



Prifysgol Cymru
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University of Wales
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EC SO5005

Experiential Placement: Becoming a Reflective Practitioner

Reflective Practice

2023

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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What is Reflective Practice?

- Imagine that you come home at the end of a really bad week where everything possible has gone wrong.
- When you walk in the front door you are confronted with a time machine which can take you back to Monday morning so you can live the whole week over again.
- You use this opportunity to think about everything that went wrong and what you could do (if anything) to correct things as well as trying to repeat the things that you have done right.

(The University of Cambridge, 2023)



What is Reflective Practice?

- It may not seem like it, but this is reflective practice
 - the act of thinking about our experiences in order to learn from them for the future.
- In real life you probably don't have access to time travel, but you can still work towards being a reflective practitioner.
- We can all undertake activities to think about our experiences, learn from them and develop an action plan for what we will do next.

(The University of Cambridge, 2023)

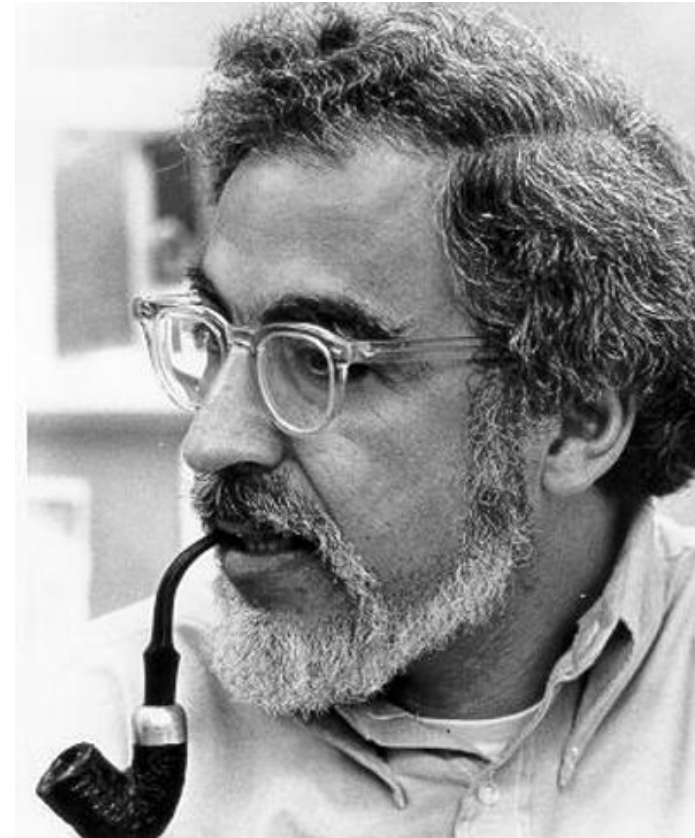
What is Reflective Practice?

