



LEARNING IN THE DIGITAL ERA - ECGE4005P

Evidence of Learning E-Portfolio

ABSTRACT

This E-Portfolio will explain the basic skills necessary for a learner to work independently in a healthy and resilient way.

Sarah Roberts-Ogleby

Foundation Degree Inclusive Education

Table of Contents

Element 1	2
Blog	2
What is reflection and why should we use it?	2
Element 2	4
Mini Essay	4
What is good time management?.....	4
Element 3	5
Academic Poster	5
What is critical thinking and how can it be developed?	5
Reference list	0

Element 1

Blog

What is reflection and why should we use it?

Reflecting on Reflection!



It's a dreary Sunday afternoon and I'm sitting at my computer, having just completed part of a university assignment. I'm feeling quite smug as I tick off today's work on my shiny new planner. Now I have to plan for next week but, before I turn the page, there's a piece at the bottom of this week's plan; it says 'TIME TO REFLECT' in big **bold** CAPITAL letters, so it must be important right? Hmm... but what is reflection?? How is that going to help me achieve my goals? Why should I bother using this bit of my planner?



I decide to go and make a cup of tea while I ponder these thoughts.

Tea always helps!

Waiting for the kettle to boil, my inquisitive mind decides that I will delve into this reflective world a little more. I return to my desk, with a cup of tea in hand, and start researching.

The first thing I come across is a theory from Socrates (469-399 BC), who believed that 'the life which is unexamined is not worth living' (Bates, 2019) or in other words, you have to reflect on and examine your life, to gain a better perspective and wisdom; otherwise, you will continue to make the same mistakes, which makes life worthless. This seems quite plausible; I've been consistently told from a young age that I need to learn from my mistakes to improve and I'd like to think I have! Does this mean I have been practising reflection without realising it?

Interestingly Donald Schön argues that there are two types of reflection; namely, 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action' (Bates, 2019). In both of these scenarios, a person is reviewing, analysing and evaluating their work. However, the first describes the way we think of things after an event occurs and allows us to see where we can improve in the future; whilst the latter describes how we think on our feet and make instant decisions about what to do next whilst we are experiencing things.

I suppose this theory would explain why I've learnt from past mistakes and improved in areas I'd previously fallen short in. So, if I've been doing this all my life anyway, why should I now find extra time to formally reflect and jot down my findings?

According to Cottrell (2019), writing a reflective journal can be useful to develop new learning strategies. It can help you understand your thoughts and emotions more clearly and allow you to gain a better perspective on your progression. It highlights the areas in your learning that need improving, as well as your strengths. It's a simple tool to help you focus on your personal development. Whereas Bolton (2005) argues that for reflection to be effective, it should 'explore experience, values and professional identities' and those engaged in reflective practice should 'be open to have understandings challenged, willing to have beliefs questioned, and courageous in discovering aspects underlying and affecting daily behaviour'.

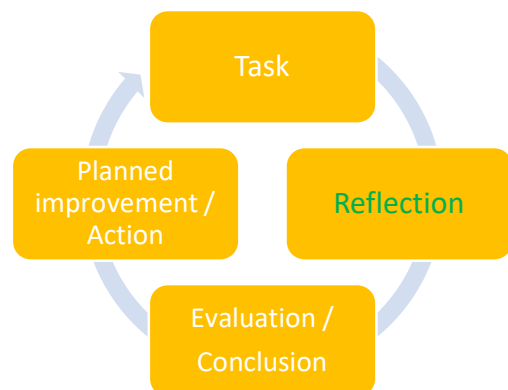
"What should we be writing down?" I hear you ask.

Well, it can be anything you find useful! Some examples;

- What have you learnt from a recent success?
- What challenges are you currently facing?
- Can you list ideas or different methods to try?
- What changes could you make to serve you better? (Think about your current habits!)
- Are there gaps in your knowledge? How can you fill them in? (Cottrell, 2019)

How often should we be reflecting and jotting things down?

As often as possible would be the best answer, as reflection can be used as a tool for continuous self-improvement. Therefore, over time, you should see improvements in your studies, which will, in turn, lead you to success in your career and future ambitions (Cottrell, 2019).



