



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David



Professional Teaching Experience Portfolio

An academic critique of current thinking in relation to the use of reflective practice in teaching and learning.

Mark Flagg

Alice Surgy, p147900



Contents

Introduction.....	3
Reflective practice and what it is	3
Theorists and their impacts on reflective practice	3
Current thinking on reflective practice.....	5
Conclusion.....	6
Reference list	8
Bibliography	11
Appendix.....	12
Appendix 1 – Kolb's experiential learning cycle	12
Appendix 2 – Gibbs reflective cycle	13



Introduction

This written academic critique aims to explore the current thinking and discussion within the field of education in relation to reflective practice and its criticism and praise. With an emphasis on both teaching and learning points of view, the author intends to explore and display what the literature highlights in relation to this topic within the last few years.

This report exposes the evolution of thinking by various theorists and their importance towards reflective practice. Furthermore, the author concludes this report by analysing the potential future trajectory of reflective practice.

Reflective practice and what it is

There are many definitions for reflective practice; however, one of the most up to date definitions is as follow:

“Reflective practice is a state of mind, an ongoing attitude to life and work, the pearl grit in the oyster of practice and education.” (Bolton and Delderfield, 2018, p1)

In other words, reflective practice is the development of insight and the progression of the relationship between the theories surrounding reflective practice and the everyday life. (Bolton and Delderfield, 2018).

Theorists and their impacts on reflective practice

To correctly start this section of the critique it is crucial to firstly discuss John Dewey, as he was a very influential educational thinking who shaped reflection within education (Aubrey and Riley, 2016). Dewey believed that reflection involved a thoughtful process of searching and inquiring in order to dispose of perplexity, and therefore its value is imperative within teaching and teacher education. (Dewey, 1933). His work has reached far within the educational system, especially within school settings but also within transforming the role of a teacher into a reflective practitioner (Aubrey and Riley, 2016), which is someone that dedicates time to reflect on their own teaching with the goal of improving it (Petty, 2014). Furthermore, other theorists such as Schön (Aubrey and Riley, 2016) later developed Dewey's theories, Schön (1983) established two specific types of reflection:



- Reflection-in-action, which is when someone thinks on the spot and makes necessary changes during the event (Comer, 2016), so within teaching settings it would be when an activity or task is not working so the teacher rectifies it in order to maximise learning. Studies conducted on the matter of reflection-in-action have showed professional development and better class management (Iqbal, 2017)
- Reflection-on-action, which is reflection after the event in order to improve and analysis strengths and areas for improvement (Aubrey and Riley, 2016), likewise within teaching settings it happens when a teacher establishes what went well and what could be improved after the lesson in order to improve their teaching performance.

Schöns' work has immensely affected the generations of teachers, and has become a very popular model to follow within education (Hillier, 2012).

Moving forward, many thinkers and theorists though of the learning process as cyclical, which simply means that the learning leads to other stages that ultimately leads to the start of the cycle again (Williams and Woolliams, 2012). Therefore, it is important to mention another theorist named Kolb who had an input to the reflective practice field, by creating the Kolb's (1984) learning cycle. Which emphasised that a learner once they have an experience should engage in a reflection period on that experience and afterwards establish theories and ideas on how to improve or develop that experience and finally the learner then experiments with those ideas and therefore creating another experience and starting the cycle again (Bohon et al, 2017).

He saw reflection as a mechanism for cognitive and professional development (Aubrey and Riley, 2016). This cycle is not purely about changing and doing something different about the experience but is most importantly about the changes and the reasons of those changes regarding the experience (Lindon and Trodd, 2016), in other words this cycle is highly dependent on the reflection section and its outcomes. Kolb's learning cycle can be found in Appendix 1.

Furthermore, the last theorist that the author believes has had a crucial impact on reflective practice is Gibbs. Gibbs (1988) established the Gibbs reflective cycle, a 6-stage reflection process outlined in Appendix 1. Gibbs adapted Kolbs model in order



to include feelings and emotions, as he believed that those aspects were important within the reflective cycle (Williams and Woolliams, 2012).

This particular reflective cycle is an important cycle for those interested in reflective practice, as the model is great for beginners intrigued with reflection (Bolton and Delderfield, 2018).