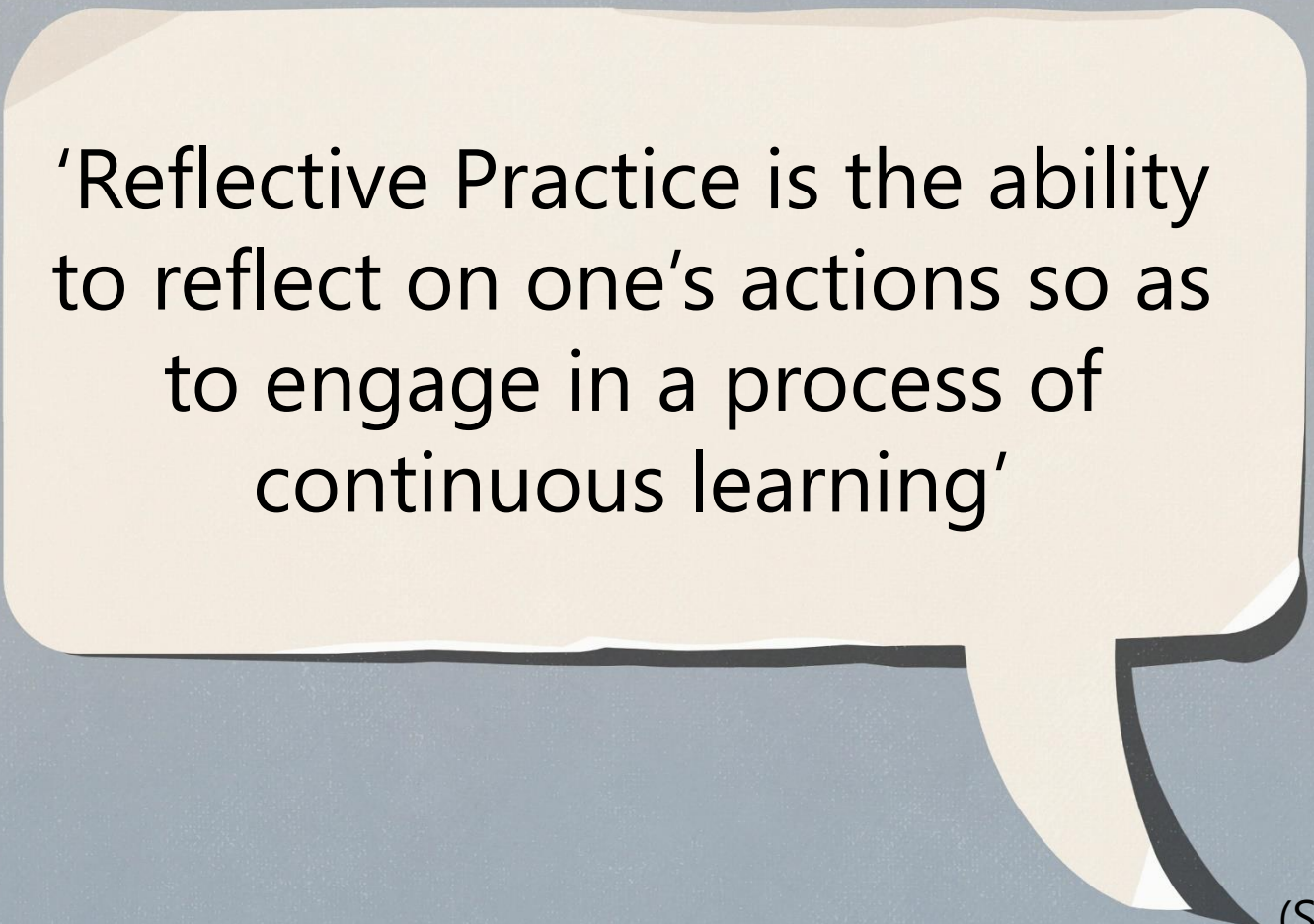
- Reflective practice was something which developed in disciplines such as teaching, medicine and social work as a way to learn from real life experiences.
- People in these areas would think about encounters with their students, patients or clients, how these worked and what lessons they could take away.
- Over time many other areas have adopted the principles of reflective practice, including universities.
- You can use reflection when studying, for example when preparing group work or when working on assignments.
- It is also useful beyond academia when you are applying for jobs, as part of a professional qualification or just as a way of thinking about your role.

(The University of Cambridge, 2023)

Donald Schon (1930 – 1997)

- An American Philosopher and Professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- He developed the concept of reflective practice and contributed to the theory of organisational learning.





'Reflective Practice is the ability
to reflect on one's actions so as
to engage in a process of
continuous learning'

(Schon, 1987)

