Condensed Learning Diaries for Reflective Development

"a new approach to learning diaries which is less time consuming for students (and staff), and engages them in the valuable activity of reflective learning"

Rob Bray Argyll College

Contents

Part 1 Reflective Practice – essential but neglected?

Part 2 Condensed Learning Diaries – an innovative approach

Part 3 A new research project

With pauses for questions, comments and of course, reflection

Part 1: What is Reflective Practice and why does it matter?

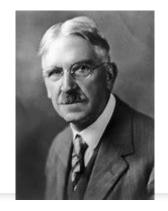Our ability to reflect on thoughts and behaviour – is it uniquely human?

The philosophical tradition includes:

"The unexamined life is not worth living" **Socrates**

"By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest."
Confucious 孔夫子; *Kǒng Fūzǐ,*

John Dewey (1859-1952).

Dewey 'The Founder of Reflection'

Reflective thought begins when we experience and problem or dilemma:

 'a "felt difficulty"

Reflection - part of the cycle that enables us to learn from experience
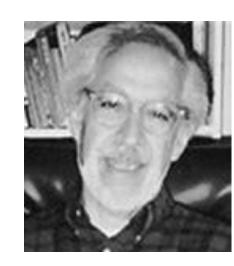
> "To maintain the state of doubt and to carry on systematic and protracted inquiry — these are the essentials of thinking." Dewey 1933 p118

So Reflection is **active and deliberative**

is about thinking to learn

 - a way to escape from the captivity of routine

'The Reflective Turn'

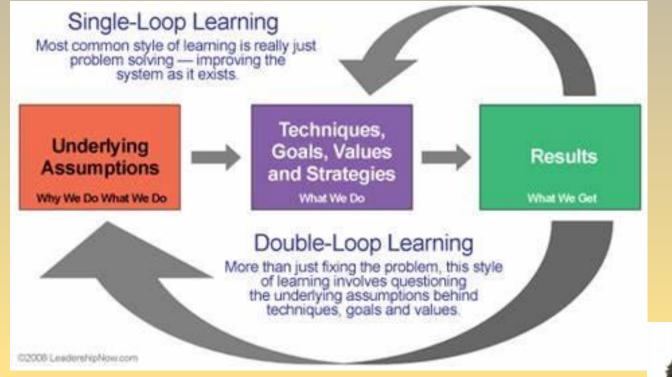Late 20th century a surge of interest in applying reflection to professional learning and training

Donald Schön 1983 ***The Reflective Practitioner***

'The importance of doubt'
- *reflection-in-action*
- *reflection-on-action*
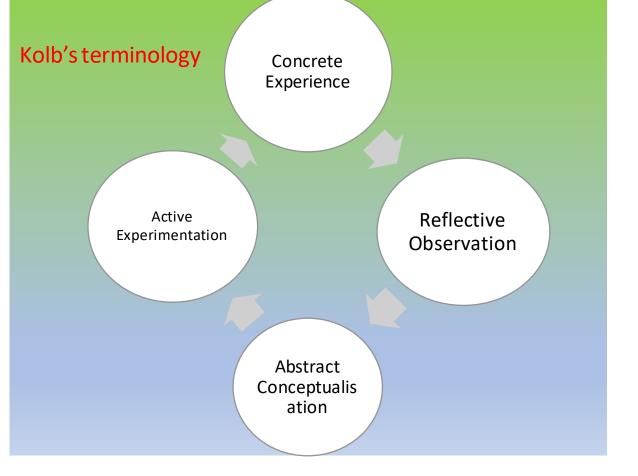
A number of theories and models soon emerged

- **Chris Argyris (1991)**: Single and double loop learning

Single-Loop Learning
Most common style of learning is really just problem solving — improving the system as it exists.

Underlying Assumptions
Why We Do What We Do

Techniques, Goals, Values and Strategies
What We Do

Results
What We Get

Double-Loop Learning
More than just fixing the problem, this style of learning involves questioning the underlying assumptions behind techniques, goals and values.
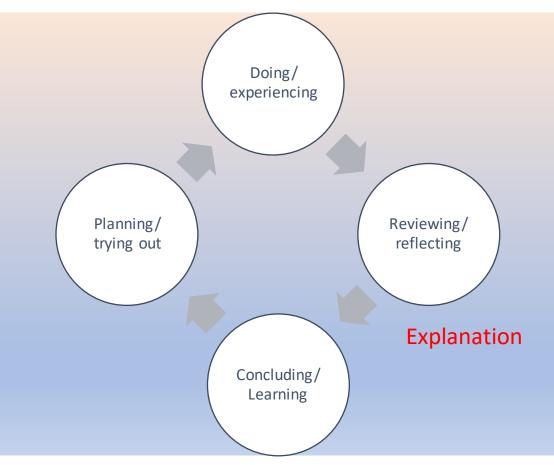
©2008 LeadershipNow.com