Post introduction of Dewey, Schön, Kolbs and Gibbs models, the next section of this academic critique will analyse the current views and opinions of the literature in regards to the reflective models that the theorists introduced to the educational system. It is vital to mention that the next section is not solely focusing on one particular model but instead concentrating on the views of the academics in relation to reflective practice as a whole. Additionally, the author must acknowledge the lack of literature currently surrounding this topic, possibly due to the models being outdated and therefore not a lot of academics are focusing on it, creating a gap in research.

Current thinking on reflective practice

Reflection has become a key word in the debate on pedagogies and education, especially due to the positive attributes associated with reflective practice in working life and education programmes (Illeris, 2006). Conversely, there are not that many studies published that display the importance and involvement of teaching on reflective practice in the last few years (Motallebzadeh, Fatemeh and Mansoored, 2018). However, from the reports and journals that the author could find the underlying message is that reflective practice leads to professional development (Iqbal, 2017).

Furthermore, Gwen et al (2018) suggests that reflective practice demonstrates itself equally as self-recognition, which is part of progressing to professional maturity. However, these processes of both reflective practice and self-recognition require dedication and internal commitment to reflection (Iqbal, 2017) and simultaneously in order to reflect properly the teacher must allocate time for reflection and it can be highly time consuming (Aubrey and Riley, 2016).

Gribb (2015) stated that firstly, reflective practice provided certain benefits to an individual such as teacher autonomy and secondly, that reflective practice played a critical role in a teacher's well-being. Likewise, Bates (2016) expressed similar opinions and additionally stated that reflective practice must be part of ones continuing

personal and professional development (CPD), as Bates stated that it is impossible to be an effective teacher without strongly committing to reflective practice.

Before Bates, Wilson (2014) also linked reflective practice with CPD, as he claimed that there is an intrinsically link between the two, as CPD is based on acquiring new knowledge and reflection is ensuring that knowledge has an impact.

Additionally, it is key to allude to that the students as well as the educators should conduct reflective practice; unfortunately, there is limited resources within the literature on how teachers can successfully help students cultivate reflective skills (Pretorius and Ford, 2016). Therefore, additional literature must arise to expand those skills and eventually improve employability chances (Bolton and Delderfield, 2018) for those students.

Furthermore, reflective practice is definitely not a panacea for everyone, as reflective practice involves being able to expose emotions and reflect on the implications of their own personal choices, however it should be mentioned that being able to reflect is, and will always be, a fundamental part of everyday life (Harper, 2018).

Conclusion

Overall, there has been a wide variety of statements and opinions on reflective practice with an unfortunate decline of literature in the last few years. There seems to be a clear flow between the theorists and their work in relation to the model before, and it seems fitting to stop at Gibbs due to the simplicity of the cycle and the straightforwardness steps involved with it. However, there should be more emphasis on implementing reflective practice within the educational system for the students themselves as well as the teachers.

It is crucial to mention the underlying statement of importance of reflective practice that most academics claim, as they state that is a vital part of professional development and post career skills, important to both students and teachers.

Upon completion of the placement and various teaching experiences, the author has utilised reflective practice to outline strengths and areas for improvement and can state that it is a vital part of the learning and teaching experience. As it provides with the opportunity to reflect and amend any mistakes or problems that could arise.



The author believes that by becoming a reflective practitioner the individual is developing analytical and reflective skills that could aid personally and professionally.

Conclusively, regardless of the various approaches that academics have in relation to reflection and reflective practice, there seems to be a core agreement that reflective practice is a forward-looking process, which develops creative ways to solve circumstantial issues (Walshe and Driver, 2019). More importantly, within educational settings reflective practice allows teachers and students to develop as an individual and expand their life skills. Currently, there seems to be an influence of reflective practice within the educational curriculum, which with hope will expand globally.

Reference list

Aubrey, K. and Riley, A. (2016). *Understanding & using educational theories*. London. Sage.

Bates, B. (2016). *Learning theories simplified and how to apply them to teaching*. London. Sage.

Bohon, L. et al (2017). 'Training for content teacher of English Language Learners: using experiential learning to improve instruction.' *Teacher Development*. 21(5). Pp.609-634. [Online] available at: <https://web-b-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=b578cc42-5e59-4170-be9c-7a973fcdffc5%40sessionmgr104> [accessed on 01.05.2019]

Bolton, G. and Delderfield, R. (2018). *Reflective Practice – writing and professional development*. 5th ed. London. Sage.

