

Resources for Reflective Learning

This is a section of 50 pages from Moon, J (2004) A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning , Routledge Falmer, London. You are welcome to use this material freely, but it would be good if you referenced it..... There is more detail on the exercises in the book, but some are self evident

Introduction

On these pages are exercises, material for handouts and examples that are designed to support the introduction and use of reflective and experiential learning. The instructions for the use of these materials in within the text, mainly in Chapter 11, with some further references in Chapter 13. Copyright restrictions have been waived, so these may be copied freely for use with learners.

Below the resources and their subject matter are listed with the page number that is their main reference in the text of the book.

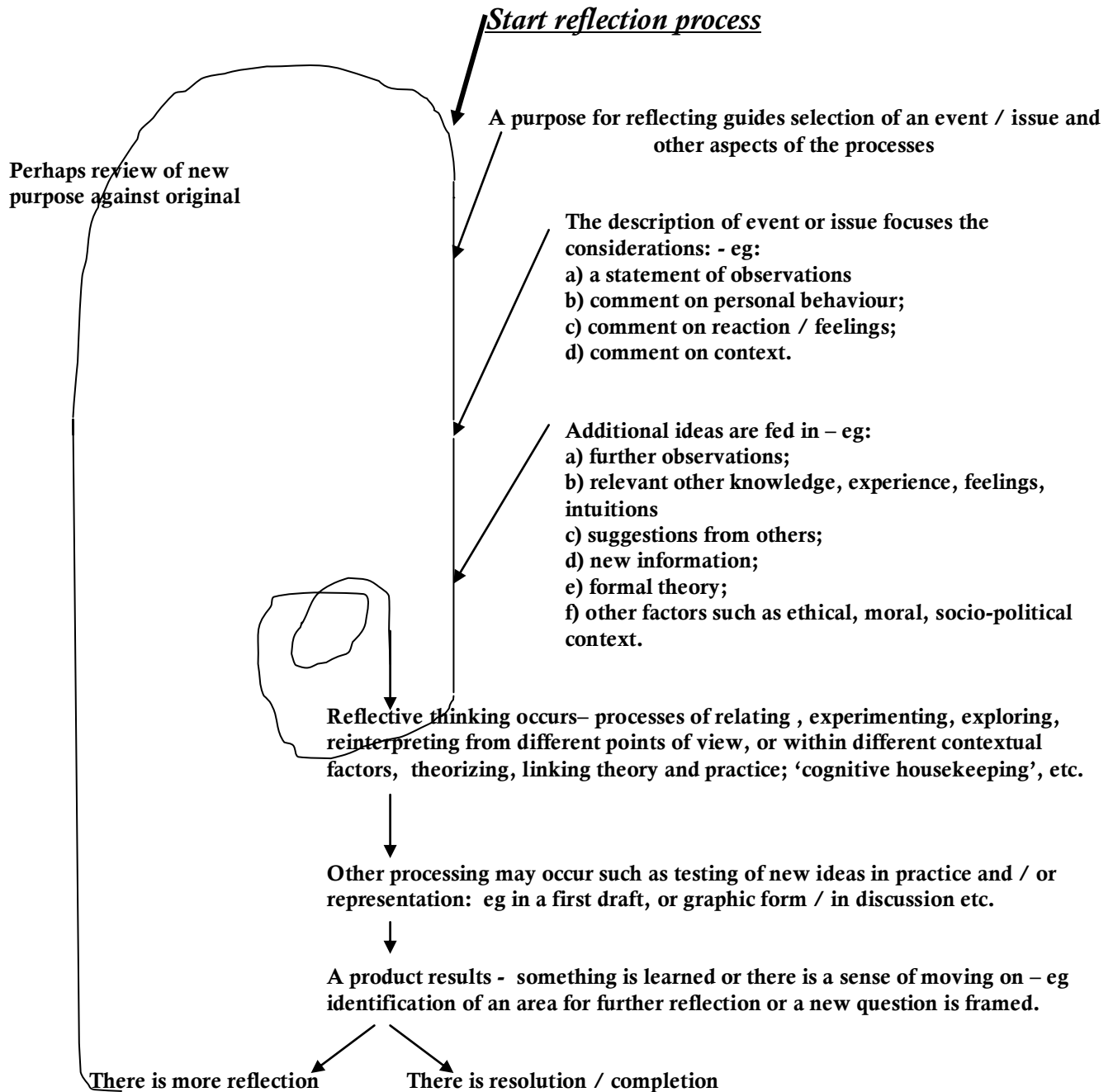
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Resource 1 The processes of writing reflectively: a map of reflective writing



From Moon. (1999a)

Resource 2 Reflective Writing - some initial guidance for students (handout)

Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Introduction – reflection and reflective writing

Reflection lies somewhere around the notion of learning and thinking. We reflect in order to learn something, or we learn as a result of reflecting. Reflective writing is the expression on paper/screen of some of the mental processes of reflection. Other forms of expressing reflection are in speech, in film, in graphic portrayal, music etc. The expression of reflection is not, however, a direct mirror of what happens in the head. It is a representation of that process within the chosen medium - and reflection represented in writing, for example, will be different to that encompassed in a drawing. In other words, in making a representation of reflection, we shape and model the content of our reflection according to many influences. Factors that could shape your reflection into reflective writing might include:

- the reason why you are writing reflectively (personal reasons – eg in a diary or for academic purposes etc)
- whether others are going to see what you have written and who they are (eg no-one else; a tutor who will mark it; a tutor who will not mark it, friends etc.);
- your emotional state at the time of writing, and emotional reaction to what you are writing (eg - a disturbing event that you do not want to think about or something you did well and want to enjoy in the rethinking process);
- related to the above, how safe you feel about the material and anyone seeing it;
- what you know about reflective writing and how able you are to engage in it (see below)

– and so on. It is also worth noting that you will learn not only from the ‘in the head’ reflection but from the process of representing the reflection itself. Also, you will learn different things according to the manner in which you represent your reflection. For example, what you would learn from drawing a picture to represent reflections will differ from what you will learn in writing about the same content. It is a part of the process of writing reflectively to be as aware as possible of the influences that are shaping the writing that you actually do.

What is reflective writing?

We will start from what reflective writing is not. It is not:

- conveyance of information, instruction or argument in a report, essay or ‘recipe’;
- straight-forward description, though there may be descriptive elements;

- a straight-forward decision eg about whether something is right or wrong, good or bad etc.
- simple problem solving like recalling how to get to the nearest station.

In the context of your higher education programme, reflective writing will usually have a purpose (eg you will be writing reflectively about something that you have to do or have done). It will usually involve the sorting out of bits of knowledge, ideas, feelings, awareness of how you are behaving and so on. It could be seen as a melting pot into which you put a number of thoughts, feelings, other forms of awareness, and perhaps new information. In the process of sorting it out in your head, and representing the sortings out on paper, you may either recognise that you have learnt something new or that you need to reflect more with, perhaps further input. Your reflections need to come to some sort of end point, even if that is a statement of what you need to consider next.

It is also worth recognising that reflective writing may be a means of becoming clearer about something. For example, you might use reflective writing to consider the kind of career direction that you might take. Into the 'melting pot' you might then 'put' ideas, information, feelings, other people's perspectives and advice. A metaphor for reflection or its expression in reflective writing in this context is 'cognitive housekeeping' to imply its nature as a sorting out, clarifying process.

From what has been said above, it will be obvious that reflection is not a straight-forward and 'tidy' process itself. When you have to represent the process for someone else to read, you will inevitably tidy it up – but if a tutor is expecting reflective writing, s/he will not be looking for a dry 'single-track' account, or just a conclusion. It is also all right to use the first person – 'I' - in reflective writing.

Let us assume that you are reflecting on a presentation that you have just done in class. We said, above, that reflective writing is not a 'straight-forward' description. You will probably have to describe what you are about to reflect on and perhaps relate it to the purpose for which you are reflecting. But reflection is more than that. You might want to evaluate your performance in the presentation, for example. This may be represented by you questioning yourself, perhaps challenging yourself. You may consider your reactions, and even the manner in which you have initially viewed the situation and written about it. Your writing may recognise that others may have different views of the same event. So with regard to the presentation, you might think about the performances of others – and so on.

Some subject matter for reflective writing

Reflective writing may apply to anything that is relatively complex. You might reflect on:

- how to go about your dissertation topic;
- how well you wrote an assignment;
- experiences gained in your part time work;
- what your essay title means and how to go about writing it;
- how to present some project work;
- how you want to behave differently in some context;
- the way in which your non-work activities relate to the programme that you are on;

- the quality of a relationship with someone (to do with your programme or home or family etc);
- how well you got on in your programme last semester;
- your process in solving a difficult problem (eg in academic work);
- what you need to do to improve your study processes – and anything and everything....