David Boud – Reflection not just about reasoning
but also about feelings, emotions   (e.g. Boud 2001)

Kolb's Learning Cycle (Kolb 1984)

Kolb's terminology

- Concrete Experience
- Reflective Observation
- Abstract Conceptualisation
- Active Experimentation

Explanation

- Doing/experiencing
- Reviewing/reflecting
- Concluding/Learning
- Planning/trying out

and the development of Critical Reflection …

… a more radical sub-set of Reflective Practice that focuses on the question of power, challenges assumptions and questions organisational norms, for instance those of new managerialism   (Bray and McLellan 2019)

- Jack Mezirow (1990) – Transformative Learning - for whom it questions everything that practitioners had previously take for granted

Stephen Brookfield (1995) Critical Reflection challenges paradigmatic suppositions in two ways: first, it examines how power influences educational processes; while, secondly, it recognises and uncovers hegemonic assumptions

Brookfield believes teachers do what they do to "change the world" (1995, p. 1).

Brookfield's 'lens' model: we view the world through four lenses :

Our autobiographies as learners
SELF

Our students' eyes
STUDENTS

Our colleagues' experiences
PEERS

Theoretical Literature
SCHOLARSHIP

Possible purposes of Reflective Practice

- Learning – Individual, Group and / or Organisational
- Personal Development and Psychological well-being
  - Widely used in therapy – for instance therapeutic journaling
- Organisational control and efficiency
  - as a means of ensuring performance meets targets, as a method of involving individuals in their own assessment

Variations, methods

RP may be carried out on a regular/ routine basis or for Critical Incidents ('trigger' events)

May be individual or Group/ collective

Used by Learners (trainees, students) or practitioners/ professionals

May be voluntary or compulsory (for instance as part of assessment)

Methods:

- Individual: journals, diaries, logs, blogs, vlogs etc.
- Group methods include Action Learning Sets (Guest et al 2006).

Time for some definitions

Reflection is a critical analysis of knowledge and experience, in order to achieve deeper meaning and understanding
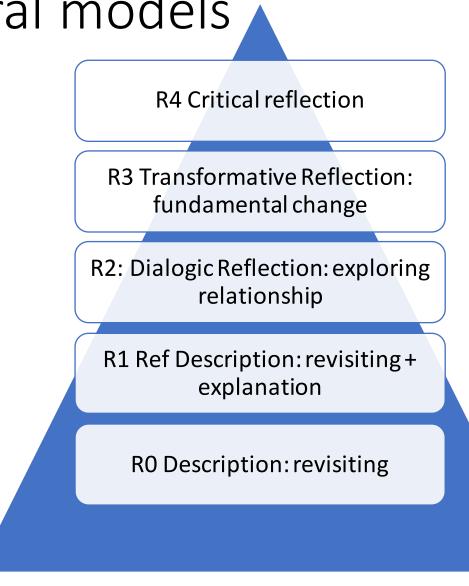
"Reflection is a metacognitive process in which professionals and students actively and purposefully consider their feelings, reactions, thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, responses, and experiences" Vianamuri et al 2017 p2

"An important characteristic of **Reflective Practice** rather than reflection is the fact that it is **captured and expressed in** some form - usually written, spoken or pictorial - on a systematic basis" CIPD 2020 (my emphasis)

Levels of reflection – several models

For instance the Fleck and Fitzpatrick (2010) model

1. R0 Description: revisiting

2. R1 Ref Description: revisiting + explanation

3. R2: Dialogic Reflection: exploring relationship

4. R3 Transformative Reflection: fundamental change

5. R4 Critical reflection

R4 Critical reflection

R3 Transformative Reflection: fundamental change

R2: Dialogic Reflection: exploring relationship

R1 Ref Description: revisiting + explanation

R0 Description: revisiting

So ... **Reflective Practice is 'the bedrock of professional identity'** (Finlay, 2008 p 2).

- Reflective Practice is now often regarded as ***essential to the professional role*** (Finlay, 2008).