Comer, M. (2016). 'Rethinking reflection-in-action: what did Schön really mean?' *Nurse education today*. 36. Pp.4-6. [Online] available at: <https://www.sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/science/article/pii/S0260691715003457> [Accessed on 01.05.2019]

Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think*. New York. Health and Co.

Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by doing: a guide to teaching and learning methods*. Oxford. Oxford Polytechnic.

Gribb, R. (2015). *Becoming an outstanding primary school teacher*. 2nd ed. Oxon. Routledge.

Gwen, S. et al (2018). 'Reflective practices: meaningful recognition for healthy work environments.' *Nursing Management* (2014+). 24(10). [Online] available at: <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/central/docview/2007986416/B92BC655BC03419CPQ/20?accountid=130472> [Accessed on 26.04.2019]

Harper, R. (2018). 'The meaning of doing: Reflective practice in public administration education.' *Teaching Public Administration*. 36(2). pp.143-162 [Online] available at:



<https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1177/0144739418770486> [Accessed on 29.04.2019]

Hillier, Y. (2012). *Reflective teaching in further and adult education*. 3rd ed. London. Continuum.

Illeris, K. (2006). *How we learn – learning and non-learning in school and beyond*. Oxon. Routledge.

Iqbal, M. (2017). 'Reflection-in-action: A stimulus reflective practice for professional development of student teachers' *Bulletin of education and research*. 39(2). [Online] available at: <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/central/docview/1984751706/B92BC655BC03419CPQ/9?accountid=130472> [Accessed on 26.04.2019]

Kolb, DA. (1984). *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.

Lindon, J. and Trodd, L. (2016). *Reflective practice and early years professionalism*. 3rd ed. London. Hodder Education

Motallebzadeh, K., Fatemeh, A. and Mansoored, H. (2018). 'The relationship between EFL teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness: A structural equation modelling approach.' *Cogent Psychology*. 5(1). [Online] Available at: <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/central/docview/2170827044/B92BC655BC03419CPQ/14?accountid=130472> [Accessed on 26.04.2019]

Petty, G. (2014). *A practical guide – Teaching today*. 5th ed. Oxford. Oxford university press.

Pretorius, L. and Ford, A. (2016). 'Reflection for Learning: Teaching Reflective Practice at the Beginning of University Study.' *International Journal of teaching & learning in higher education*. 28 (2). P241-253. [Online] Available at: <https://web-b-ebshost-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=1fce430c-69ab-45ec-bcf8->



[64e9556a82b3%40sessionmgr102&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZW9vc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=117547843&db=eue](#) [Accessed on 29.04.2019]

Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*. New York. Basic Books.

Walshe, N. and Driver, P. (2019). 'Developing reflective trainee teacher practice with 360-degree video' *Teaching and teacher education*. 78. Pp 97-105 [Online] available at: [https://www.sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/science/article/pii/S0742051X18303871](https://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/science/article/pii/S0742051X18303871) [Accessed on 30.04.2019]

Williams, K., Woolliams, M. and Spiro, J. (2012). *Reflective Writing*. Hampshire. Palgrave MacMillan.

Wilson, L. (2014). *Practical teaching – a guide to teaching in the education and training sector*. 2nd ed. Hampshire. Cengage learning.

Bibliography

Andreina, B. and Giuseppina, D. (2018). 'Reflective practicum in higher education: the influence of the learning environment on the quality of learning.' *Assessment and evaluation in higher education*. 43(3). Pp. 345-358. [Online] available at: <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/central/docview/2012856382/B92BC655BC03419CPQ/6?accountid=130472> [Accessed on 26.04.2019]

Coles, A. (2004). *Teaching in Post-Compulsory Education – Policy, Practice and values*. Oxon. David Fulton Publishers.

Keeley – Browne, L. (2007). *Training to teach in the learning & skills sector – from threshold award to QTLS*. Harlow. Pearson Education Limited.

Lea, J. et al (2003). *Work in Post-compulsory education*. Berkshire. Open University Press.

Milner – Bolotin, M. (2018). 'Promoting Reflective Physics Teaching through the use of collaborative learning annotation system.' *Physics teacher*. 56(5). P.313-316.

Minton, D. (2005). *Teachingskills in further and adult education*. 3rd ed. Thomson.

Peterson, A. and Warwick, P. (2015). *Global Learning and education – key concepts and effective practice*. Oxon. Routledge.

Pollard, A. and Tann, S. (1987). *Reflective teaching in the primary school – a handbook for the classroom*. London. Cassell.