Think about... Definitions

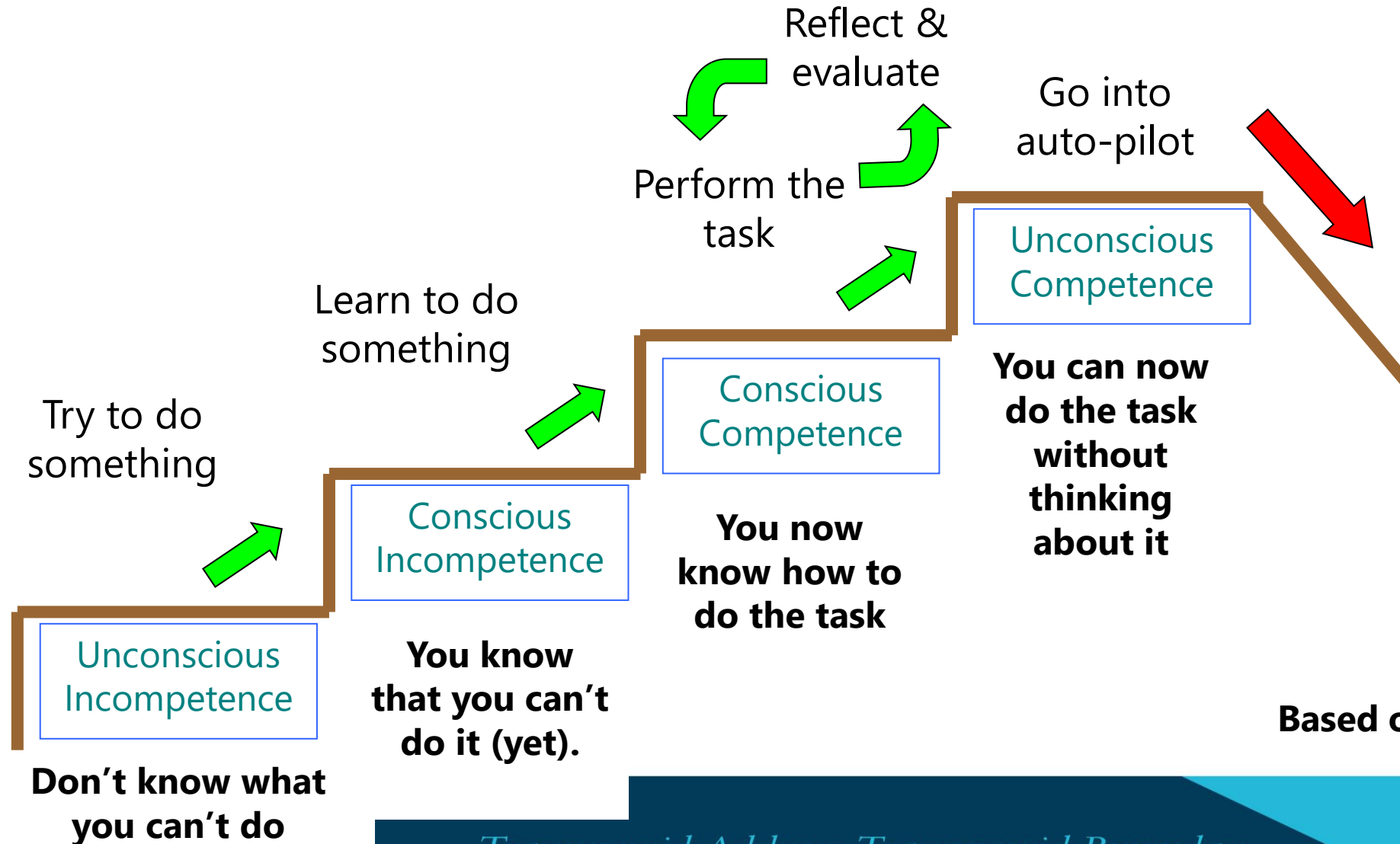
- Take a few minutes to think about what reflective practice means to you.
- There is no right or wrong answer to this question and your answer will depend on many factors, including your own background.
- Keep this definition in mind as we go through the following slides.



How do we learn?