- In some professions RP has become standard, for instance:
  - *"Reflective practice has become part of the discourse of nursing education classrooms, conferences, and journals, and are popular features of nursing continuing education programs."* Ruth-Sahd, L. A. (2003 *P 488)*

In Education – it's embedded in policy nationally …

The College Development Network's *Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges* area 2 (Professional Knowledge and Understanding):

2.5(c) Understand[ing] how to reflect critically on their own learning and the application of this to student learning and experiences (College Development Network 2020(a))

… the purpose of the Standards as a whole includes:

Developing critically reflective and evaluative practitioners. (College Development Network 2020(b))

Accordingly, RP is frequently built into initial training courses (often assessed) and CPD for teachers in secondary, further and higher education (Canning 2011; Collin et al 2014).

... and at UHI

Reflective practice and continuous improvement

The UHI **Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy** (2017-2021) includes Twelve [Learning and Teaching Enhancement Values](#) that provide the basis of the strategy itself, one of which is

Reflective practice and continuous improvement:

"At individual, team, departmental and institutional level we will review the effectiveness of our teaching practices, reflect on the potential for improvement and actively plan for a better educational experience for current and future students."

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy (2017-2021)

Note that RP can be conducted by professionals **or** students -
Example of using reflective practice with students

Kheng & Sethela (2015).

Used Learning Logs in undergraduate Entrepreneurship module at a Malaysian University

N = 136

Assessed (10% total mark) – graded according to level (similar to the Fleck and Fitzpatrick model from purely descriptive to Critical Reflection

55% of the completed logs were at the lowest level – purely descriptive

Examples of a purely descriptive log from Kheng & Sethela (2015: 31) Continued

Student 20:

"In this chapter I study the definition of SME. SME apply for the following sectors which are primary agriculture, manufacturing (including agro-based), manufacturing-Related Services (MRS) and Services (including information and communication technology). My comment for this chapter is, I can find out about the importance of SME entrepreneurs in Malaysia" [sic]

Example of using reflective practice with students Kheng & Sethela (2015) - continued

They concluded:

"self-confessional writing is hard to come by "

and students

"had difficulty in writing the reflection when being requested to do so. This has resulted in their reflection being written descriptively which lacks in critical analysis and deep thinking".

but nevertheless the

"Reflective learning log provides students with a profound insight into their own world ..." (p15)

So reflective practice is a well established part of what we do – as practitioners and as part of our teaching strategy with students?

- Probably not! (but see later)
- Most published literature refers to use with students (HE) or in CPD
- What is the evidence for use of Reflective Practice outwith these?
- Uptake outside mandatory requirements is low
- Evidence that there are many barriers
- RP is out of fashion: doesn't fit with current trends

General barriers to Reflective Practice

- The nderlying approach at odds with dominant rationalist narrative – Habermas (1998)

- Skills may be difficult to acquire "I believe that reflection is more intellectually challenging than is generally recognised (Francis 1995: 229)

- Might lead to unresolved internal conflict, cognitive dissonance, awareness of contradictions, troubling knowledge (Bray and MacLellan 2019)

- Professionally risky (Luft and Roughley, 2016); Critical Reflection may be viewed negatively by organisations (Lynch 2014) - Who is the reader ….? (see Boud 2001)

Specific barriers to journals and logs in RP

- Journal writing is time-consuming (Langer 2002)
- Journals are too unstructured (or occasionally too structured!)
- The process is oriented towards the writing rather than the cognitive element of reflection itself
- Participants may have negative affect towards their experiences of the compulsory use of journals during training (some find reflection unhelpful and not relevant to learning : Stephens and Winterbottom 2010)
- Participants don't know what do with them – 'so what'
- [Note there are specific issues with **assessing** learning logs]

Part 2 A solution?: the condensed reflective diary (Lean Learning Logs) or Reduced Reflective Records

- For use by professionals ... or students, voluntary or assessed?