You will often find there to be unexpected rewards in working in this manner. You will find out things that you had not considered, you even find that your academic writing becomes more fluent; you may find that you can solve problems more easily when you have reflected on your processing of similar problems.

The quality of reflective writing

It is worth thinking of the quality of reflective writing as being on a continuum from rather superficial writings that are largely descriptive, to much deeper writings in which the questioning is more profound. Neither is necessarily right or wrong – they are just different. Reflective writing will need be ‘pitched’ according to the purpose for which the task is done. Those who are learning to become counsellors and need to question their motives for the way they work will require to take a much more profound approach, for example, than most others in higher education programmes. The challenge is at least to ‘go beyond’ descriptive writing. The questions below help to give a picture of the difference between descriptive and more profound reflection.

A final note

‘Reflection’ is a word in every-day language but that in some contexts it is a subject of academic study, with many books and papers devoted to it. The material in this paper is derived from three books Moon, J (1999, 1999a and 2003), which provide an introduction to the literature for those who are interested in taking this further.

Moon, J (1999) *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development*, Kogan Page, London

Moon, J (1999a) *Learning Journals: a Handbook for Academics, Students and Professional Development*, Kogan Page, London

Moon, J (2003) This book – title needs to be put in here

Handout developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Resource 3 A Comparison of Reflective Writing and Report or Essay Writing

Undergraduate report / essay writing	Reflective writing
The subject matter is likely to be clearly defined.	The subject matter may be diffuse and ill-structured.
The subject matter is not likely to be personal.	The subject matter may be personal.
The subject matter is likely to be given.	The subject matter may be determined by the writer.
The purpose of this kind of writing is set in advance, usually fairly precisely in a title / topic	There may be purpose, but it is more of the nature of a 'container' or direction, not a precise title that predicts the outcome.
Most of the ideas drawn into an essay / report will be predictable and will be determined by the subject matter	Ideas will be drawn into reflective writing from anywhere that the writer believes to be relevant. What is drawn in will be determined by the sense being forged by the writer
There will be a conclusion	There may be a conclusion in that something has been learnt, or there may be a recognition of further areas for reflection.
Essays / reports are more likely to be 'one off' – finished and handed in.	Reflective writing may be part of a process that takes place over a period of time.
There is likely to be a clear structure of introduction, discussion and conclusion	There is not necessarily a clear structure other than some description at the beginning and some identification of progress made. Structures, such as questions to prompt reflective activity may be given.
The writing style is likely to be relatively objective – probably without use of the first person.	The writing style is likely to be relatively subjective, with involvement of the first person
An essay or report is usually intended to be a representation of learning.	The intention underlying reflective writing is likely to be for the purpose of learning.
An essay / report is likely to be the product of a thinking process, tidily ordered.	Reflective writing usually involves the process of thinking and learning, and it is therefore not necessarily 'tidy' in its ordering.

Material developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Resource 4 Samples of Reflective Writing

An experience in an work experience placement on a Business and Management programme (level 1) – reasonably reflective writing

The placement is in The Black Bull in Grentown. The student, Barry, has been at the placement for only a few days. He has been asked to wait on the tables at lunchtime.

Today the pub was full and many people wanted lunch. I think that Mr Freddings (the manager) was a bit caught out because it had been very quiet the last few days and he had told two of the regular lunchtime staff not to bother to come in until later. I helped out in the kitchen this morning – washing up and doing some cleaning up. Jan, the cook, said that I would be needed to wait at the tables. I was a bit shocked because I had not done this before. I was embarrassed when she took me out and told me what to do in front of some of the customers, but I suppose I did need to know. I was left in a situation in which some customers knew that I am new to this, and others did not. On the whole, I decided to pretend that I had been doing it all my life. Jan told me how to write down what people order very quickly, and told me her type of shorthand which I have been trying to use. On the whole it seems to work, - I did make one or two mistakes when I had to go back to the customers and ask again what they wanted again. One customer was really nice when this happened because she had seen me being taught what to do. Another, a bit later, was quite abrupt. I guess that I had become a little over-confident by then. I backed off and realised that I have a lot to learn even in this simple matter of taking orders and bringing out the food.

A bit later there was a difficult incident that I got involved in. There was a party of three women – I think that they work at the big company that makes furniture up the road. They had booked but were a bit late and, because it was quite busy by then, we had to tell them that they would have to wait for their meal for a bit. They grumbled and then ordered. Then it got really busy and cook could really hardly cope so it made it even longer that they had to wait. She asked me to go and tell them they would have to wait even longer. She told me what to say – to be polite but firm and not to get drawn into stuff about how they had booked – because, as she said, it was their fault because they were late. Anyway, the women treated me as if it was my fault. I fell apart a bit, not sure what to say apart from sorry lots of times. I got away and went back to the kitchen. By then Mr Freddings had come in and he and Jan had decided to offer the women some food that could be served up straight away. I wished they could have thought of it earlier. Again, I had to take out the message. The women were cross and made a huge fuss about not wanting the food on offer, and said how the pub had gone down-hill and it used not to be like that. I just had to stand and listen and wished I had not pretended to have been there all my life. It all made me feel upset especially when, at last, grudgingly they said they would have the food.

I brought out their meals and now they were all smiles because they thought they had got a bargain because what they had been given was more expensive. They were nice to me then and left quite a tip. I think I learnt quite a bit about waiting all in a short time.

These are some of the things that I learnt from today...(she lists 6 topics).....

Reflection on study habits over the last semester – reasonably reflective writing

The student, Kerry, is in level 2 on a Biology programme. She has been asked to reflect on her progress in study in the previous semester by her tutor and to bring the piece she has written to the tutorial. This is part of the personal professional planning initiative in the university.

In the summer at the end of my first year of uni, I travelled all around Europe. I had always wanted to do that and felt that I had to come back before I was ready. I got back to uni two days late and I felt unsettled for a while after because it seemed that everyone had got into ruts of studying before I could. I missed a few lectures in the first two weeks – none of it seemed to have any meaning. I thought about leaving but my parents were wild when I said that that I thought I had better try to settle down.

We had lots of work to do at that stage for the first genetics module. You can't afford to get behind in that and I was behind. I had to go to Dr Spolan and tell him I couldn't do it. He was really helpful which made me feel a lot better. He said he knew several of us would have difficulty and set up a surgery with some of the postgraduate students. Mostly they were good, though sometimes they did not have much idea of just how hard I found it. Somehow they could not always explain. Anyway, I seem to have caught up now and passed the exam.

I think I have difficulty writing essays. I can't seem to organise my ideas in the way that tutors want. I think I have done it and then get comments about there not being proper discussions and conclusions to what I write. I am not sure that anyone has ever told me how to write an essay – you just have to guess. I did buy a study skills book for science students and that helped me because it had examples, even from biology. It also helped me with referencing. I have always been confused about how much you can put down of someone else's work without it being plagiarism. I know we had some rules about plagiarism in the course handbook, but when you are in the middle of an essay, with a really relevant book in front of you, it seems difficult to see how to apply the rules. Can you, for example, put down quite a big chunk of someone else's work if it says exactly what you want to say yourself? It would have a reference put after it of course. I think I need some help on this.

We have multiple choice questions for the first biology methods module. I was not sure how to revise for an exam like that. We ended up making up questions and testing each other on the answers. I did find that I did not seem to need to understand the ideas that were put over in the questions – I thought I could just guess at the kinds of questions and make sure that I had the answers. I did not do all that well in the exam so maybe I need to prepare differently - but I really don't know how to do it. I will need to ask .

Anyway, I think that deciding to stay on at uni was a good idea and as the term goes on, I feel more settled.

Reflection on a skills module – not very reflective writing

Jackie is on a level 1 skills module. She has just given a presentation as part of that module and has been asked to assess how she got on in a reflective manner as part of the assessment of the module.

I have just done a presentation in front of our group. We were asked to choose any subject this time but next time we will be giving a presentation on a topic associated with our subject. I choose to talk about my adventure sailing holiday in Scotland. I was third to go. I was nervous because the last time I gave a presentation was at school and then I knew everyone well. This is a new module so I do not yet know people. There were 6 of us, and the tutor.

I talked about the journey up to Scotland – and how we missed the train and then could not find the boat we were going on. People seemed to be listening. I talked about the first day of sailing. It was windy and I told them how I was a bit scared – then there were two days when we did not go anywhere because it was so rough. We then did get some sailing and went to several islands. There were adders on the islands so we had to wear boots if we walked on the heather. It made me very nervous about going onto the land.