Now we know what reflection is, why we should use it and how it benefits us! Exciting, eh?

Join me and start your reflective learning journal today!

Element 2

Mini Essay

What is good time management?

Time management is personal to each individual, everyone has different priorities and demands in their life; therefore, there is no singular effective structure that every person can follow. However, everyone can analyse where their time is being spent and what they wish to achieve from the time they have available. 'Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion' (Sebestyén, 2022); in other words, how long it will take to complete a task will depend on how a person uses their time. For example, if a person sleeps 8 hours a day, then this leaves 16 hours a day which they can either waste by doing nothing much or optimise by focusing on the things they wish to get done. Managing time effectively can be difficult when other demands are factored in; such as family, illness, or when other unexpected events occur.

For someone balancing studying for a degree with work and/or raising a family, good time management becomes of utmost importance, especially if they are to meet all the demands that these areas of life place on them. Physical and psychological needs have to be balanced; for example, creating a suitable study environment with scheduled uninterrupted time and having the right mindset or motivation to study (Cottrell, 2019). It can be beneficial to analyse lifestyle habits to understand what affects energy levels; the more energy one has, the more focus one will have (Patrick, 2022). Likewise, it is important to note how long a person can focus and for them to cater for this in their planning (Cottrell, 2019).

Cottrell (2019) states that there are ten steps to good time management and suggests several planning sheets for students to use in her book, *The Study Skills Handbook 2019*. Cottrell (2019) recommends working backwards from a deadline and, if possible, setting an earlier deadline than is required; to ensure there is an ample amount of time to complete the tasks set and allow leeway for any unforeseen circumstances that may arise. Effective planning requires the use of a calendar or scheduler and has the breakdown of hours as well as days, weeks, and months. A simple Gantt chart can be used for planning work over longer periods (Microsoft, 2022). Everything should be included in the planning stage including scheduling frequent breaks to avoid burnout and maintain studying motivation levels. Goals should be SMART! (Miller, 2022) Tasks should be prioritised in order of importance and when implementing the plan, full attention should be given to the most important task first. For studying to be completed effectively, it is essential to focus on one task at a time and not multitask. It is important to spend the right amount of time on each activity and not feel rushed to complete work, which also means managing distractions and dealing with procrastination (Cottrell, 2019).

Some people may argue that they work better when under the pressure of a deadline; that is to say, they will procrastinate and not start tasks until very close to the deadline approaching. However, although this may seem to be effective as the work always ends up being completed, it does not necessarily mean that it is the best standard of work that could be presented (Urban, 2016). Time management tools can help to avoid ending up in this situation and enable more efficient ways of studying. The Pomodoro Technique (CIRILLO CONSULTING GMBH, 2022), recommends choosing a task and setting a timer for 25 minutes. During that 25 minutes, phones and other distractions should be kept away while a person focuses solely on the task in front of them. Once the timer goes off, put a tick on a sheet of paper and take a short five-minute break. Set the timer again and repeat the process. After four timers (four ticks on the sheet) take a longer break. Another method is the

Power Hour (Herbert, 2022), which is similar to Mark Twain's 'Eat the Frog' theory (Kanani & Berendt, 2020), it suggests getting the most important task done first thing in the morning. These methods are ways of breaking down studying into more manageable chunks of work and can help a person to kickstart themselves into taking action, rather than procrastinating because they are overwhelmed by the thought of their workload. For students with busy home lives, it may be necessary to find ways to create extra chunks of time to dedicate solely to studying. They may need to delegate some of their responsibilities and ask other members of their families or friends to help. For instance, older children could help with household chores; a partner or spouse could cook some meals; a grandparent or friend could help with childcare for a few hours a week while they study or visit the library.