Reece, I. and Walker, S. (2007). *Teaching, training & learning – a practical guide*. 6th ed. Business Education Publishers.

Roche, M. (2015). *Developing Children's Critical Thinking through Picturebooks – a guide for primary and early years student and teachers*. Oxon. Routledge.

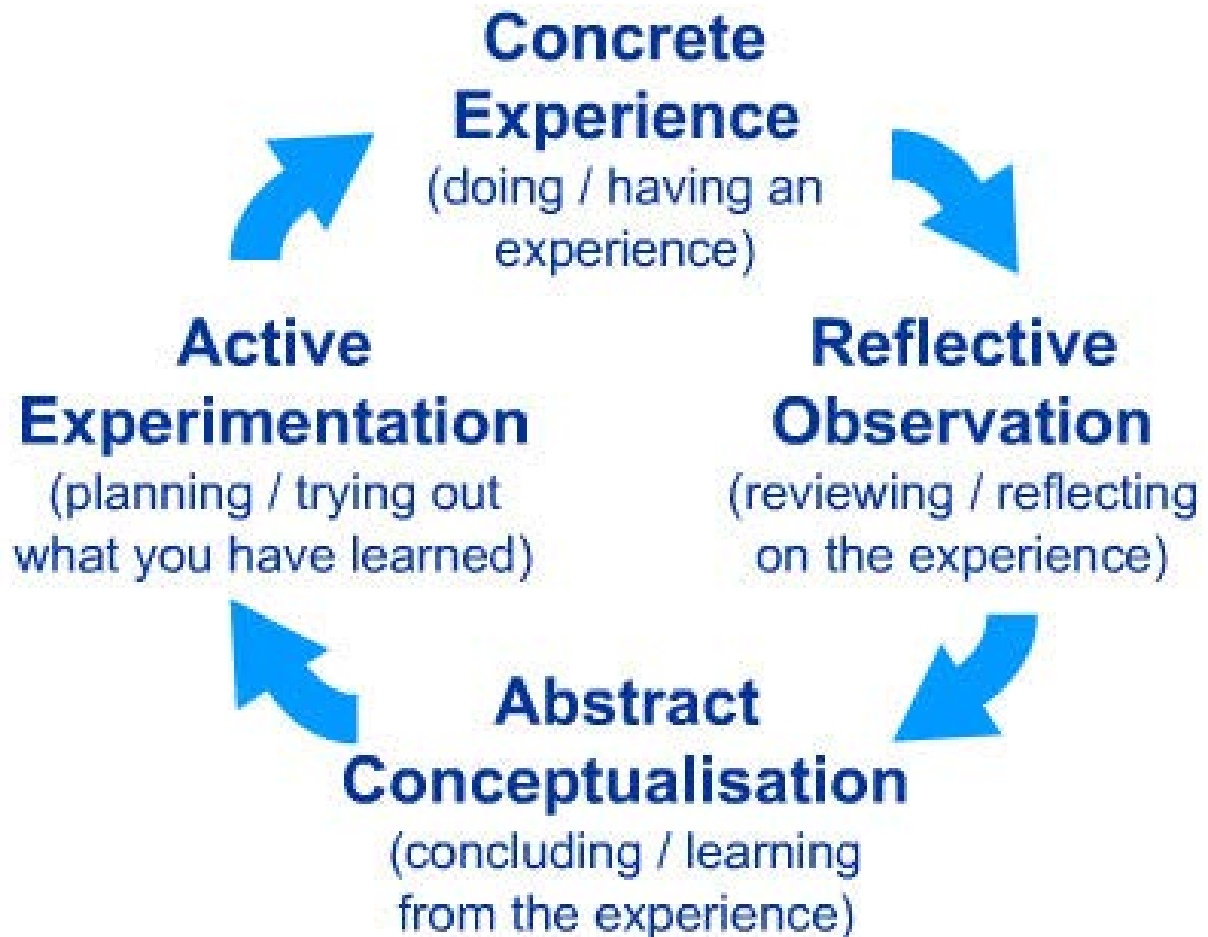
Walklin, L. (1990) *Teaching and learning in further and adult education*. Cheltenham. Nelson Thornes.

Water, M., McAvoy, M. and Hunt, K. (2015). *Drama and Education – performance methodologies for teaching and learning*. Oxon. Routledge.



Appendix

Appendix 1 – Kolb's experiential learning cycle





Appendix 2 – Gibbs reflective cycle