I talked for the six minutes that was required. I fitted in most of what I had to say. I then had to ask if anyone had any questions. There were three questions. Sam asked how old the boat was and I told him that it was built in 1910. Beckie asked where we sailed from and Dr Smythe asked if we had to be the crew and pull ropes. I told him that we were the crew and that over the week I began to learn which ropes did what to the boat.

Then it was over. I think I did the presentation well and people listened. I do not think that I would do anything differently next time.

Handout developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Resource 5 The Park - an exercise in reflective writing

Introduction

This is an account of an incident in a park. It is recounted by ‘Annie’ who was involved in the incident herself. It is written in different versions that demonstrate different levels of reflective writing. At the end of the accounts, there are notes on the criteria for the levels of reflection that each account portrays. You may not be given the notes until you have discussed your responses to the material. It is best to sum up this exercise with the framework for reflective writing – resource 9 to which it is related

The Park (1)

I went through the park the other day. The sun shone sometimes but large clouds floated across the sky in a breeze. It reminded me of a time that I was walking on St David’s Head in Wales – when there was a hard and bright light and anything I looked at was bright. It was really quite hot – so much nicer than the day before, which was rainy. I went over to the children’s playing field. I had not been there for a while and wanted to see the improvements. There were several children there and one, in particular, I noticed, was in too many clothes for the heat. The children were running about and this child became red in the face and began to slow down and then he sat. He must have been about 10. Some of the others called him up again and he got to his feet. He stumbled into the game for a few moments, tripping once or twice. It seemed to me that he had just not got the energy to lift his feet. Eventually he stumbled down and did not get up but he was still moving and he shuffled into a half sitting and half lying position watching the other children and I think he was calling out to them. I don’t know.

Anyway, I had to get on to get to the shop to buy some meat for the chilli that my children had asked for for their party. The twins had invited many friends round for an end-of-term celebration of the beginning of the summer holidays. They might think that they have cause to celebrate but it makes a lot more work for me when they are home. I find that their holiday time makes a lot more work.

It was the next day when the paper came through the door – in it there was a report of a child who had been taken seriously ill in the park the previous day. He was fighting for his life in hospital and they said that the seriousness of the situation was due to the delay before he was brought to hospital. The report commented on the fact that he had been lying unattended for half an hour before someone saw him. By then the other children had gone. It said that that several passers-by might have seen him looking ill and even on the ground and the report went on to ask why passers-by do not take action when they see that something is wrong. The article was headed ‘Why do they ‘Walk on by’? I have been terribly upset since then. James says I should not worry – it is just a headline.

The Park (2)

I went to the park the other day. I was going to the supermarket to get some meat to make the chilli that I had promised the children. They were having one of their end-of-term celebrations with friends. I wonder what drew me to the playground and why I ended up standing and watching those children playing with a rough old football? I am not sure as I don't usually look at other people's children – I just did. Anyway there were a number of kids there. I noticed, in particular, one child who seemed to be very overdressed for the weather. I try now to recall what he looked like - his face was red. He was a boy of around 10 – not unlike Charlie was at that age – maybe that is why I noticed him to start with when he was running around with the others. But then he was beginning to look distressed. I felt uneasy about him – sort of maternal but I did not do anything. What could I have done? I remember thinking, I had little time and the supermarket would get crowded. What a strange way of thinking, in the circumstances!

In retrospect I wish I had acted. I ask myself what stopped me - but I don't know what I might have done at that point. Anyway he sat down, looking absolutely exhausted and as if he had no energy to do anything. A few moments later, the other children called him up to run about again. I felt more uneasy and watched as he got up and tried to run, then fell, ran again and fell and half sat and half lay. Still I did nothing more than look – what was going on with me?

Eventually I went on I tell myself now that it was really important to get to the shops. It was the next day when the paper came through the door that I had a real shock. In the paper there was a report of a child who had been taken seriously ill in the park the previous day. He was fighting for his life in the hospital and the situation was much more serious because there had been such a delay in getting help. The report commented on the fact that he had been lying, unattended, for half an hour or more. At first, I wondered why the other children had not been more responsible. The article went on to say that several passers-by might have seen him playing and looking ill and the report questioned why passers-by do not take action when they see that something is wrong.

The event has affected me for some days but I do not know where to go or whom to tell. I do want to own up to my part in it to someone though.

The Park (3)

The incident happened in Ingle Park and it is very much still on my mind. There was a child playing with others. He looked hot and unfit and kept sitting down but the other children kept on getting him back up and making him play with them. I was on my way to the shop and only watched the children for a while before I walked on. Next day it was reported in the paper that the child had been taken to hospital seriously ill – very seriously ill. The report said that there were several passers-by in the park who had seen the child looking ill and who had done nothing. It was a scathing report about those who do not take action in such situations.

Reading the report, I felt dreadful and it has been very difficult to shift the feelings. I did not stop to see to the child because I told myself that I was on my way to the shops to buy food for a meal that I had to cook for the children's party – what do I mean that *I had to* cook it?. Though I saw that the child was ill, I didn't do anything. It is hard to say what I was really thinking at the time – to what degree I was determined to go on with my day in the way I had planned it (the party really was not that important was it?). Or did I genuinely not think that the boy was ill – but just over-dressed and a bit tired? To what extent did I try to make convenient excuses and to what

extent was my action based on an attempt to really understand the situation? Looking back, I could have cut through my excuses at the time – rather than now.

I did not go over to the child and ask what was wrong but I should have done. I could have talked to the other children - and even got one of the other children to call for help. I am not sure if the help would have been ambulance or doctor at that stage – but it does not matter now. If he had been given help then, he might not be fighting for his life.

It would be helpful to me if I could work out what I was really thinking and why I acted as I did. This event has really shaken me to my roots – more than I would have expected. It made me feel really guilty. I do not usually do wrong, in fact I think of myself as a good person. This event is also making me think about actions in all sorts of areas of my life. It reminds me of some things in the past as when my uncle died – but then again I don't really think that that is relevant - he was going to die anyway. My bad feelings then were due to sheer sadness and some irrational regrets that I did not visit him on the day before. Strangely it also reminds me of how bad I felt when Charlie was ill while we went on that anniversary weekend away. As I think more about Charlie being ill, I recognise that there are commonalities in the situations. I also keep wondering if I knew that boy....

The Park (4)

It happened in Ingle Park and this event is very much still on my mind. It feels significant. There was a child playing with others. He looked hot and unfit and kept sitting down but the other children kept on getting him back up and making him play with them. I was on my way to the shop and only watched the children for a while before I walked on. Next day it was reported in the paper that the child had been taken to hospital seriously ill – very seriously ill. The report said that there were several passers-by in the park who had seen the child looking ill and who had done nothing. It was a scathing report about those who do not take action in such situation.

It was the report initially that made me think more deeply. It kept coming back in my mind and over the next few days - I began to think of the situation in lots of different ways. Initially I considered my urge to get to the shop – regardless of the state of the boy. That was an easy way of excusing myself – to say that I had to get to the shop. Then I began to go through all of the agonising as to whether I could have mis-read the situation and really thought that the boy was simply over-dressed or perhaps play-acting or trying to gain sympathy from me or the others. Could I have believed that the situation was all right? All of that thinking, I now notice, would also have let me off the hook – made it not my fault that I did not take action at the time.

I talked with Tom about my reflections on the event – on the incident, on my thinking about it at the time and then immediately after. He observed that my sense of myself as a 'good person who always lends a helping hand when others need help' was put in some jeopardy by it all. At the time and immediately after, it might have been easier to avoid shaking my view of myself than to admit that I had avoided facing up to the situation and admitting that I had not acted as 'a good person'. With this hindsight, I notice that I can probably find it more easy to admit that I am not always 'a good person' and that I made a mistake in retrospect than immediately after the event. I suspect that this may apply to other situations.

As I think about the situation now, I recall some more of the thoughts – or were they feelings mixed up with thoughts? I remember a sense at the time that this boy looked quite scruffy and reminded me of a child who used to play with Charlie. We did not feel happy during the brief period of their friendship because this boy was known as a bully and we were uneasy either that Charlie would end up being bullied, or that Charlie would learn to bully. Funnily enough we were talking about this boy – I now remember – at the dinner table the night before. The conversation had reminded me of all of the angonising about the children’s friends at the time. The fleeting thought / feeling was possibly something like this:– if this boy is like one I did not feel uncomfortable with – then maybe he deserves to get left in this way. Maybe he was a brother of the original child. I remember social psychology research along the lines of attributing blame to victims to justify their plight. Then it might not have been anything to do with Charlie’s friend.