The Four Stages of Learning



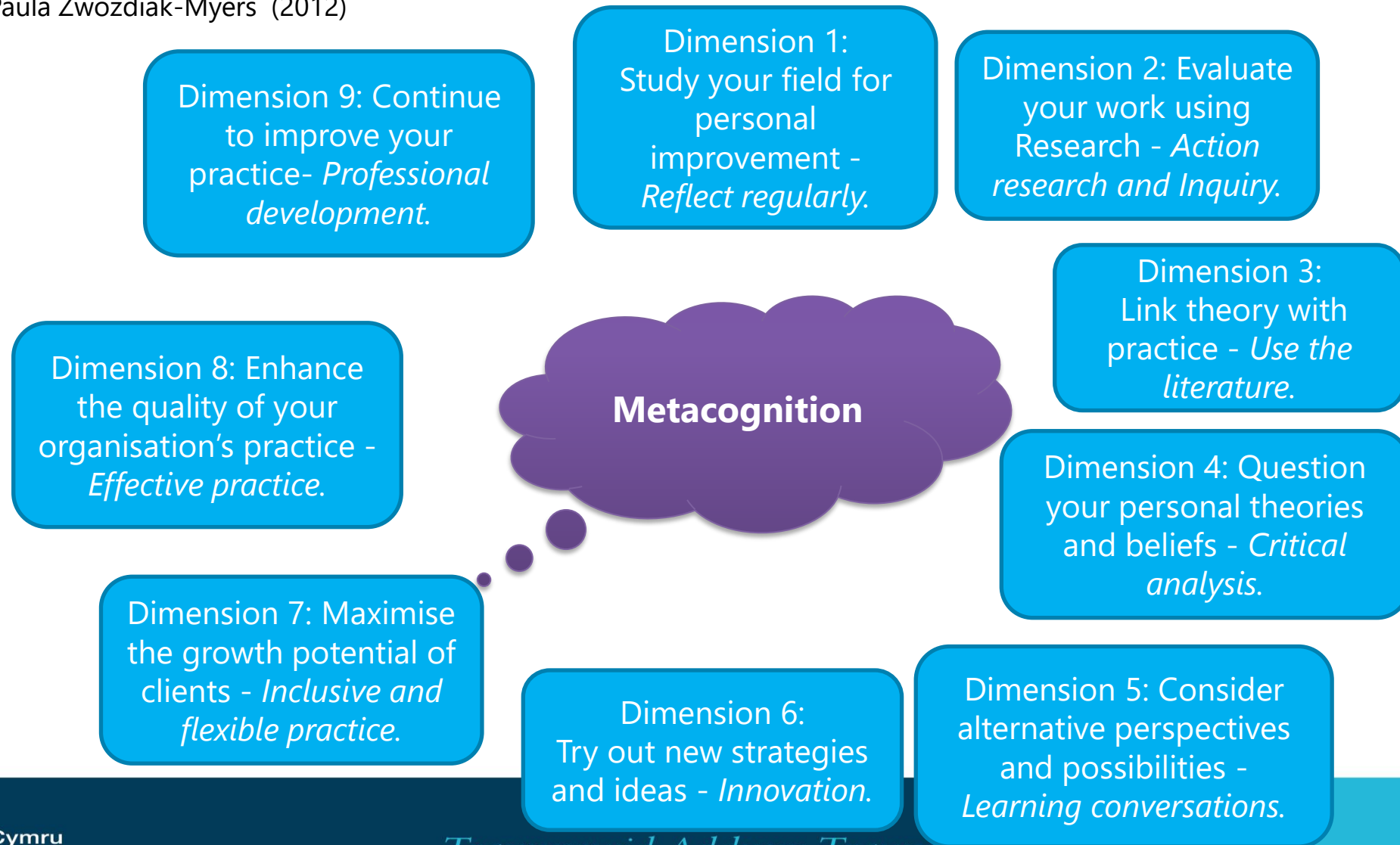
Based on Crosbie (2005)

How do we reflect: Metacognition

- Metacognition is, put simply, thinking about one's thinking.
- More precisely, it refers to the processes used to plan, monitor, and assess one's understanding and performance.
- Metacognition includes a critical awareness of
 - a) one's thinking and learning and
 - b) oneself as a thinker and learner.

The Nine Dimensions of Reflective Practice

adapted from Paula Zwozdiak-Myers (2012)



Why do we reflect?

- You can practice reflection during your education, within the workplace or as part of your general personal wellbeing.
- It has many benefits at both a personal and professional level and can help you to focus on planning for future experiences.

Benefits of Reflection



What are the main benefits of reflection?

