

## **Learning in the Digital Era E-portfolio**

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# Reflection – A dialogue with yourself



(Vandenbussche 2018)

As the Musical Director of a Samba band I recently led the band at a large prestigious event where we played to thousands of people for hours whilst parading through the streets for several miles. After the event I wondered to myself “How did I manage that?” when only a few years ago I had never directed the band let alone done so whilst also drumming myself.



(Samba Doc 2022)

With no formal training I questioned how I had developed this skill and thought about how after every performance I would spend hours looking at what had gone well, what pieces worked, and more importantly what didn't work and what I needed to do to improve for the next performance. I often critiqued my own playing and regularly researched ways to improve.

“Reflective learning involves actively monitoring and assessing your knowledge, abilities, and performance during the learning process, in order to improve the process and its associated outcomes” (Shatz, n.d).

## So, what exactly is the process of reflection?

One of the simplest models of reflection is the three step ERA cycle which begins with an experience either good or bad, we reflect on it and the feelings it gave us and decide how we want to move forward, this then results in another action leading to another experience and the cycle continues (Jasper, 2013, p.2).

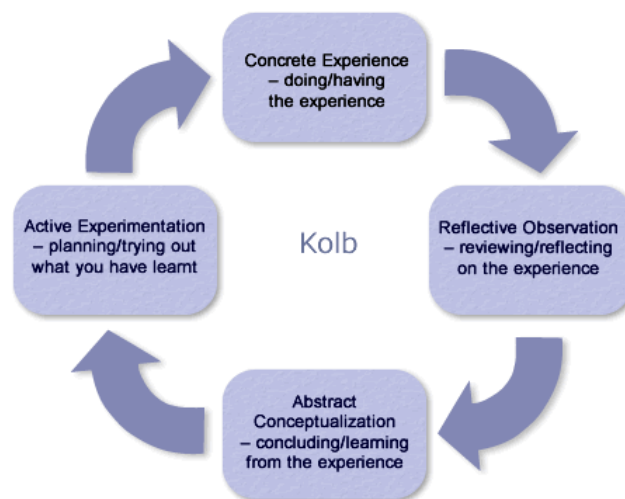


(Reflective writing tips n.d)

### **But isn't the key to learning being taught by others?**

When we think about learning many of us think about a classroom environment where someone with more knowledge of a subject than we have, a “Teacher” or a “subject specialist” shares their knowledge and we attempt to retain that information, however a study by Fullana et al (2016) showed “there is consensus in viewing reflective learning as a methodology that improves learning”.

What a great idea, using our own experiences to learn! This is the basis to Kolb's experiential learning cycle, he looked at the different ways people learn and developed a cycle that included abstract conceptualization in the learning process.



(Southampton University, n.d.)

### **So if we simply follow one of these models of reflection will we always succeed in our learning?**

If only it were that simple, what about our individual differences? Our feelings following an event are bound to be different, we don't all experience the same emotions or reactions to an experience. Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) recognised that an individual's own emotions needed to be considered during reflection, an issue that may have been overlooked in many of the early reflective learning models (Southampton University n.d.).

If you're reading this thinking Wow! What an amazing new concept of learning through reflection, it may surprise you to know that this is not a new idea, almost 100

years ago the founder of reflective learning said “Our experiences shape us, and when reflective practice is part of learning, meaning and relevancy is created, which initiates growth and change (Dewey, 1933)”.

I would urge anyone who is on a learning journey to use reflection to improve their experience, here's a few ways you can do that

- **Time** – set aside time to reflect on your work, it's best to have short periods of reflection regularly.
- **Slow down** – Take some quiet time to really consider your feelings, use meditation and breathing to focus.
- **Be curious** – Don't be too hard on yourself, use reflection as a way to explore and improve (Bown 2021).

**Now that we've looked at the importance of reflection and how we can incorporate it into our learning – go and start that conversation with yourself today!**

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## **Element 2 – What is good Time Management?**

In order for an individual to understand what good time management is, it is important to first of all look at the meaning of the term and its importance. Time Management is simply how we “manage our time” to ensure that we use it as productively as possible to achieve our goals efficiently. This essay will look at the benefits of good time management, some of the obstacles that may be faced when trying to manage time and the theories and methods that students can use to improve productivity.