So I can see how I looked at that event and perhaps interpreted it in a manner that was consistent with my emotional frame of mind at the time. Seeing the same events without that dinner-time conversation might have led me to see the whole thing in an entirely different manner and I might have acted differently. The significance of this whole event is chilling when I realise that my lack of action nearly resulted in his death – and it might have been because of an attitude that was formed years ago in relation to a different situation.

This has all made me think about how we view things. The way I saw this event at the time was quite different to the way I see it now – even this few days later. Writing an account at the time would have been different to the account – or several accounts that I would write now. I cannot know what ‘story’ is ‘true’. The bullying story may be one that I have constructed retrospectively - fabricated. Interestingly I can believe that story completely.

The Park: comments on the quality of reflection

The Park (1)

This piece tells the story. Sometimes it mentions past experiences, sometimes anticipates the future but all in the context of the account of the story.

There might be references to emotional state, but the role of the emotions on action is not explored.

Ideas of others are mentioned but not elaborated or used to investigate the meaning of the events.

The account is written only from one point of view – that of Annie.

Generally ideas are presented in a sequence and are only linked by the story. They are not all relevant or focused

In fact – you could hardly deem this to be reflective at all. It is very descriptive. It could be a reasonably written account of an event that could serve as a basis on which reflection might start, though it hardly signals any material for reflection – other than the last few words

The Park (2)

In this account there is a description of the same events. There is very little addition of ideas from outside the event – reference to attitudes of others, comments.

The account is more than a story though. It is focused on the event as if there is a big question to be asked and answered.

In the questioning there is recognition of the worth of exploring the motives for behaviour – but it does not go very far. In other words, asking the questions makes it more than a descriptive account, but the lack of attempt to respond to the questions means that there is little actual analysis of the events.

Annie is critical of her actions and in her questions, signals this. The questioning of action does mean that Annie is standing back from the event to a small extent. There is a sense that she recognises that this is a significant incident, with learning to be gained – but the reflection does not go sufficiently deep to enable the learning to begin to occur.

The Park (3)

The description is succinct – just sufficient to raise the issues. Extraneous information is not added. It is not a story. The focus is on the attempt to reflect on the event and to learn from it. There is more of a sense of Annie standing back from the event in order to reflect better on her actions and in order to be more effectively critical.

There is more analysis of the situation and an evident understanding that it was not a simple situation – that there might be alternative explanations or actions that could be justified equally effectively.

*The description could be said to be slightly narrow (see *The Park (4)*) as Annie is not acknowledging that there might be other ways of perceiving the situation – other points of view. She does not seem to be recognising that her reflection is affected by her frame of reference at the time or now. It is possible, for example, that her experience with Charlie (last paragraph) – or her question about knowing the boy have influenced the manner in which she reacted. It might not just be a matter of linking up other events, but of going beyond and checking out the possibility that her frame of reference might have been affected by the prior experiences.*

The Park (4) (you may not have been given the fourth part of *The Park*)

The account is succinct and to the point. There is some deep reflection here that is self-critical and questions the basis of the beliefs and values on which the behaviour was based.

There is evidence of standing back from the event, of Annie treating herself as an object acting within the context.

There is also an internal dialogue – a conversation with herself in which she proposes and further reflects on alternative explanations.

She shows evidence of looking at the views of others (Tom) and of considering the alternative point of view, and learning from it.

She recognises the significance of the effect of passage of time on her reflection – eg that her personal frame of reference at the time may have influenced her actions and that a different frame of reference might have led to different results.

She notices that the proximity of other, possibly unrelated events (the dinner-time conversation) have an effect either possibly on her actual behaviour and her subsequent reflection – or possibly on her reflective processes only. She notices that she can be said to be reconstructing the event in retrospect – creating a story around it that may not be 'true'.

She recognises that there may be no conclusion to this situation – but that there are still things to be learnt from it.

She has also been able to reflect on her own process of reflecting (acted metacognitively), recognising that her process influenced the outcome.

Exercise devised by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter,

Resource 6 The Presentation - an exercise in reflective writing

Introduction

This is an account of the experience of giving a presentation. It is written by Marianne who is in her first job after graduating. It is written in three different versions that demonstrate different levels of reflective writing., At the end of the accounts, there are notes on the criteria for the levels of reflection that each account portrays. It is best to relate this material to Resource 9 to which it can be related.

The Presentation (1)

I had to take an agenda item to the weekly team meeting in my third week of working at PIGG PLC. I had to talk about the project that I am on (creating a new database for the management information system). I had done a presentation before and then I relied on my acting skills. Despite the acting, I spent quite a bit of time preparing it in the way that I have seen others make similar presentations.

The presentation at the last team meeting, given by my colleague, went well – she used Power Point and I decided to use it. I decided that a good presentation comes from good planning and having all the figures that anyone might request so I spent a long time in the preparation and I went in feeling confident.

However, I became nervous when I realised they were all waiting for me to speak and my nerves made my voice wobble. I did not know how to stop it. Early on, I noticed that people seemed not to understand what I was saying despite the Power Point. Using Power Point meant that people received my presentation both through what I was saying and what I had prepared on the slides. In a way that meant they got it twice but I noticed that Mrs Shaw (my boss) repeated bits of what I had said several times and once or twice answered questions for me. This made me feel uncomfortable. I felt it was quite patronising and I was upset. Later my colleagues said that she always does it. I was disappointed that my presentation did not seem to have gone well.

I thought about the presentation for several days and then talked with Mrs Shaw about the presentation (there was no-one else). She gave me a list of points for improvement next time. They included:

- putting less on Power Point;
- talking more slowly;
- calming myself down in some way.

I also have to write down the figures in a different way so that they can be understood better. She suggested that I should do a presentation to several of the team sometime next week so that I can improve my performance.

The Presentation (2)

I had to take an agenda item to the weekly team meeting in my third week of working at PIGG PLC. I had to talk about the project that I am on. I am creating a new database for the management information system. I had given a presentation before and that time I relied on my acting skills. I did realise that there were considerable differences between then and now, particularly in the situation (it was only fellow students and my tutor before). I was confident but I did spend quite a bit of time preparing. Because everyone else here uses Power Point, I felt I had better use it – though I realised that it was not for the best reasons. I also prepared lots of figures so that I could answer questions. I thought, at that stage, that any questions would involve requests for data. When I think back on the preparation that I did, I realise that I was desperately trying to prove that I could make a presentation as well as my colleague, who did the last one. I wanted to impress everyone. I had not realised there was so much to learn about presenting, and how much I needed to know about Power Point to use it properly.

When I set up the presentation in the meeting I tried to be calm but it did not work out. Early on the Power Point went wrong and I began to panic. Trying to pretend that I was cool and confident made the situation worse because I did not admit my difficulties and ask for help. The more I spoke, the more my voice went wobbly. I realised, from the kinds of questions that the others asked, that they did not understand what I was saying. They were asking for clarification – not the figures. I felt worse when Mrs Shaw, my boss, started to answer questions for me. I felt flustered and even less able to cope.

As a result of this poor presentation, my self esteem is low at work now. I had thought I was doing all right in the company. After a few days, I went to see Mrs Shaw and we talked it over. I still feel that her interventions did not help me. Interestingly several of my colleagues commented that she always does that. It was probably her behaviour, more than anything else, that damaged my poise. Partly through talking over the presentation and the things that went wrong (but not, of course, her interventions), I can see several areas that I could get better. I need to know more about using Power Point – and to practice with it. I recognise, also, that my old acting skills might have given me initial confidence, but I needed more than a clear voice, especially when I lost my way with Power Point. Relying on a mass of figures was not right either. It was not figures they wanted. In retrospect, I could have put the figures on a handout. I am hoping to have a chance to try with a presentation, practicing with some of the team.

The Presentation (3)

I am writing this back in my office. It all happened 2 days ago.

Three weeks after I started at PIGG PLC had to take an agenda item to the team meeting. I was required to report on my progress in the project on which I am working. I am developing a new database for the management information system of the company. I was immediately worried. I was scared about not saying the right things and not being able to answer questions properly. I did a presentation in my course at university and felt the same about it initially. I was thinking then, like this time, I could use my acting skills. Both times that was helpful in maintaining my confidence at first, at least. Though the fact that I was all right last time through the whole presentation may not have helped me this time!

I decided to use Power Point. I was not very easy about its use because I have seen it go wrong so often. However, I have not seen anyone else give a presentation here without using it - and learning to use Power Point would be valuable. I was not sure, when it came to the session, whether I really knew enough about running Power Point. (How do you know when you know enough about something? – dummy runs, I suppose, but I couldn't get the laptop when I wanted it).