- When you're studying you are likely to be very involved in your work and achieving academic success.
 - It can be easy to become too focused on your work in this situation, but reflective practice allows you to look at the bigger picture.
 - Undertaking regular reflection, for example once a term, can help you to think about your goals for studying and your plans for the future.

What are the main benefits of reflection?

- It can help with the issue of 'self-talk'.
 - We all have a little voice inside our heads which reminds us of all the things we could have done differently in certain situations.
 - Reflecting on an experience can help to put this voice to use as we learn from what we have done and move forward.

What are the main benefits of reflection?

- It gives you areas to improve on or develop.
 - Whether you are a student or in the workplace you will find that you are constantly being asked for ways in which you can develop your knowledge and skills.
 - Undertaking reflections can help you to think about areas that you can work on as well as what you are doing well.

What are the main benefits of reflection?

- Students are often asked to reflect as part of their assignments.
 - Assessment 1 is based on the skill of reflection that comes from the experiences that you have within your placements
 - Assessment 2 Is focussed on the theory of reflection

What are the main benefits of reflection?

- Reflection can help you to be more creative and try new things.
 - It's very easy to get stuck in a rut and it can be helpful to think about what you are doing and why you are doing it.
 - This can help to spark new ideas and ways of thinking.

What are the main benefits of reflection?

- Human nature means that we all make assumptions about people and situations.
 - Taking a step back and reflecting can help you to challenge some of these assumptions and see things from a new perspective.

What are the main benefits of reflection?

- Reflection is a key part of emotional intelligence - the ability to understand and remain in control of our emotions.
 - This is a useful skills to have both for our own wellbeing and when working with others.

What are the main benefits of reflection?

- It helps to maintain a healthy work/life balance by offering a defined process for thinking things through.
 - Hopefully you can learn from them and move on rather than dwelling on what happened.

Reflection in Practice



Reflection in Practice

- In practical terms, reflective practice is a cycle which involves;
 - Planning some work, based on current knowledge and policies
 - Carrying out the work
 - Evaluation by self, by stakeholders, and colleagues
 - Research, dialogue, team meetings, strategic meetings
 - Creating a new plan
 - Carrying out work more effectively with increased positive outcomes for the people we work with

How to Reflect

- The easiest way to start reflecting is to ask yourself some of the following questions about the experience you want to reflect on:

What did I learn?

Why did I feel the way I did?

What went well?

What went badly?

What do I need to learn more about?

What was easy?

What was difficult?

I wonder what would happen if...

How can I improve in the future?

Everyday Reflection

- If you are new to reflection then you may be wondering where to start?
- The good news is that you probably already do more reflection in your everyday life than you realise.
- Think about all the times you have had a chat with your friends over a cup of coffee, talked with a supervisor about a project or even thought back on the day as you were in the shower.
- This is all reflection - you are thinking back on your experiences, perhaps considering what you could have done differently and how you could approach similar experiences in the future.
- Reflection can happen at any time and for any reason.
- It doesn't have to be formal, written or even follow a certain procedure for it to add value to your learning.

Positive Vs Negative

- A common question about reflection is whether it is more useful to reflect on positive or negative experiences.
 - There is no correct answer to this question as much of what you choose to reflect on will depend on your personal circumstances and preferences but a balance of the two is probably the best for most people.



Positive experiences

- Reflecting on positive experiences can be very uplifting and motivating.
- It encourages you to see what you have been doing well in your education and career and how you can use this to your advantage in the future.
- It is natural to want to repeat our successes and by analysing the things we did well we can form a plan to make this happen again.
- However, if we only look at the positives we can overlook problems, and this can lead to more issues in the future.

Negative experiences

- Negative experiences are often easier to learn from as we can pick them apart and think about what we can change to make them better.
- There is always something we can improve on and this is an excellent basis for making a future plan.
- However, focusing too much on what went wrong can be demotivating and cause negativity.
- For this reason, it is important that you maintain a balance in what you look at during your reflections.