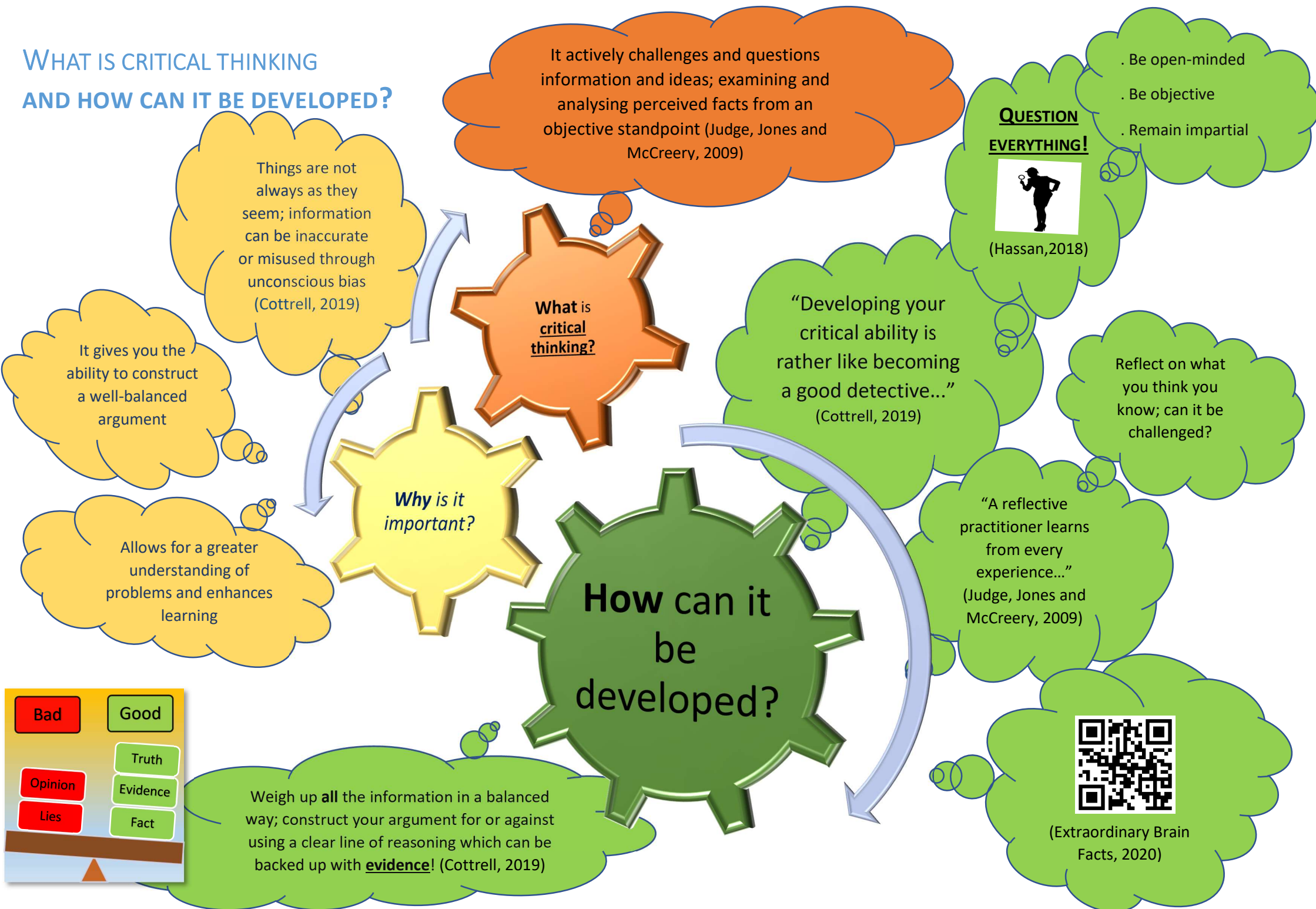
In conclusion, a systematic approach to learning is required to get the best out of the time that is available to students. Planning for study needs to be thorough and take into account time demands that are already present in a student's life, it also needs to have a set of realistic smaller goals to prevent students from feeling overwhelmed. Using planners or schedulers, along with time management techniques, allows the work to be broken up into manageable chunks and helps to deal with time wasted on procrastination. The benefits of good time management are that more work can be completed in a shorter space of time and people feel less stressed about the amount of work they have to do. For students, it means that all their work gets submitted on time and to a high standard, which in turn leads to them achieving their desired degree qualification and potentially enhances their career success (Cottrell, 2019).

Element 3

Academic Poster

What is critical thinking and how can it be developed?

WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING AND HOW CAN IT BE DEVELOPED?



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