There are many benefits to good time management when studying, they include completing tasks in less time as students are more focused and efficient, and being able to complete more work within that given time due to having allocated a specific time to each task and having prioritized each element of the work. Students who follow good time management strategies may experience reduced stress levels as they have planned their studying and therefore can complete things in a timelier manner (simplilearn 2022). A study undertaken by Cyril (2014) looked at whether there was a relationship between time management and academic achievement of higher secondary students, his research found that those students who when surveyed were found to have high academic achievement, also had high levels of time management skills.

Before looking at ways to improve time management it is necessary to understand some of the obstacles that students are faced with when attempting to complete given tasks. There are two categories of distraction, external, which includes interruption from other individuals or an issue with the study environment for example noise, and internal distraction for example being hungry or struggling with distracting thoughts or emotions. It is necessary for an individual to identify and manage these distractions to enable them to be productive and efficient in their task. Some effective methods to manage external distraction could be to change study environment from a noisy shared home to a library, or to use one of the applications available block social media interactions when studying. Internal distractions could be managed by writing down distracting thoughts or preparing for study using relaxation techniques to focus such as meditation (University of North Carolina n.d).

Another barrier to effective time management is procrastination, the act of delaying or postponing something. “It has been estimated that over 70% of college students engage in procrastination” (Ellis & Knaus, 1977, cited in Schouwenburg 1995, p71). Even though the

student who procrastinates may go on to complete the work before the given deadline, a meta-analysis of studies of procrastination conducted by Kim & Seo (2015) concluded that procrastination was negatively correlated with academic performance. It also found that when a study required the student to assess their own procrastination and academic performance, that the negative correlation was lower than when they were assessed externally, this could indicate that students in these studies under reported their procrastination and over assessed their academic performance, meaning that the actual negative correlation may be significantly higher than concluded.

There are many models and strategies that can be used to improve time management, reduce procrastination and manage distractions, one of which is Francesco Cirillo's Pomodoro Technique, which is based upon the use of a timer to define set periods of study time and short study breaks. The individual sets a timer for 25 minutes study time where any distractions are ignored and then a five minute break for the learner to do whatever they choose, this cycle is repeated four times and then a longer 15 to 30 minute break can be taken. This method could be particularly useful for learners who find small external or internal distractions difficult to manage as it invites individuals to write those distractions down and react to them in the allocated breaks. It can also be effective in preventing fatigue or working passed the point of optimal productivity (Cirillo 2018).

The Pickle Jar method uses a jar as a visual metaphor for prioritising daily tasks, Jeremy Wright (2002) believed that we should categorise our daily tasks by size with the most important being represented by rocks followed by pebbles for medium priority and sand for those less important activities. The jar which represents the finite time we have during the day is filled with the larger rocks first, followed by the pebbles and finally filling the gaps with sand. This theory will only work if the rocks are placed in the jar first, if we add the pebbles or sand first we will not have space for the rocks, this can be translated to managing our time by completing the larger tasks first followed by the less important. If the day is started with distracting activities like social networking, we will have no "space in the jar" for the larger more important tasks such as studying (Mraovic 2021).

Setting SMART goals is a time management strategy, Created by Doran (1981) he created the acronym to represent the five criteria required for good time management, goals must be Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic and Time-related. He believed that in applying these criteria to a given task, individuals could produce goals that were achievable within the

given timescale. Critics of this approach however felt that this is not a good strategy for long term goals as it lacks flexibility and stifles creativity (Haughey 2014). However a study conducted by Gardner and Albee (2015) found that 76% of students who wrote down their goals and shared their progress with others achieved those goals which is 33% higher than those who did not.

In conclusion good time management is shown to not only reduce a student's stress levels but also to improve academic achievement, the author feels that if an individual familiarise themselves with the different time management strategies and applies those most suitable to their learning style they can maximize their time to achieve given tasks within the timescale required.

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## CRITICAL THINKING MODELS

### THE RED MODEL

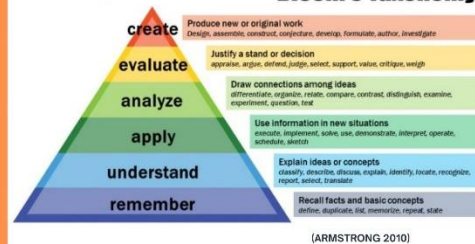
**Recognise** assumptions  
**Evaluate** Arguments  
**Draw** Conclusions

Pearson's model of critical thinking was developed following research using the Watson-Glaser II assessment. These three easy to use steps guide individuals to

- Think logically and clearly to identify assumptions and information gaps and to look at various view points.
- Evaluate arguments using objectivity and accuracy, to scrutinise evidence given and to be aware of personal influences.