Reflective Writing



The Challenges

- Writing in a different way
- Writing a personal but objective account
- Using academic evidence in reflective writing
- Selecting the content
- The writing process
- Getting the language right

The language of reflective writing – 'person'

- Based on your own experience, so it is appropriate to use the first person: "I"
- However, most assignments containing reflective writing will also include academic writing

You are therefore likely to need to write both

- in the first person e.g. 'I felt...' and
- in the third person '(Smith 2009) proposes that ...'.

The language of reflective writing - tense

Mixing experience with theory

- When writing about your reflections use the past tense as you are referring to a particular moment: *I felt....*
- When referring to theory use the present tense as the ideas are still current: *Smith (2013) proposes that...*

Reflective writing

- Involves an exploration and explanation of an event, experience or several connected events.
- May feel particularly difficult and more challenging than other forms of academic writing as it involves thinking and writing about anxieties and errors as well as successes in your interactions with an individual or group or when carrying out a practical task.

Reflective writing

- Try to stand back from the situation, give some distance in time before reflecting
- Be as objective as possible.
- Although you are writing about your own experiences and feelings, you need to be as rigorous and thorough as you would be for any other assignment.

Why are we reflecting?

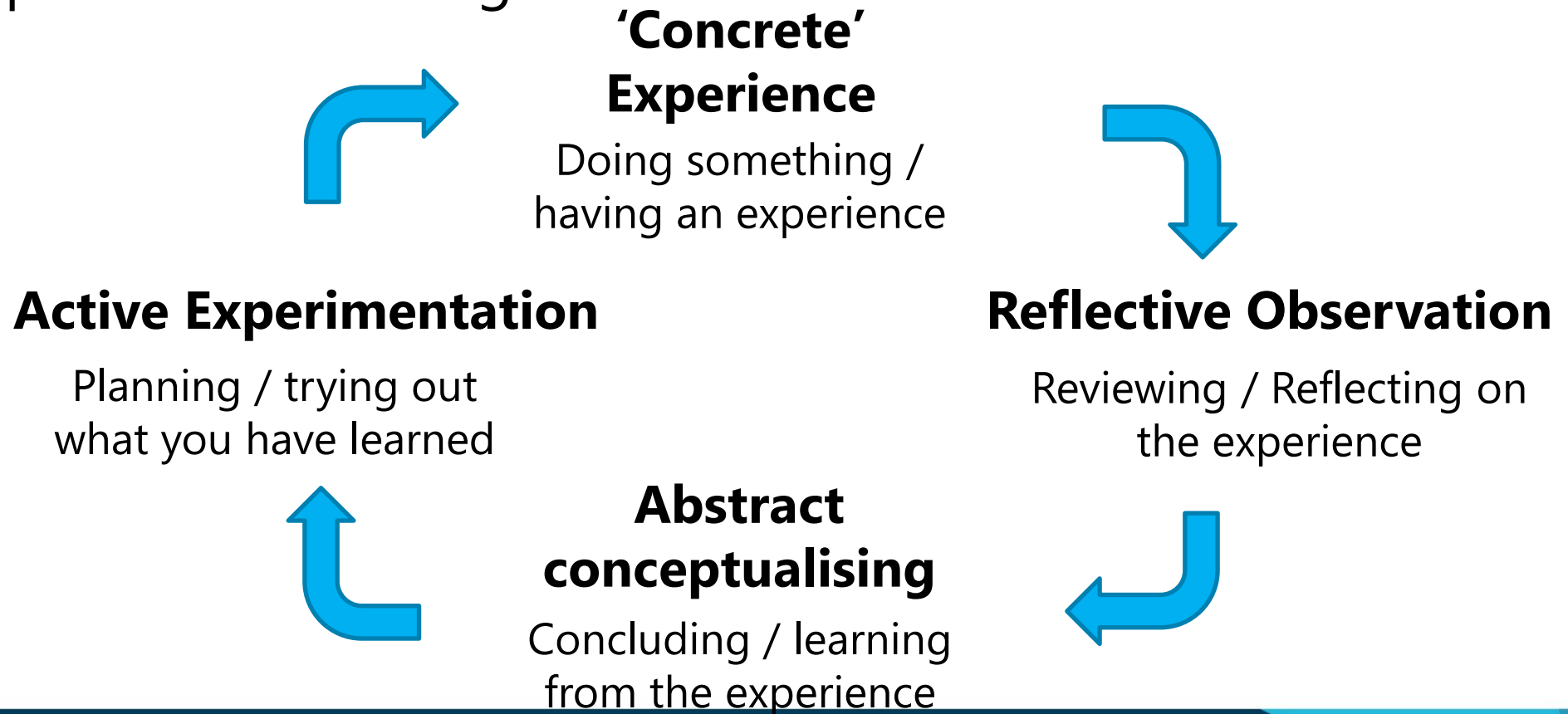
- Reflection **ON** action:
 - Reflecting on a past event, action or experience in order to better understand ourselves and what happened
- Reflection **IN** action:
 - The ability to analyse a situation whilst it is occurring and to try new solutions or actions 'in the moment'
- Reflection **FOR** action:
 - Learning from a past event, action or experience in order to better prepare ourselves for a similar event in the future