- LLL's are very short, but still capture the essentials points

- Involve minimal writing, leaving more time for reflective process itself (we all reflect – but we rarely make time to record those reflections)

- Structured using Kolb's experiential Learning Cycle

- Cumulative so can be used as based for longitudinal meta-reflection

The Lean Learning Log: Instructions

1 Select a learning event (something that you were involved in that made a significant impression);

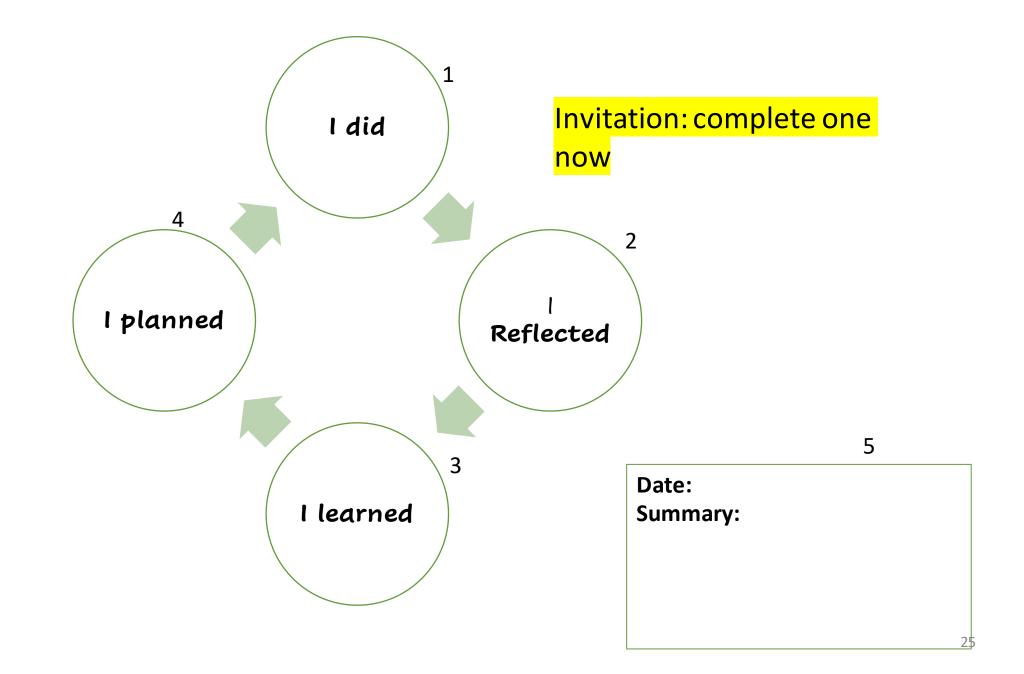2 Record in **Circle 1 what you did** – summarise in a sentence (two at the most);

3 Record **in circle 2** your reflections - **how you felt** about what happened and your own role/actions (and any tensions between understanding and feeling) (again a sentence or two);
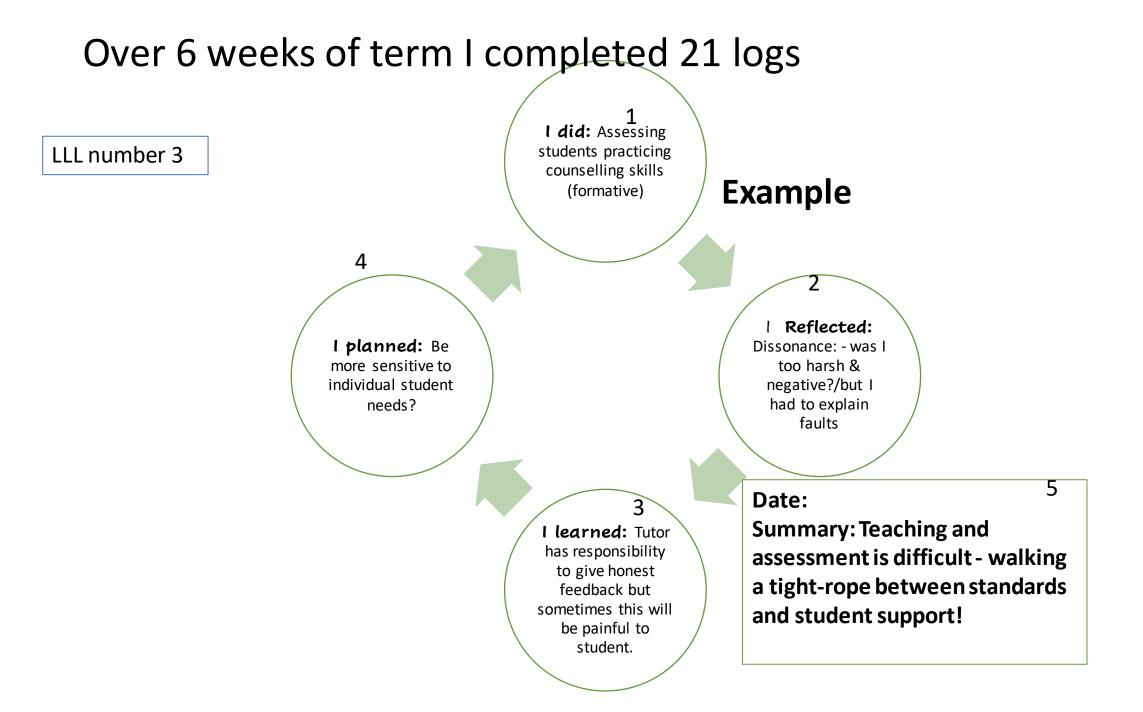
4 Record in **circle 3 what you learned** from these reflections – this could be in terms of your own practice, others' practice, organisations, ideas, theories ….. a sentence or two;