- To draw conclusions using relevant information and evidence.

(Pearson North America 2015)



Originally created in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom and his collaborators, this now revised model comprises six thinking skills that guide an individual through a cognitive learning process from the lower order thinking skills of remember, understand and apply to the higher order thinking skills of analyze, evaluate and create. They are often depicted in a hierarchal triangle to demonstrate that the lower skills must be achieved in order to achieve the higher skills, for example knowledge must be remembered before ideas or concepts can be understood. (Lewis 2019)

**WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?**  
"Critical thinking is the disciplined mental activity of evaluating arguments or propositions and making judgments that can guide the development of beliefs and taking action."  
(Huitt 1998)

### CRITICAL THINKER

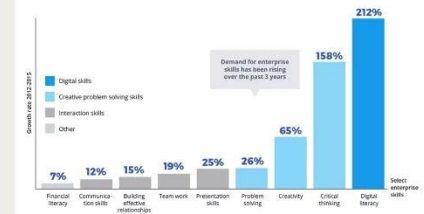
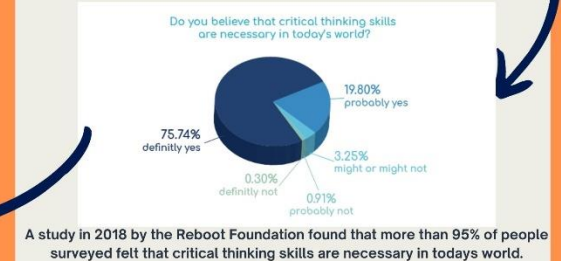
- Aware of own limits.
- Excited by problems and challenges.
- Wants to understand.
- Makes judgments using evidence.
- Interested in other peoples ideas.
- Skeptical of extreme views.
- Is not impulsive.
- Avoids emotionalism.
- Has an open mind .
- Demonstrates active listening

### NON-CRITICAL THINKER

- Agrees with the first approach that are shown.
- Is too quick to judge
- Does not demonstrate active listening.
- Believes their ideas are better than others.
- Will avoid change.
- Can be influenced by stereotyping.

(Ruggiero 2012)

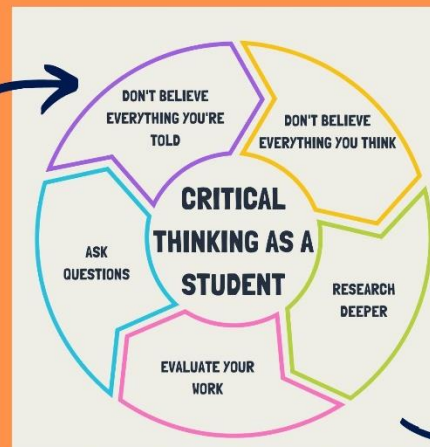
### WHY BE A CRITICAL THINKER?



### BARRIERS TO CRITICAL THINKING

**EGOCENTRIC THINKING** – LEADS TO THE INABILITY TO CONSIDER OTHERS THOUGHTS OR IDEAS  
**GROUPTHINK** – PREVENTS INDEPENDANT THOUGHT  
**DRONE MENTALITY** – CREATES AN INABILITY TO DEAL WITH NEW SITUATIONS  
**SOCIAL CONDITIONING** – CREATED BY ASSUMPTIONS AND STEREOTYPING  
**BIASED EXPERIENCES** – PREVENTS OPEN MINDEDNESS AND INQUISITIVENESS  
**SCHEDULE PRESSURES** – TIME CONSTRAINTS CAN PREVENT CRITICAL THINKING  
**ARROGANCE AND INTOLERANCE** – CAN CAUSE CLOSED MINDET

(CROCKER N.D)



**"THE FUNCTION OF EDUCATION IS TO TEACH ONE TO THINK INTENSIVELY AND TO THINK CRITICALLY. INTELLIGENCE PLUS CHARACTER – THAT IS THE GOAL OF TRUE EDUCATION."**

(LUTHER-KING JNR, 1992, P.124)

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