Models of Reflection



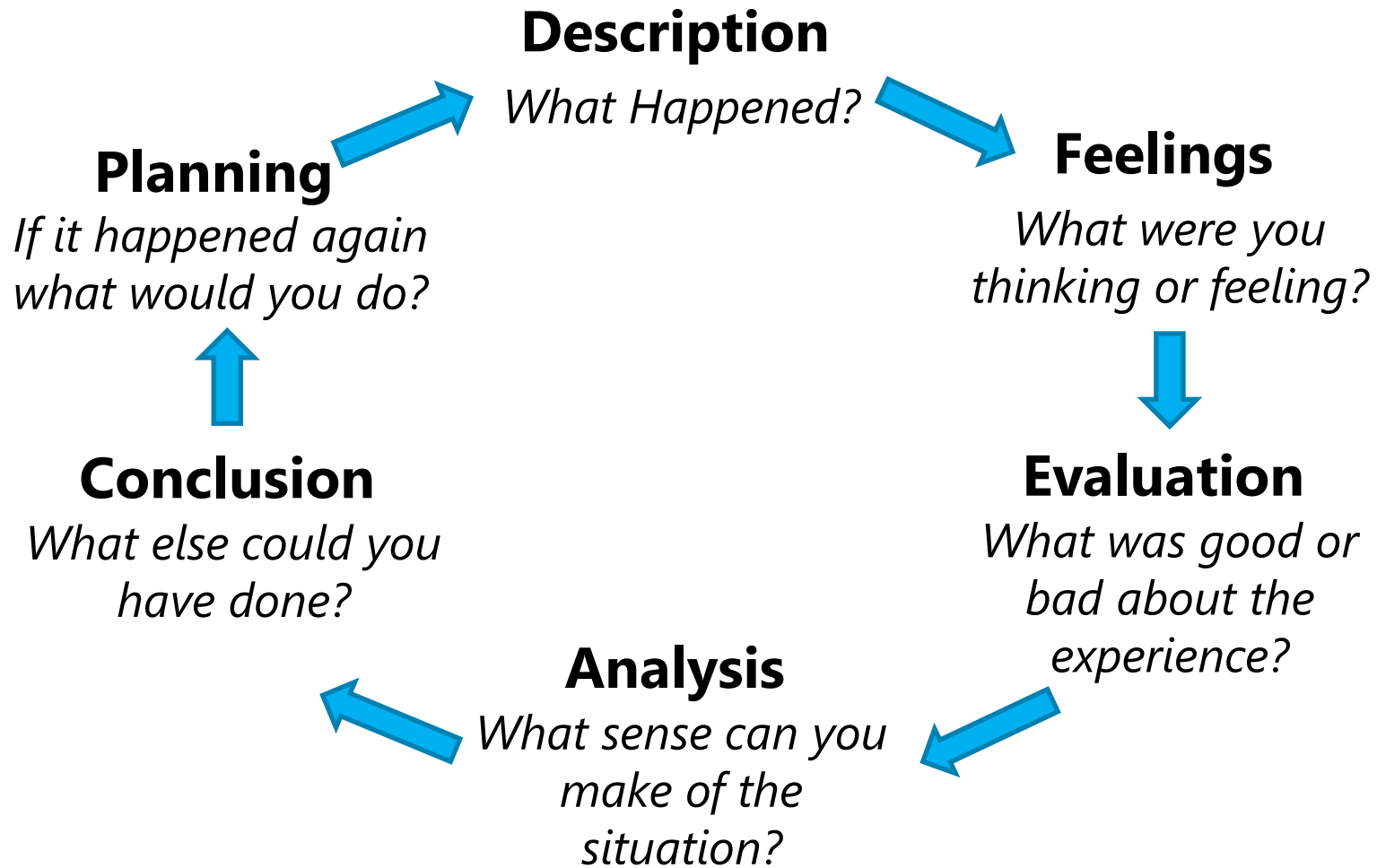
Models of Reflection

Kolb – Experiential Learning



Models of Reflection

Gibbs – Reflective Model



Models of Reflection

Boud *et al.* – Returning to Experience

- Returning to experience – that is to say recalling or detailing salient events.
- Attending to (or connecting with) feelings – this has two aspects: using helpful feelings and removing or containing obstructive ones.
- Evaluating experience – this involves re-examining experience in the light of one's intent and existing knowledge etc.
- It also involves integrating this new knowledge into one's conceptual framework.
- What will I do differently next time.

Models of Reflection

O'Donnell et al – Reflecting for action

Observation of Experience

I found it difficult to.....



Reflection

What is this an example of? Conjecture #1, Conjecture #2, Conjecture #3



Information Gathering

What information do I need to understand what happened, who should I ask?



Decision Making

Given what I have learned what is the best explanation of what happened?



Evaluation

What would be the best thing to do if it happens again?

Combining Reflection and Theory

- You will gain more marks for your reflective insights and not for the description of events, so keep your descriptions of what happened brief and to the point.

$$\text{Reflective Insight} = \frac{\text{Experience x Theory + Policy}}{\text{Over Time}}$$

Reflective writing

Produce a balance

- by weaving together sections of 'I thought... 'I felt,...' and the relevant academic theories.
- This is more effective than having a section which deals with the theory and a separate section dealing with your experiences.
- Try to avoid emotive or subjective terms.

Using academic evidence and policy in reflective writing

- You are aiming to draw out the links between theory and practice. So you will need to keep comparing the two and exploring the relationship between them.
- Analyse the event and think about it with reference to a particular theory or academic evidence.