5 In **circle 4** record how this may affect your future behaviour (in the same event or more generally) ("I planned");

6 In the box on the right: **Date** and **Summarise** the whole thing in a few words.

Note: entries should be short, but can be expanded if appropriate: they can be regarded as 'gateways' to larger, more extensive/deeper reflections
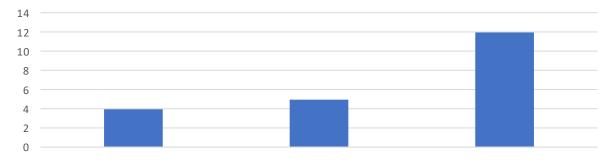
1

I did

4

I planned

2

|
Reflected

3

I learned

5

Date:
Summary:

Over 6 weeks of term I completed 21 logs

LLL number 3

Example

1
I did: Assessing students practicing counselling skills (formative)

2
I **Reflected:** Dissonance: - was I too harsh & negative?/but I had to explain faults

3
I learned: Tutor has responsibility to give honest feedback but sometimes this will be painful to student.

4
I planned: Be more sensitive to individual student needs?

5
Date:
Summary: Teaching and assessment is difficult - walking a tight-rope between standards and student support!

Some meta-reflection on my logs

The dominant theme in the Log using Mezirow's classification of Critical Reflection types ⬇

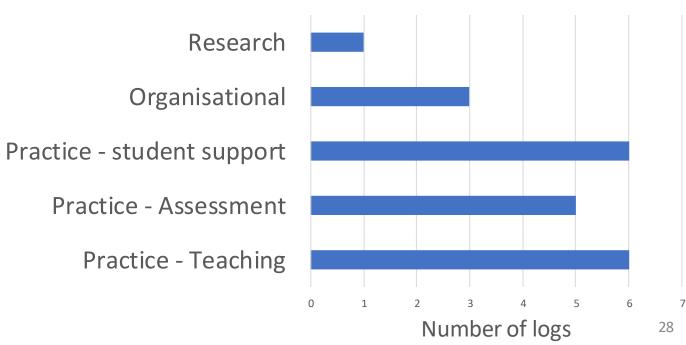| Log	Action	Topic	Summary (Mezirow 1998)	Redacted
1	No	Practice - student support	Subjective - Narrative	
2	No	Practice - student support	Subjective - Therapeutic	Yes
3	No	Practice - Assessment	Subjective - Therapeutic	
4	Partial	Research	Subjective - Therapeutic	
5	Yes	Practice - Teaching	Subjective - Systemic	
6	Yes	Practice - Assessment	Subjective - Systemic	

Action identified

Yes   Partial   No

Classification of Topics

Research
Organisational
Practice - student support
Practice - Assessment
Practice - Teaching

Number of logs

28

My reflections on using Lean Learning Logs

- The logs were very quick to do – a few minutes … as I had already done the 'thinking' (the cognitive elements)
- The structure helped me organise my thoughts
- It was relatively easy to extract the main points and create meta-reflections
- It was interesting to see patterns emerge from these meta-reflections: has helped in ongoing personal development
- The Logs became more interrogative, less superficial (more 'critically reflective'?) with time
- Some Logs (4) led to useful, concrete Action Planning

Questions, issues, criticisms?

- Reinventing the wheel ? Or …
- *'Reintroducing a neglected wheel with upgrades'*?
- Use for individuals or groups (collaboratively) or organisations?
- Should reflection ever be compulsory?
- Possible developments – an App
- The Learning Log as therapy?

Part 3 Some research
Reflective Practice –awareness and usage within UHI
Supported by the LTA Scholarship Fund 2020/21

Research questions

1 To what extent are academic staff aware of the University's policy on Reflective Practice, and of the pedagogical theories underlying the relevance of Reflective Practice

2 To what extent do academic staff use Reflective Practice to reflect on their own learning and development as professionals,

3 To what extent to academic staff use Reflective Practice as a method of assessing students (for instance using diaries, journaling, logs.)