When it came to the presentation, I really wanted to do it well – as well as the presentations were done the week before. Maybe I wanted too much to do well. Previous presentations have been interesting, informative and clear and I thought the handouts from them were good (I noticed that the best gave enough but not too much information).

In the event, the session was a disaster and has left me feeling uncomfortable in my work and I even worry about it at home. I need to think about why a simple presentation could have such an effect on me. The Power Point went wrong (I think I clicked on the wrong thing). My efforts to be calm and 'cool' failed and my voice went wobbly – that was, anyway, how it felt to me. My colleague actually said afterwards that I looked quite calm despite what I was feeling (I am not sure whether she meant it or was trying to help me). When I think back to that moment, if I had thought that I still looked calm (despite what I felt), I could have regained the situation. As it was, it went from bad to worse and I know that my state became obvious because Mrs Shaw, my boss, began to answer the questions that people were asking for me.

I am thinking about the awful presentation again – it was this time last week. I am reading what I wrote earlier about it. Now I return to it, I do have a slightly different perspective. I think that it was not as bad as it felt at the time. Several of my colleagues told me afterwards that Mrs Shaw always steps in to answer questions like that and they commented that I handled her intrusion well. That is interesting. I need to do some thinking about how to act next time to prevent this interruption from happening or to deal with the situation when she starts*. I might look in the library for that book on assertiveness.

I have talked to Mrs Shaw now too. I notice that my confidence in her is not all that great while I am still feeling a bit cross. However, I am feeling more positive generally and I can begin to analyse what I could do better in the presentation. It is interesting to see the change in my attitude after a week. I need to think from the beginning about the process of giving a good presentation.. I am not sure how helpful was my reliance on my acting skills*. Acting helped my voice to be stronger and better paced, but I was not just trying to put over someone else's lines but my own and I needed to be able to discuss matters in greater depth rather than just give the line*.

I probably will use Power Point again. I have had a look in the manual and it suggests that you treat it as a tool – not let it dominate and not use it as a means of presenting myself. That is what I think I was doing. I need not only to know how to use it, but I need to feel sufficiently confident in its use so I can retrieve the situation when things go wrong. That means understanding more than just the sequence of actions*.

As I am writing this, I am noticing how useful it is to go back over things I have written about before. I seem to be able to see the situation differently. The first time I wrote this, I felt that the presentation was dreadful and that I could not have done it differently. Then later I realised that

there were things I did not know at the time (eg about Mrs Shaw and her habit of interrupting). I also recognise some of the areas in which I went wrong. At the time I could not see that. It was as if my low self esteem got in the way. Knowing where I went wrong, and admitting the errors to myself gives me a chance to improve next time – and perhaps to help Mrs Shaw to improve in her behaviour towards us!

*I have asterisked the points that I need to address in order to improve.

Features of the accounts that are indicative of different levels of reflection

The Presentation (1)

This account is descriptive and it contains little reflection.

- *The account describes what happened, sometimes mentioning past experiences, sometimes anticipating the future – but all in the context of an account of the event.*
- *There are some references to Marianne's emotional reactions, but she has not explored how the reactions relate to her behaviour.*
- *Ideas are taken on without questioning them or considering them in depth.*
- *The account is written only from Marianne's point of view.*
- *External information is mentioned but its impact on behaviour is not subject to consideration.*
- *Generally one point is made at a time and ideas are not linked.*

The Presentation (2)

An account showing evidence of some reflection.

- *There is description of the event, but where there are external ideas or information, the material is subjected to consideration and deliberation.*
- *The account shows some analysis.*
- *There is recognition of the worth of exploring motives for behaviour*
- *There is willingness to be critical of action.*
- *Relevant and helpful detail is explored where it has value.*
- *There is recognition of the overall effect of the event on self – in other words, there is some 'standing back' from the event.*

The account is written at one point in time. It does not, therefore, demonstrate the recognition that views can change with time and more reflection. In other words the account does not indicate a recognition that frames of reference affect the manner in which we reflect at a given time.

The Presentation (3) (You may not yet have been given the third part of The Presentation)

This account shows quite deep reflection, and it does incorporate a recognition that the frame of reference with which an event is viewed can change

- *Self questioning is evident (an 'internal dialogue' is set up at times) deliberating between different views of her own behaviour (different views of her own and others).*
- *Marianne takes into account the views and motives of others and considers these against her own.*
- *She recognises how prior experience, thoughts (own and other's) interact with the production of her own behaviour.*
- *There is clear evidence of standing back from an event.*
- *She helps herself to learn from the experience by splitting off the reflective processes from the points she wants to learn (by asterisk system).*
- *There is recognition that the personal frame of reference can change according to the emotional state in which it is written, the acquisition of new information, the review of ideas and the effect of time passing.*

Exercise developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Resource 7 Questions to Support Reflective Writing

It can be useful to prompt the description of the subject matter of reflection in terms of a question such as:

- ◆ What is the issue / event / topic / plan / project / task / period of time etc that is to be the subject matter of the reflection?

Questions to facilitate reflection

- ◆ Out of the description, what is the issue / are the issues that could be addressed in reflective writing? These issues can be raised within the description or separately. They are like bits of velcro to which you can attach the reflective writing.
- ◆ Is there anything else you need to consider at the moment in terms of the context?
- ◆ What is the nature of the significance of this issue to you?
- ◆ How do you feel about it?
- ◆ How do your feelings relate to any action?
- ◆ Was it good / bad – and what are the implications?
- ◆ What do you need to do?
- ◆ What other information do you need (ideas, knowledge, opinion etc)?
- ◆ Are there previous instances of this event, issue arising that will help you to think more/ differently about it?
- ◆ Are there others, or the views of others who are relevant to this matter – and in what way?

Questions that are likely to be helpful in prompting more profound reflection

- ◆ Has the nature of your description of the issue / event (etc) influenced the manner in which you have gone about the reflective writing?
- ◆ Is there relevant formal theory that you need to apply?
- ◆ How do your motives for and the context of the reflective writing affect the manner in which you have gone about the task?

- ◆ In what way might have you tackled the task differently if the context was not one of formal education (perhaps with assessment)?
- ◆ Is there another point of view that you could explore – are there alternative interpretations to consider?
- ◆ Are others seeing this issue from different points of view that may be helpful to you to explore?
- ◆ Does this issue relate to other contexts – reflection on which may be helpful?
- ◆ If you ‘step back’ from this issue, how does it look different?
- ◆ How do you judge your ability to reflect on this matter ?
- ◆ Do you notice that your feelings about it have changed over time – or in the course of writing this – suggesting that your own frame of reference has changed?
- ◆ Are there ethical / moral / wider social issues that you would want to explore?

Material developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Resource 8 Dialogues – an exercise to expand reflective thinking and writing

This is a dialogue between Toni and a teacher, Mr Jaques, who inspired her and was helpful at school. Toni is using this exercise in the context of a learning journal in a Careers and Personal Development Planning module in her biology degree programme. She is trying to make up her mind what group of modules to choose for her final year studies. She seeks advice from a teacher who she remembers as being very helpful at school. She writes what she would ask and then ‘listens’ (in imagination) for the response and the continuation of the conversation.

Toni – Hello Mr Jaques, I haven’t seen you for a long time – since I left school. You were really helpful to me at school. You always seemed to give me good advice, and I remember when you went through that essay and showed me how I could make it a lot better. I was always better at writing essays after that time. I seemed to understand what to do.

Mr Jaques – Hello Toni, how are you getting on – is it some more help that you want? How can I help?

Toni – Yes I need some help. I don’t know what modules to take next year. I have to make a choice very soon. I am getting quite worried about it. I don’t know how to make a choice.

Mr Jaques – OK, what are the choices?

Toni – I have a choice between going down the road of molecular biology modules with lots of lab work and the modules of ecology and the kind of field work types of modules.

Mr Jaques – Yes, I can see that there is quite a choice to make. I suppose the important question now is what you want to do when you have left university. You may want to make a career in biology and in that case the kinds of experience you have at this stage of your degree may be pretty influential in what you do.

Toni – That’s what they said at careers a while ago. I have to say that I have been mainly thinking about what I want to do while I am here. It’s quite hard to think about the future – though everyone keeps saying we should. I feel I have only just really settled here!

Mr Jaques – So what is the bigger picture? What do you see yourself doing?

Toni – Well I don’t know really – I did think that I might teach – and then I felt that I did not want to be shut in with lots of kids all day and wanted to work more with adults. I suppose I do like being outside quite a bit.