- Are your observations consistent with the theory, policy, models or published academic evidence?
- How can the theories help you to interpret your experience?
- Also consider how your experience in practice helps you to understand the theories and policies.
- Does it seem to bear out what the theories have predicted; and the policies prescribe?
- Or is it quite different? If so, can you identify why it's different? (Perhaps you were operating in different circumstances from the original research, for instance.)

Reflective writing

- Be selective:
 - Identify challenging or successful parts of the encounter.
 - Reflect deeply on a few significant aspects and learning points.
 - Discuss your reflections with others to
 - deepen your insight,
 - improve your ability to express your ideas and
 - help to explore a range of perspectives

Reflective writing

- Collect evidence There are three sources of evidence which need to be used in reflective writing assignments:
 - 1) Your reflections form essential evidence of your experiences. Keep notes on your reflections and the developments that have occurred during the process. Reflective accounts!
 - 2) Academic evidence from published case studies and theories to show how your ideas and practices have developed in the context of the relevant academic literature.
 - 3) Policies and reports.

Barriers to Reflection



TASK

- What do you feel could pose as barriers to reflective practice?
 - In small groups discuss potential barriers to becoming an effective practitioner



What could pose barriers to reflective practice?

- Time constraints (individually or on a team level)
- Organisational structures – we may reflect, but does this lead to any changes? (unchangeable procedures, decision-making rests with individuals who either don't reflect or who don't see the need to change)
- Cultural/individual attitudes
- Change is often resisted

Barriers to Reflection



- What steps could you take to mitigate these barriers and why?

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