4 Is there potential for introducing new forms of Reflective Practice to enhance its uptake, for instance using video, audio, reduced, co-operative reflective records, Action Learning Sets and digital methods such as apps

Why   and how

Despite the centrality of Reflective Practice within educational thought there has been remarkably little research into the reality of how it is used by practitioners.

Method

1 Questionnaire to UHI teaching staff

2 Follow up semi-structured interviews

For more information contact   rob.bray@uhi.ac.uk

Thank you

References

Argyris, Chris (May 1991). "Teaching smart people how to learn" (PDF). *Harvard Business Review*. **69** (3): 99–109. Retrieved 22 November 2015.

Boud, D. (2001). Using journal writing to enhance reflective practice. *New directions for adult and continuing education*, *2001*(90), 9-18.

Bray, R. and MacLellan G (2019) Critical Reflection and Community Education values. *Concept: The Journal of Contemporary Community Education Practice Theory*, 10 (1) Spring

Brookfield, S. D. (1995). Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher. Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series.

Canning Roy(2011) Reflecting on the reflective practitioner: vocational initial teacher education in Scotland, Journal of Vocational Education & Training, 63:4, 609-617, DOI: 10.1080/13636820.2011.560391

CIPD 2020 What is Reflective Practice (Produced in collaboration with Grace Owen and Alison Fletcher)https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/reflective-practice-guide_tcm18-12524.pdf/ Accessed 20/6/2020

College Development Network 2020(a) 2 Professional Knowledge and Understandinghttps://www.cdn.ac.uk/professional-standards/knowledge/ Accessed 2/8/2020

College Development Network 2020(b) Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges dhttps://www.cdn.ac.uk/professional-standards/knowledge/ Accessed 2/8/2020

Collin, S., Karsenti, T., & Komis, V. (2013). Reflective practice in initial teacher training: Critiques and perspectives. *Reflective practice*, *14*(1), 104-117.

Dewey, J. (1933). How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process Vol. 8.

Finlay, L. (2008). Reflecting on reflective practice. PBPL paper, 52, 1-27.

Warde, B., & Kolb, P. (2017). The reflective diary: an experiential tool for enhancing social work students' research learning. *Social Work Education*, *36*(8), 933-945

Fleck, R., & Fitzpatrick, G. (2010, November). Reflecting on reflection: framing a design landscape. In *Proceedings of the 22nd Conference of the Computer-Human Interaction Special Interest Group of Australia on Computer-Human Interaction* (pp. 216-223).

Fook, J. (2015). Reflective practice and critical reflection. Handbook for practice learning in social work and social care, 440-454.

Gibbs, G, 1988, Learning by Doing. A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods. FEU

Habermas, J. (1998) The inclusion of the Other. Studies in Political Theory. Parts VIII and IX of Ch1 Transcribed by Andy Blunden. London: MIT Press

Kheng, Y. K., & Sethela, J. (2015). The Development of Reflective Undergraduate Students: Assessing the Educational Benefits of Reflective Learning Logs in Entrepreneurship Module. *International Education Studies*, *8*(9), 25-35.Francis 1995: 229

Kolb, D. 1984, Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development, Prentice Hall, New Jersey

Luft, T., & Roughley, R. (2016). Self: The Role of Reflective Practice for Supporting Professional Identity Development in Graduate Students. SUPPORTING, 53.

Lynch, K. (2014). New managerialism: The impact on education. Concept, 5(3), 11.

Mezirow, J. (1990). How critical reflection triggers transformative learning. Fostering critical reflection in adulthood, 1, 20.

Mezirow, J. and Associates (2000) Learning as Transformation – Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Ruth-Sahd, L. A. (2003). Reflective practice: A critical analysis of data-based studies and implications for nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education*, *42*(11), 488-497Langer A M (2002) Reflecting on practice: using learning journals in higher and continuing education. Teaching in Higher Education. 7(3) 337-351.

Schon, D. A. (1983). The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action. Basic Books, New York. pp102-4 Lawrence-Wilkes, L., and Ashmore, L., (2014) The Reflective Practitioner in Professional Education, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Stephens, K., & Winterbottom, M. (2010). Using a learning log to support students' learning in biology lessons. *Journal of Biological Education*, *44*(2), 72-80Langer 2002 Vinjamuri, M.,