

Schön's (1983) work is seminal in relation to reflective practice, and in his text, *The Reflective Practitioner*, he describes two important types of reflection: reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. Both are important for people working in the minor professions, where typically there is no single correct response to a situation and no 'one size fits all' model that can be learned and applied in all situations and circumstances.

Reflection-on-action involves looking back on an experience and helps you to:

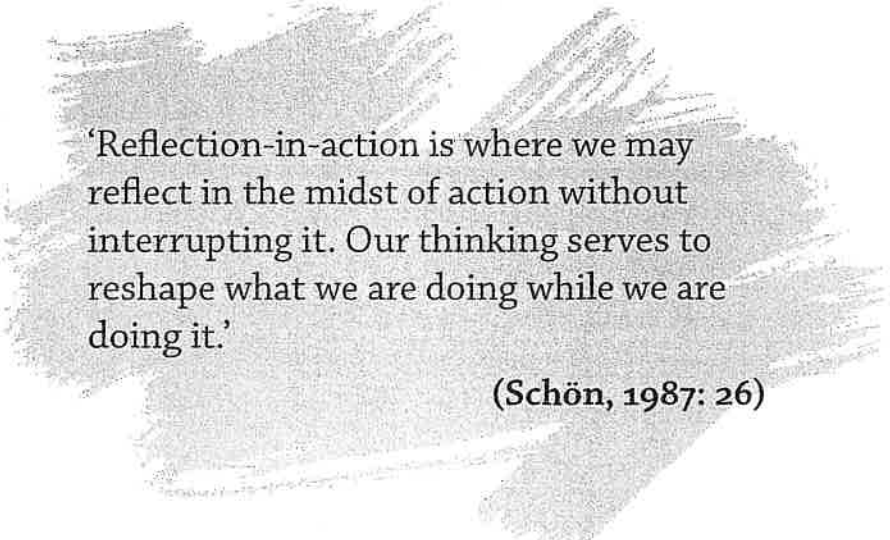
- analyse what happened
- think through the event from a number of perspectives (for example, your own and the client's)
- identify the things that went well
- identify problems and work towards solutions where possible
- identify areas for development
- build your professional knowledge
- think about what you would do next time in a similar situation.

Another important aspect of reflection-on-action is that it can prevent your practice from routine stagnation, by encouraging you to turn off your 'automatic pilot'. This is not meant to imply that you will need, or indeed be able, to spend time reflecting on everything that happens. However, it is well worth thinking about when and how you will make time to include this in your professional life, in order to keep your practice (and your working life generally) vibrant.

The second type of reflection that Schön (1983) discusses is reflection-in-action. All of us spend time thinking – it is so much part of our everyday lives that sometimes we do not even realise we are doing it. Reflection-in-action is the kind of thinking we all do as we are working, studying and living generally; as human beings we have a capacity to think whilst doing other things. When writing about reflection-in-action, Schön describes it as 'thinking on your feet'.

When working with people, it will often be necessary to try a number of different strategies to enable them to engage with you as you work with them. By reflecting-in-action, you will be able to assess the strategies you are using as you go along, deciding whether or not your approach is working with that particular individual or group. If not, you will need to change your approach to try to find something that will work.

Schön, of course, is not without his critics. Whether or not it is possible to distinguish clearly between reflection-on and reflection-in-action is debatable. Indeed, in his own writing Schön himself is not absolutely clear on this distinction. However, as concepts they are often useful in helping us to analyse practice at a deeper level.



‘Reflection-in-action is where we may reflect in the midst of action without interrupting it. Our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it.’

(Schön, 1987: 26)