

Research & Communication Skills

Week 3: Reflective Writing

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This Lecture:

- What is reflective writing?
- The place of reflection in research / practice
- Kolb's Learning Cycle
- Levels of reflection
- Stages in a piece of reflective writing
- Approaches to reflection
- What not to do
- Using reflective writing in your work

What is reflective writing?

- A personal account of a piece of work, research or practice. It is used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the task and to develop possible plans for future work.
- It is a way to analyse your activities and experiences in a critical way, to enable understanding and learning.
- As such it needs to be both subjective and objective.

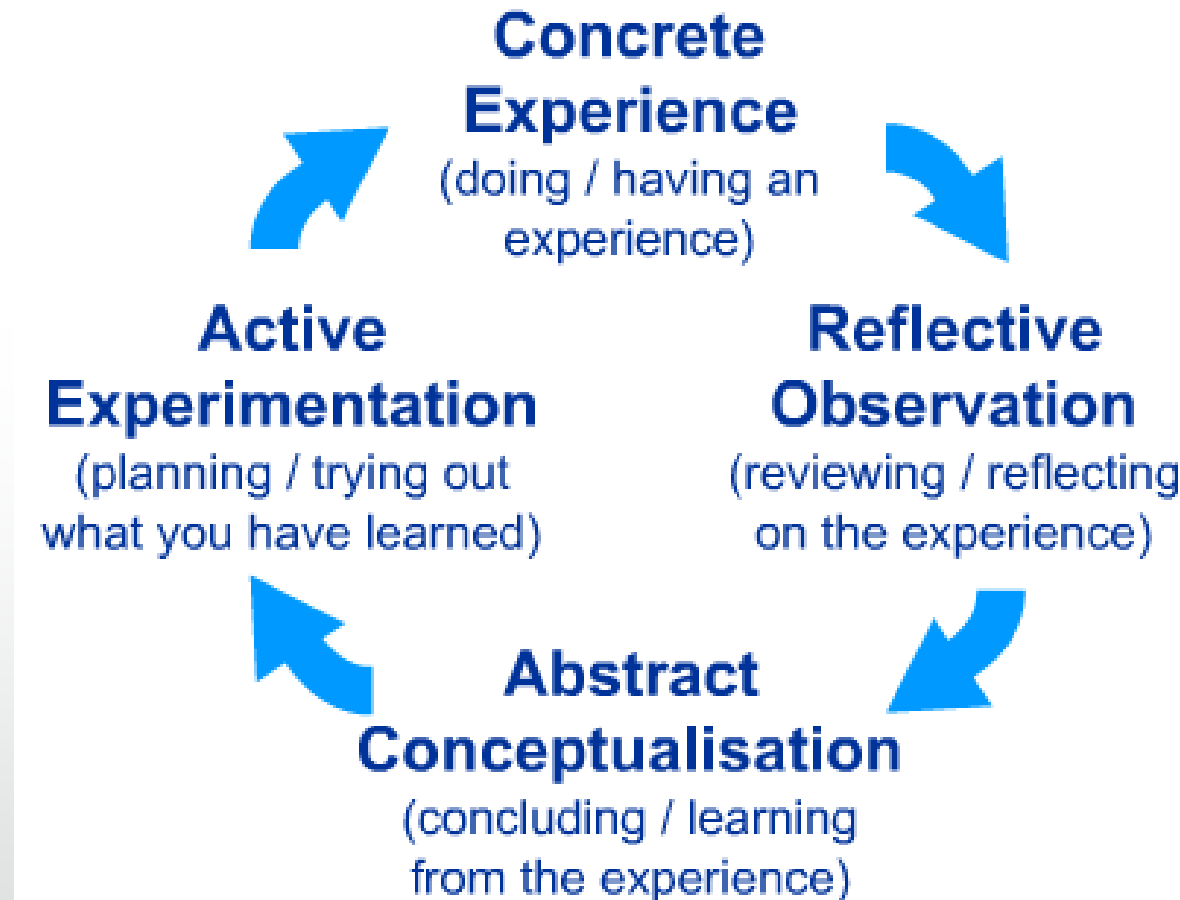
Reflective writing should be ...

- Personal
- Honest
- Assessing
- Critical
- Used to look for learning opportunities
- About planning ahead

The place of reflection in research / practice

- To understand what has been done
- To assess the strengths and weaknesses of experiences
- To evaluate the possible improvements
- To plan ahead for the next time
- To create a record for future reflection/incorporation

Kolb's Learning Cycle



- **Active Experimentation** – Planning
- **Concrete Experience** – Doing / Having an Experience
- **Reflective Observation** – Reviewing / Reflecting on the Experience
- **Abstract Conceptualisation** – Concluding / Learning from the Experience
- **Active Experimentation** – Trying out what you have learned

Levels of Reflection

- Descriptive – simply saying what happened
- Dialogic – involving your own perspective in events
- Critical – widening the perspective to include assessment and outside knowledge.

Specific tasks were shared out amongst members of my team. Initially, however, the tasks were not seen as equally difficult by all team members. Cooperation between group members was at risk because of this perception of unfairness. Social interdependence theory recognises a type of group interaction called ‘positive interdependence’, meaning cooperation (Johnson & Johnson, 1993, cited by Maughan & Webb, 2001), and many studies have demonstrated that “cooperative learning experiences encourage higher achievement” (Maughan & Webb, 2001). Ultimately, our group achieved a successful outcome, but to improve the process, we perhaps needed a chairperson to help encourage cooperation when tasks were being shared out. In future group work, on the course and at work, I would probably suggest this.

Reference

Maughan, C., & Webb, J. (2001). *Small group learning and assessment*. Retrieved August 01, 2007, from the Higher Education Academy website:

www.ukcle.ac.uk/resources/temp/assessment.html

Stages in a piece of reflective writing

- Description – statement of facts, background, context.
- Interpretation – what was most important / relevant / useful. Explanations. Comparison with similar situations.
- Outcomes – understanding of what worked and what didn't. Possible solutions to the latter and ways to continue the former.

Approaches to reflection

- First person accounts
- Bullet points / tables / mindmaps / spider diagrams
- Reports
- Diary / Journal / Blog
- Third person / Fictional?

What not to do

- Don't be too descriptive
- Don't try to hide / minimise errors or mistakes
- Don't include the things you wish you had done
- Don't leave it too late
- Don't write it and then forget about it
- Don't feel it needs to be too 'academic'

Using reflective writing in your work

- Reflect immediately after completion
- Reflect again at a later point
- Review reflections when planning for the next task
- Incorporate the use of previous reflections in your next reflection
- Make reflection a habit as part of the cycle of your work

We have...

- Learned what reflective writing is
- Understood the place of reflection in research / practice
- Examined various approaches to reflective writing
- Covered the possible pitfalls in reflective writing
- Examined how to incorporate reflective writing into our own practice