Mr Jaques – Do you see yourself in a lab?

Toni – Well I like it sometimes – that is why the choice is so hard. I like being precise and working towards a measured result in an experiment – but that is only sometimes.

Mr Jaques – There are jobs where you might spend quite a bit of time in the field, but still need lab skills. Do you really have to go in one way or the other. Could you do some ecology modules and some that would equip you with lab skills. Then you might look for a job that combined the two – for example, agriculture or some aspects of ecology where lab work is relevant. It seems like a hard choice to make to go purely in one direction or the other at present.

Toni – Well yes. You make me think that I should get some more information on careers and see what is possible that combines the two areas. I think you are right that I should be able to use both skills.

Material developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Resource 9 A Framework for Reflective Writing

Descriptive Writing

This account is descriptive and it contains little reflection. It may tell a story but from one point of view at a time and generally one point at a time is made. Ideas tend to be linked by the sequence of the account / story rather than by meaning. The account describes what happened, sometimes mentioning past experiences, sometimes anticipating the future – but all in the context of an account of the event.

There may be references to emotional reactions but they are not explored and not related to behaviour.

The account may relate to ideas or external information, but these are not considered or questioned and the possible impact on behaviour or the meaning of events is not mentioned.

There is little attempt to focus on particular issues. Most points are made with similar weight.

The writing could hardly be deemed to be reflective at all. It could be a reasonably written account of an event that would serve as a basis on which reflection might start, though a good description that precedes reflective accounts will tend to be more focused and to signal points and issues for further reflection.

Descriptive account with some reflection

This is a descriptive account that signals points for reflection while not actually showing much reflection.

The basic account is descriptive in the manner of description above. There is little addition of ideas from outside the event, reference to alternative viewpoints or attitudes to others, comment and so on. However, the account is more than just a story. It is focused on the event as if there is a big question or there are questions to be asked and answered. Points on which reflection could occur are signalled.

There is recognition of the worth of further exploring but it does not go very far. In other words, asking the questions makes it more than a descriptive account, but the lack of attempt to respond to the questions means that there is little actual analysis of the events.

The questioning does begin to suggest a 'standing back from the event' in (usually) isolated areas of the account.

The account may mention emotional reactions, or be influenced by emotion. Any influence may be noted, and possibly questioned.

There is a sense of recognition this is an incident from which learning can be gained, – but the reflection does not go sufficiently deep to enable the learning to begin to occur.

Reflective writing (1)

There is description but it is focused with particular aspects accentuated for reflective comment. There may be a sense that the material is being mulled around. It is no longer a straight-forward account of an event, but it is definitely reflective.

There is evidence of external ideas or information and where this occurs, the material is subjected to reflection.

The account shows some analysis and there is recognition of the worth of exploring motives or reasons for behaviour

Where relevant, there is willingness to be critical of the action of self or others. There is likely to be some self questioning and willingness also to recognise the overall effect of the event on self. In other words, there is some 'standing back' from the event.

There is recognition of any emotional content, a questioning of its role and influence and an attempt to consider its significance in shaping the views presented.

There may be recognition that things might look different from other perspectives, that views can change with time or the emotional state. The existence of several alternative points of view may be acknowledged but not analysed.

In other words, in a relatively limited way the account may recognise that frames of reference affect the manner in which we reflect at a given time but it does not deal with this in a way that links it effectively to issues about the quality of personal judgement.

Reflective writing (2)

Description now only serves the process of reflection, covering the issues for reflection and noting their context. There is clear evidence of standing back from an event and there is mulling over and internal dialogue.

The account shows deep reflection, and it incorporates a recognition that the frame of reference with which an event is viewed can change.

A metacognitive stance is taken (ie critical awareness of one's own processes of mental functioning – including reflection).

The account probably recognises that events exist in a historical or social context that may be influential on a person's reaction to them. In other words, multiple perspectives are noted.

Self questioning is evident (an 'internal dialogue' is set up at times) deliberating between different views of personal behaviour and that of others).

The view and motives of others are taken into account and considered against those of the writer.

There is recognition of the role of emotion in shaping the ideas and recognition of the manner in which different emotional influences can frame the account in different ways.

There is recognition that prior experience, thoughts (own and other's) interact with the production of current behaviour.

There is observation that there is learning to be gained from the experience and points for learning are noted.

There is recognition that the personal frame of reference can change according to the emotional state in which it is written, the acquisition of new information, the review of ideas and the effect of time passing.

Material developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Resource 10 The Dance Lesson - an exercise in reflective writing

Introduction

These reflective accounts concern a lesson in dance. The teacher, Hanna, is working with Year 8 pupils in the first lesson of the day. The lesson is the fourth in a five-lesson unit of work based on street dance style. She has found that the children have been quite slow to learn. There are two statemented children in the class, Ben and Jade. She has written other notes about her concerns about working with mixed ability groups and enabling the learning of all of the children in the class. Jade and Ben have given rise to some difficulties in her teaching in previous classes, and the situation bothers her. This exercise should be related to Resource 9

A dance lesson (1)

When I took the register today, I saw that there were several absences. This would cause difficulties since the pupils had been creating their dance in pairs. This would mean that those on their own would need to pair up and create a new duet, rapidly learning to co-operate with each other. Generally they were not a group of quick learners, and some had shown that they had particular difficulties in working together. I realised then that I could be in for some difficulties myself and wished I had planned better.

The two statemented pupils – Ben and Jade worried me a bit as I could see that they were both distracted and lively this morning. As we started to warm up, a learning support assistant came in. She acknowledged me briefly and then turned her attention to Jade.

I had decided to do simple fun activities for the warm up – based on walking and travelling at different speeds. It meant that the pupils had to concentrate in order to vary the direction and speed of travel in response to my instructions. It all went well with everyone involved.

I developed the warm-up, repeating exercises and phrases that we had performed in previous lessons. Most pupils joined in and seemed to enjoy the simple repetitive patterns of movement but I noticed that Ben and Jade were already having problems, though a few moments later, to my relief, I noticed that Jade was beginning to settle down and had started to fall in with the patterns of the movements quite nicely. Ben, however, could not copy the movements and his concentration began to wander. Then he started to distract others. I focussed my attention on him and praised him when he did things well. The LSA moved across to Ben, leaving Jade. She talked to him and gave him some encouragement but I could see that he was not able to listen to her.

By now, the rest of the class had picked up the repetitive movements. The lesson was, on the whole, going quite well at this stage. I introduced a more challenging phase by adding two new actions to the sequence and they danced in time to the music. By now Ben had really lost concentration and was running around in the space among the dancers. It was only 10 minutes into the lesson and his very public display of off-task behaviour could potentially throw

everything off course again. Eventually, after just catching my eye, the LSA removed Ben from the room. I was not completely easy with this, but I do not know what else I might have done. I learnt afterwards from another colleague that he had been given sanctions which included a letter home to inform his parents of his poor behaviour. I felt guilty but it was a very difficult situation. I have been trying to think how it could have been different.

A dance lesson (2)

I want to consider a situation that arose in a potentially unsettled mixed ability class where I was teaching dance. The focus of the situation was Ben, one of two statemented pupils. The situation left me feeling guilty and inadequate as a teacher.

I began the lesson with slightly uneasy feelings. I noticed that there were several absences. The pupils had been creating their dance in pairs and with some of the partners absent, they would have to co-operate in new pairings. Co-operation was a problem for some. The children are mixed in their abilities and I had already been thinking that I need to develop strategies both to help individuals when they work outside their friendship groups and also where they need to create new material quickly. I began the lesson with these concerns and thoughts in mind.

I had started the warm up when the learning support assistant came in to work with Jade, the other statemented pupil. It might have been helpful if she had come in just a few minutes before. Generally, however, things went well in the warm-up. I felt that I had got that right with simple and fun activities and because the skill level was low, everyone could join in and enjoy it. It really engaged them and this good start probably helped later when things got distracting.

The next stage also went well for most of the class. It was a development of the warm up using exercises and phrases that had been mastered in previous lessons. Although I was a bit anxious about the lesson, fortunately I was patient and at their own pace nearly all of the class joined in. This too was a useful strategy. It was Jade and Ben who were having problems, though with the help of the LSA, Jade was beginning to settle. Ben was not. He found it difficult to copy the movements, seemed briefly to get frustrated, and then began to distract others, eventually running around in the spaces between the other pupils. The LSA left Jade and went to help him, while I tried as well as I could, to carry on the class, moving into more challenging work.

Ben's behaviour did not improve and the LSA removed him from the room. Later I was informed that he had been given sanctions, including a letter to his parents about his poor behaviour.

