employability skills
 - Reflection also central to authentic assessment
- 

What is reflective practice?


- Reflection in the professional sense, reflection on professional practice, gives us the opportunity to analyse, critique and interpret our work.
 - Schon (1983) spoke about reflection IN action and reflection ON action.
 - In the professional sense, reflection is critical and applied.
 - It involves consciously thinking about what you have done, analysing aspects of your action and planning to improve or modify your behaviours for future action and for a future purpose.
- 



Criticisms of a reflective approach


- It may be considered:
 - overly individualised and purely instrumental (Vince, 2002).
 - too introspective with no further development (Hoyrup, 2004)
 - serving individual growth as opposed to organisational or group improvement (Lather, 1991)
 - it can be scary and confronting
 - In the education and assessment context students often criticise reflective activities as being non-academic “is only my personal ideas” “it is too private to be assessed”
- 

Strengths of a reflective approach

- Conversely, its value is recognised for:
 - Contributing to the development of new understandings and new knowledge (Mackintosh, 1998)
 - Challenging the prevailing cultural or professional ways of acting (Brookfield, 1995)
 - Making us aware of personal historical and cultural perspectives that guide their actions (Cranton, 1996)
 - Focused critical reflection can lead to empowerment for both individuals and organisations.
- 




Purposes for reflection

- **Personal growth**
 - Formal accreditation.....competence attainment.....
 - Learning – education - assessment
 - Professional development – career progression – career planning
 - Action planning
 - **Lifelong learning**
 - **Mentoring**
 - Workplace development
 - Developing a body of evidence of what you can do and who you are
 - Showcasing!!
- 


Focused reflection

You need to slow down and take time to reflect!!


- It is important to take time to reflect.....write it down think about it....come back to it.....
 - “The horror of that moment," the King went on, "I shall never, never forget." "You will though," the Queen said, "if you don't make a memorandum of it." (Alice through the looking glass)
- 



Keeping a journal


- Traditionally used in the caring professions
 - Support the transition from theory to practice
 - Becoming more widespread across the disciplines to support work experience and work based learning
 - Can be intensely personal but can be focused for specific purposes
 - Provide a wealth of material for drilling down to significant instances for reflection
- 

...Quality and depth of reflection


- There is a tendency to talk about ineffective and effective reflection. Of course, it depends on the purpose for the reflection.
 - This view comes from the education sector where reflective practice is often the basis for assessment.
 - Using a framework which asks pertinent questions to guide the reflection can ensure the reflection is focused for the purpose
- 



Scaffolding for formal reflection

- it can be argued that “real” reflective practice needs another person as mentor or professional supervisor, who can ask appropriate questions to ensure that the reflection goes somewhere, and does not get bogged down in self-justification, self-indulgence or self-pity (Atherton, 2011)
 - we can use structures/frameworks to ask the questions and provide a focus for our reflection
- 

Scaffolding for formal reflection

- Frameworks:
 - Help you get started with purposeful, targeted reflection for learning
 - Provide guidance and assist targeting for specific purposes.
 - They provide a focus for:
 - Personal growth/development
 - Reflecting on specific activities
 - Considering potential improvements
 - Planning for learning
 - Recognising informal experiences as learning
 - Evidence learning and development
- 

STAR – L


- **S**ituation is the context of where you had the experience.
- **T**ask is what was required of you in that situation
- **A**ction includes what you actually did
- **R**esult is about what happened and what were the outcomes
- **L**earning includes reflecting on what was the key element of your actions and what you might have done differently or will develop for future practice

5 Rs – (sometimes just 4Rs)


- Reporting
- Responding
 - report what happened and the relevance to you. Make observations; express your opinions.
- Relating
 - Have I seen this before in my own practice? What is different or similar to what I do or see in practice? How might I relate to this?
- Reasoning
 - Highlight in detail the significant elements underlying what you saw. What kinds of skills were displayed?
- Reconstructing
 - Reframe or reconstruct future practice or understanding. How can I implement this in my practice? What might happen if...? Are my ideas supported by theory?



3-Step framework

- 1. Take notice – describe the experience; what did you do, feel, think; what decisions did you make?
 - 2. Analyse the experience – why did you make those particular decisions; why did you that action?
 - 3. Take action – What did you learn; how can you use this learning?
- 

Mentoring / WIL framework

- 1. Reflect on practice – on an event, on the day or on the week
 - 2. Talk to someone about it – supervisor, mentor, colleague - Seek advice or comment
 - 3. Set goals – could involve change of approach; seeking further information; up to you!
- 



Spaces for reflection


There are a range of spaces or tools available. These tools provide physical structure for your reflections.

- Portfolios – ePortfolios
- Learning journals
- Blogs/Wiki spaces
- Collaborative online tools

They may be provided by an institution or professional association:


- University/TAFE
 - ALIA, Australian Computer Society
- 

Structure in the reflection space

- Skill sets – employability skills / soft skills
 - Professional competencies and standards
 - Exemplars – share examples with colleagues
 - When setting up your reflection space design a structure that will help you focus.....like folders in the filing cabinet!
- 



Activities to encourage reflection

- Select a photo as a metaphor for a recent experience
 - Ask questions (this is what frameworks do)
 - Concept mapping or graphic representation – draw your ideas
 - ‘Take a sentence’ – identifies issues / interest point from readings, workshops, sessions
 - Time lapse writing – helps manage reflection on negative experiences
 - Reflect in cartoon and also on how this is different
 - Dialogue journals for collaboration or peer support
- 

Examples of ePortfolio

- ePortfolio examples:

[Matt Dyson](#)

[Rebecca Randall](#)

[Alexander Turin](#)

[Information Management Perspective](#)



Resources for reflection

- Jennifer Moon - Learning Journals: A handbook for reflective practice and professional development.
- Fiona Timmins – Making sense of portfolios: A guide for nursing students.
- Ira Progoff – At a journal workshop.
 - www.intensivejournal.org
- Supporting structures
[Frameworks for reflection](#)

References

- Atherton, J. (2011). *Learning and teaching: Reflection and reflective practice*. Retrieved May 2011 from <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/reflecti.htm>
- Bain, J., Ballantyne, R., Mills, C. & Lester, N. (2002). *Reflecting on practice: Student teachers' perspectives*. Flaxton: Post Pressed
- Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Cranton, P. (1996). *Professional development as transformative Learning: New perspectives for teachers of adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Høyrup, S. (2004). Reflection as a core process in organisational learning, *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 16 (8), 442-54
- Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy within the postmodern*. New York: Routledge
- Mackintosh, C. (1998). Reflection: a flawed strategy for the nursing profession. *Nurse Education Today*, 18 (7), 553-557
- Moon, J. (2006). *Learning journals: A handbook for reflective practice and professional development*. Abingdon: Routledge
- Progoff, I. (1975). *At a journal workshop*. New York: Dialogue House Library
- Timmins, F. (2008). *Making sense of portfolios: A guide for nursing students*. Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. New York: Basic Books
- Vince, R. (1996). Experiential management education as the practice of change. In French, R. & Grey, C. (Eds). *Rethinking Management Education*. London: Sage Publications



Questions??

**Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action.
(Peter Drucker)**

