REFLECTIVE WRITING
Outline of the session

This workshop will cover:

• What reflection is and why it is valuable
• How to write in a reflective style
• How to integrate academic research into your reflective writing
Exercise 1: What is reflection?

In pairs, and using the post-it notes provided:

• Discuss what you think ‘reflection’ is
• Write down your thoughts on the post-its
One definition of reflection

“Reflection is a form of mental processing – like a form of thinking – that we may use to fulfil a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome or we may simply ‘be reflective’ and then an outcome can be expected. Reflection is applied to relatively complicated, ill-structured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution and is largely based on the further processing of knowledge and understanding” (Moon, 2004, p.82)
Key aspects of reflective thinking

• It is about a way of thinking and learning from that thinking (Focused)
• Involves a set of actions / practices (Purposeful)
• Asking questions – lots of questions!
• Links thinking, practice (or action) and learning (based on Experience)
Why reflection is valuable

• Improvement in practice – deeper learning
• Facilitate a change / improvement in practice

Specific goals:
• Review a process critically - stand back – explore ideas
• Build explanation from our own experiences and observations – and relate to theory
• Personal / professional development
• Personal responsibility and ethical practice
• Make a decision / resolve uncertainty
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
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| 5 people                                                                    | In my experience, when people look shocked they have witnessed something unexpected  
A large building – municipal  
Three of the people look shocked  
One of the people is carrying a camera  
Two have not reacted  
Two of the people have hands over their mouths  
They are all looking in the same direction | The people in the picture are strangers but are witnessing a terrible and large event, perhaps some sort of disaster.  
(Taken from presentation by Harriet Richmond)                                                                                           |
Cycle of reflective thinking

WHAT?
An experience

NOW WHAT?
Action

SO WHAT?
Reflective processes
Cycles of reflective learning (Jasper, 2013, p. 4)
Gibbs Reflective Cycle

- **Description**: What happened?
- **Feelings**: What were you thinking and feeling?
- **Evaluation**: What was good and bad about the situation?
- **Analysis**: What sense can you make of the situation?
- **Conclusion**: What else could you have done?
- **Action Plan**: If it arose again, what would you do?
Personal qualities for reflection

Needs:

**Openness** to different ideas / angles (Mindfulness)

**Curiosity** (asking questions)

**Patience** (if the question is complex then the answer is probably going to be as well)

**Honesty** (acknowledge uncertainties / what went badly as well as what went well.

**Personal responsibility / Integrity**

**Rigour** (analytical / insightful)

**Time and Space**
What reflective writing is NOT

• A straightforward description
• A straightforward decision – should involve an element of weighing up and consideration of both sides
• Simple problem solving
• Impersonal
• Complacent
Exercise 2

• We are going to give you a short story
• Read through it and then discuss with your partner what you think of this piece of writing
Follow up exercise

• We will now give you another version of this story to read and discuss
• Why is this more reflective?
Structure

- No set structure
- Would need an introduction and conclusion
- Then based on the reflective model you choose and the assignment criteria
Reflective writing includes evidence

1. From your personal experience

2. From the views of others
   - Mentor
   - Peers
   - Audience

3. From your reading
   - Need references
Evidence from reading

- Demonstrates that you’re well-read and understand key concepts
- Demonstrates that you base your decisions on academic research (evidence-based practice)
- Provides a justification for your approach
- *Be wary of saying: “I believe” or “I think”*
Exercise 3

• Discuss in pairs how the following could be improved. What is missing?
• “Initially I considered posting out the questionnaires for my research but then I decided to create an online questionnaire instead.”
Possible improved example
Initially I considered posting out the questionnaires for my research as this method is cheaper than face-to-face completion and avoids observer bias (Parker et al, 2000). I also lacked confidence in my skills for designing an online questionnaire. However, non-response for postal questionnaires can be an issue (Bowling and Ebrahim, 2005). Smith et al (2013) found a better response rate for online questionnaires than for postal, so I decided to persevere in creating an online questionnaire instead.
More examples

Opportunity to read and discuss other pieces of reflective writing which are also academic.
Top Tips!

• Reflect early
• Be specific
• Show the value of your reflection
References


Questions?

Thank you for your attention