I felt I had failed with this situation. I wanted to manage the behaviour of all of the children. There are several things that might have contributed to the situation. I started the class with a sense that I was not on top of the situation because of the new pairings – though in the end, I felt that things might have actually gone better because of that (I could look at this matter another time). I certainly did not need to worry about it. Also the LSA came in late. She probably would not have seen that as a problem but for me it was. There is something about the three-way relationship – Ben, the LSA and me – and, in this situation, the LSA's work with Jade. Perhaps the LSA should have worked more with Ben from the start. Who made the decisions there and who should make them?

There is also something about the situation of dance being public – it is so obvious when pupils are off task. Then there is Ben and his behaviour. I wonder how he felt about it all? Did he want to distract others?. Was he really behaving ‘poorly’ - was his action deliberate, warranting sanctions or maybe just an overflow of energy?

I know a bit about Ben and his inability to hold concentration for more than a few minutes, but dance could be of help to him as a means of using his energy in a productive manner – that is if he could be enabled to stay engaged with the activity. What could I have done better?

I want to involve all of the pupils.

A dance lesson (3)

I want to reflect on the dance lesson with year 8, and in particular on the situation that arose with Ben, though I think that there are wider issues to be considered than just Ben. The situation left me feeling guilty and inadequate as a teacher.

The class were doing some work in pairs. I felt uneasy that day because a number of children were absent and some would have to learn to co-operate with new partners who were not necessarily their choice. It is a mixed ability class, not always quick to learn or necessarily to be able to co-operate. I had already recognised the need to develop strategies:

- to help individuals to work outside their friendship groups;
- to create new material quickly

Jade and Ben are statemented. As we started to warm up, a learning support assistant came in, specifically to help Jade.

The warm up of simple fun activities seemed to engage all of the class and I was pleased with that. Then I added some of the repetitive exercises that we had done in previous classes. This stage also went well for most of the class. Although I was a bit anxious about the lesson, I kept on top of the feelings. I was patient and at their own pace nearly all of the class joined in. This too was a useful strategy. Managing to get most of the class engaged and listening to the music is really important for this group and I must not lose this point in relation to what then happened. At this stage, Jade and Ben were having problems, though with the help of the LSA, Jade was beginning to settle.

Ben found it difficult to copy the movements, seemed to get frustrated, and then began to distract others. By the time we were 10 minutes into the class, he was running around in the spaces between the other pupils – totally off task. The LSA left Jade and went to help him. I moved into more challenging work in order to keep the other children engaged and active.

Eventually, the LSA removed Ben from the room. I later learned that his parents were sent a note about his poor behaviour and there were other sanctions.

I see myself as having failed to prevent this situation and I suspect that none of us gained from it. I notice that my feelings were made worse by the fact that I felt I had failed in front of the LSA. She may have felt that she had failed in front of me. (These feelings would be better discussed). The children in the class had had their learning disrupted.

I think about being in Ben's shoes. How would he have seen it? Dance – a chance to have some space and be creative –it started with a bit of fun – so he might have felt that he could enjoy the fun. Ben would find it hard to move from what he would construe as pure 'fun' to a more serious activity. It is possible that the 'fun' works well for children who can change their focus of attention easily – but not for some like Ben who cannot quickly shift especially in the direction of more serious work. Also the other children often laugh at him when he clowns – and since he does not have many friends, such attention from the others is rewarding. They did not actually laugh this time, I think because the music and repetitive movement took up their attention - but he may have thought that they would have done. I suppose that he might have been all right if he was guided by the LSA from the start – but it was Jade who got the attention this time and he has to learn to manage without one to one attention sometimes.

Should I see Ben as a problem on his own or as an issue in the class as a whole including the LSA? I realise that we are only an element in an even larger situation when I consider what happened to Ben when he had been removed from the class. His behaviour was construed as poor behaviour and sanctions were levied. I don't imagine that his parents were helped by receiving another letter about his poor behaviour – they know about it only too well. The sanctions will probably mean that I will have even more difficulties with Ben next time. At least I should have been involved in discussions about his behaviour in my class. I must mention this to the LSA and raise it as a more general issue when we discuss the role of LSA's next time. It is something about getting everything pulling in the same direction.

I did feel particularly uneasy that day. I wonder if it was because I was tired from the late night. Things like this certainly are more of a burden when I feel tired. It is worth remembering that things might have looked different if I had felt fresh.

Anyway, it is worth trying to learn something from this situation and having a strategy better developed for when it happens next time. If I go further with the theme of 'getting everyone pulling in the same direction'How could this be achieved?

- It would have been helpful if I had shared my concerns about the group with the LSA to start with;
- It would have been helpful to me if she had come in at the beginning of the class, and we could have both been forearmed with some tactics to work with Ben and Jade
- I need to include in my planning strategies to deal with partner work when one person is away
- Praise motivates those who are working well, I must remember to use that as a teaching strategy
- There is something about the need for me to be involved in the discussion about repercussions of Ben's behaviour. They have consequences for my later dealings with Ben;
- I have concerns about the actual kinds of sanctions levied. I need to follow this up

Exercise developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Resource 11 Strategies for Enhancing Learning from Everyday Experience

This is an elaborated and rewritten version of material presented in Marsick and Watkins (1990:336 - 7) as 'Strategies for enhancing informal and incidental learning'

1. Investigate metaphors and images

Our images and metaphors represent the theories on which we base our thinking and action. They act as an ordering and reference system. To understand how our processing of information works towards development of our personal systems of knowledge, we need to understand this system and the contents of it. Access to this understanding is either through reflection or by more direct observation of our actions and reactions in relation to events and objects. With greater understanding of the image /metaphor system that we use, we can reject it, modify it or retain it with greater understanding.

2. Recognise assumptions that we have made about people or situations.

We have to make rapid assumptions about people and situations in order to manage in busy and everyday lives. These assumptions might not always be accurate but it is often easier to retain the original view despite evidence that it is not or is no longer appropriate. If, for example, a person is said to be difficult to get on with, to avoid cognitive dissonance, we may make assumptions about that person to justify the rumour, rather than judge her afresh. It is comfortable to have evidence that points a consistent direction. These assumptions can be the subject of reflection. We thus reframe our view.

3. Question and challenge familiar situations

When a situation is new or unfamiliar, we are more able to question and challenge it in order to understand it. Familiar situations are apt to evoke automatic judgements and unconsidered responses. A means of reframing assumptions and reactions is to see situations as if they are unfamiliar and to problematise them, asking naïve questions. One method of doing this is to describe the situation as if one were seeing it for the first time. It may be helpful to write about it in the present tense. Leave the writing for a day or two and then return to it and write down as many questions about it as you can think of (brainstorm for questions), not trying to answer them straight away – leaving it again for a day or two more. Another method is to work with another person who acts as a facilitator. You describe the event while the other simply listens. The other then asks questions, particularly naïve and simple questions. These two methods may be combined – so that the facilitator reads a written account and prepares questions that may be written or oral.

4. Create a situation for review and reflection

Counselling and therapy are means of reviewing and reflecting on present and past events and their relationship to the future. People tend only to 'go into' therapy and counselling from a state of being down or negative, rather than use such deliberate tactics in order to reconsider and rethink work or home events that are apparently normal. Mentoring, self help groups or learning groups can be situations for the opportunities to learn to see things in a different and transformative manner.

5. Listen to the views of others

There is often a tendency to assume that others see events, people and organisations in the same way as we do. Engineering situations in which people can share attitudes enables the possibility of recognising that the range of view that can exist. Discussion of perceptions of an event that has experienced by several people can be a helpful manner of eliciting such sharing. A start for this work can be that everyone develops a concept map (Ch11)

6. Take a wider view

There is a tendency to focus on the day to day events. It is possible to view events at different levels of magnification. There is a tendency in thinking of an event easily to become caught up in the detail of small points. We could see this form of viewing as increased magnification. What we manage less well, is to see events in longer term contexts. Without this perspective, we cannot see the patterns and cycles of events, or monitor the flow of feelings. A method of working with this in reflective mode is to conceive of periods of time in which life (emotions / events / relationships – the personal aspects of life) have felt as if there is a common thread (eg a week, a month). Think back over that time and write / draw or in other ways, depict the characteristics of that period. Monitor every-so-often whether a period continues or there is a new period (based on Progoff, 1975).

Resource 12 An Exercise on Judgement

You should set a task such as ‘reflect on how you would see these two people’. It is an exercise to show just how complicated reflection is!!

There were two lovers in towns that were separated by a large hot desert. One was called Victoria and the other, Albert. Though they e-mailed each other passionately, it was really Victoria who wanted to cross the desert to Albert - but the desert was too dry and hot for her to walk. One of her neighbours, Fred had an ancient Land Rover and she asked him to take her over. He said he would do it if she gave him the gold bracelet that only recently had been sent to her by Albert. She refused because she knew Albert would be devastated if she was not wearing the bracelet and besides it had belonged to his mother who was now dead. It could not be replaced. So she went to her so called friend Archibald and explained the situation but he said he could not or would not help. She was now desperate and went back to Fred and very sadly gave him her bracelet, which he took once he had driven her over the desert and delivered her to Albert's house.

Victoria then had to explain the loss of the bracelet to Albert. Albert responded with fury, telling her she could have no place in his life. In desperation she called one of his friends, George, on her mobile. George was deeply saddened at the situation and marched straight round to Albert's house and beat him up. Victoria watched this process with delight.

Exercise written by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter (The exercise is based on a similar exercise that was unreferenced).

Resource 13 Footprints

Rationale

This exercise is modified from the 'Steppingstones' exercise of Progoff (1975). The principle purpose of the exercise is to 'jog' or as Progoff says 'loosen' memory about a particular topic. Any topic at all can be the subject matter of it – for example, it can enable the exploration by individuals and groups of experiences such as 'being a learner' or the development of capacities such as 'skills' and so on.

The exercise is particularly valuable for:

- exploring experiences or experiences of something (such as 'learning'; feeling 'cared for' or 'teaching'). The topic might be the subject of current or future work for example in learning journals;
- expanding personal perspectives on some topic or issue;
- finding subject matter for story writing – for creative writing or for professional development or other academic purposes
- the generation of subject matter for personal skills exercises such as the giving of presentations;
- enabling the sharing of ideas in a group about a specific topic;
- group development. For shy or uninvolved participants in a group it provides a situation in which everyone will have a turn to make an oral contribution from written notes about familiar material in a light and usually creative atmosphere.

It is an enjoyable and usually enlightening exercise that tends to generate good feeling and energy. It can work to energise a group after lunch, for example. It can be run many times even on the same topic because beyond the obvious first few memories that a person retrieves on a topic, different memories will emerge on different occasions. This is an interesting aspect of the exploration involved.

The equipment needed is a paper and pen each. To do this exercise properly needs around 40 minutes and it can be done with large numbers with space enough to form small (self managed) groups and to be able to hear each other speak within those groups.

The exercise

After the introduction of the topic to be explored, the first part of the exercise is the individual writing of a number of lists each of about seven items. Participants are asked to list around seven memories of the chosen topic in chronological order – so they are asked to start with the earliest memory and then to come forward towards their present age in sequence. They are asked to write a phrase, or a few words on the paper that will enable them to recall the memory later (eg 'The time when I learnt to ride a bike'). They should be reassured that they will not be asked to reveal to anyone anything that they do not want to say.

While the lists are being written, it is likely that memories will occur that are previous in sequence to where participants have reached in their current list and they are told to hold onto that memory for the next list. In this way, over a period of ten to fifteen minutes, participants write a series of lists.

Sometimes people will begin to talk about their memories before or as they write them. They should be dissuaded from talking. A calm and meditative atmosphere works best. It is very rewarding at this stage of the exercise. The lively part of the exercise is for the second part of sharing memories.

The list-writing is stopped after what seems to be a reasonable period as judged from watching the behaviour of the participants. Nearly all should have written at least two lists. Participants are then asked to form into groups of around six. Within the group and in turn each participant shares briefly the details of one of her memories from the lists written. There is no need to be chronological – the memory can drawn be from any time. Depending on circumstances, it can be wise to ask participants to limit their sharing to a set time such as 4 minutes each to start with. This guards against ‘longwindedness’. Once each member of the group has shared one memory, there might be a second round – and more.

This stage of the exercise tends to involve good listening, and often merriment as diverse memories are shared. The rationale for this element of the exercise is that as the memories of others are unearthed, they will stimulate new memories in each individual, in this way, generating many more memories than would have been achieved in the first stage of the exercise. The new memories may be quite unexpected (and sometimes a quick private note may be made of them).

After a period of time of sharing memories, the group is asked to disperse again and individuals are asked to return to their lists and again put the new memories that have emerged as a result of the sharing, into lists, as before. Getting groups to break up at this stage can be difficult.

The outcome of this exercise for each individual will be a series of recollections about the topic chosen. Some may be memories that have not been considered for a long time. Depending on the purpose of the exercise, one of the memories may be developed into a story, presentation or an issue for further reflection in a learning journal (for example). Alternatively the whole list may be taken as an expression of personal experience to be explored further in the same or other contexts.

Instructions to give at the beginning

- The topic is given by the facilitator;
- The task is to write lists of around seven memories of the topic, in chronological order;
- When memories arise that do not fit into the current sequence, they are used to seed another list where they are put into the correct chronological order;
- No-one else will see the lists, and no-one will be asked to share anything that she does not wish to share;
- After a period of time, the list writing will stop and participants will be asked to share memories, in turn, in a group. The idea of this is that other people’s memories will generate new memories for the individual;

- For vulnerable groups and/or some topics that might be explored, it may be useful to say that the exercise could give rise to uncomfortable memories, and in this case a member of staff is available afterwards for consultation. However, because the material shared is totally under the control of individuals, this is not a likely event.

Exercise devised by Jenny Moon – modified from an original idea in Proff (1975)

Resource 14 Poetry as a Form of Capturing Experience

Many poems are effective in capturing experience in metaphor, pace and the choice of words. This is an example.

The Pub Singer

He took the seat, fresh faced, took to the spotlight.
He shuffled and settled - then with long fingers
And the work of strings, forged glittering streams of sound.

They looked. They listened. For one moment
He had them. For a moment, the fire held back its flicker.
It was a sensitive birth to which they gave those seconds.

He took them among byways and flowers of new love,
Drew ships sailing on cut glass seas. Words were threads
Of life that danced a fine line between delight and the dark.

And in the half dark, the half pissed resumed their chatter.
There was a rise of laughter, voices, a spill of coins
Across the bar; glass chinked in the beery air.

Now his ships roared by as powerboats. His words
Thundered on highways obliterating flowers.

Three claps went with him as he slipped from the light,
The ships sunk and words hanging off their lines.

J (2003)

Resource 15

Instructions for using The Park, The Presentation and other reflective learning exercises

An Exercise on Reflection

The aim of this exercise is to enable participants to see what reflective writing looks like, to recognise that reflection can vary in depth and that there is more potential for learning from deeper rather than superficial reflection. The exercise is developed in response to the observation that students, who are asked to reflect, firstly often have difficulty in writing reflectively and then, when they manage to write reflectively, tend to reflect rather superficially. In the exercise there are three or four accounts of an incident or experience. The accounts are written at different depths of reflection.

Instructions for use of the exercise

The procedure for the exercise is described as a group process, though it can be used individually. The process works best when it has a facilitator, who is not engaged in the exercise. It takes around an hour. It is important that the pages are not leafed through in advance, other than as instructed - and the exercise works better when people follow the instructions. In particular, they should not begin the discussions until everyone has read the relevant account. The facilitator needs to control this. The groups can be told that there are four accounts of an incident, and that they will be reading them one after the other, with time after each session of reading for discussion about the reflective content of the account.

- ◆ The exercise is introduced as means to demonstrate that there are different depths in reflection and that deeper reflection probably equates with better learning.
- ◆ Small groups are formed (no more than six in each).
- ◆ The groups are told to turn to the first account and read it quietly to themselves considering what features that they think are reflective.
- ◆ When it is evident that most people have read the first account, the groups are invited to discuss the account and identify where and how it is reflective. They are given about seven minutes for each discussion session. They may need less time for the earlier accounts.
- ◆ After the discussion session, the participants are asked to read the next account in the sequence (and they are reminded not to turn pages beyond the account in hand).
- ◆ After the last account has been read and discussed, groups are asked to go back through all of the accounts and to identify features of the reflection that progressively change through the accounts. For example, the accounts change from being 'story' to focusing on issues in the incident. In the later accounts there is more recognition that there are multiple perspectives etc. The groups are asked to list (eg on flip chart paper) the ways in which the accounts 'deepen'.
- ◆ In a plenary, the groups share their lists (as above) and discuss the whole exercise. It is at this stage that the participants can be referred to the Framework for Reflective Writing (Resource 9) which provides a general guide to features in deepening reflection. The accounts are not intended to accord directly with the stages described.

If the exercise is used with staff and if they are likely to want to use it later with their own students, it is worth having spare copies available (participants tend to want to mark / underline text on their copies in this exercise).

