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How to write a Reflective Report

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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What should come in a report?

- More information about your project than in the proposal, for instance about
 - Methodology
 - Context
 - Literature
- Reflection of your experience
- Bibliography
- Project Management Plan

- Explain the focus of your topic
 - What specific problems you aim to address
 - What direction you think your argument will take
- Explain the significance of your topic
 - What will your project offer to the current debate

The report should ...

- give an overview of the topic and study situated within the relevant discipline
- review the theoretical and if applicable discipline literature relevant to your topic
- explain your methodology
- present your findings and
- discuss the findings in light of the literature and your experience of it

By now most of you should

- have your idea
- have read something
- have an idea of what you are going to do
- have actually done some of it
 - ANYONE involved with something practical, visiting places, museums, collections etc. OR intend to interview or talk to people.... SHOULD have already done so...
- have worked out your methodology

Just reading is not a methodology!

- We (humanities) methodology = primarily critical, can be speculative, may have significant historical perspective.
- Social sciences (the methodology often adopted by Anth and Arch) and physical sciences, = empiricism
 - the *empirical* method by means of direct and indirect observation or experience as a way of gaining knowledge

Success – oddly NOT the most important...

- “Methodology” implies more than simply the methods you intend to use to collect data. You should include a **consideration of the concepts and theories** which underlie the methods.....
- Some efforts are successful and some are not, but it is not the measurable success that matters so much as the awareness of the process you are undertaking = how much have you done the above?

= Reflection/Reflective

Donald Schön described how reflection-in-action could be used as a tool to improve one's practice.

means after the event - I've thought about it and I've thought how it could be improved – so next time I will.....

Schön noted that it is possible to describe the tacit knowledge implicit in our actions through a process of observation and reflection (see Schön, 1987)....

Schon, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Schön (1983)

Reflection in action: draw on tacit knowledge to reflect on behavior as it happens, so as to optimize the way you address immediate issues or problems

Reflection on action: reflecting after the event, to review, analyze, and evaluate the situation, so as to gain insight for improved practice in future

Ladders of reflections: action, and reflection on action make a ladder. Every action is followed by reflection and every reflection is followed by action in a recursive manner

Reflective practice is crucial

- **To our (personal and intellectual) growth and learning**

As an academic, I learn from my experience with previous cohorts and build this into the next experience, in theory making it better for you.....you should in theory be having a blast by now!

- **Being reflective requires that parties examine their priorities **after** they enter into the 'arena' ...**

If you were to reflect on your performance in your last essay/s then you should be producing your best work ever in your third year.....

Reflexivity (Social Theory + Sciences)

- Acknowledge and take account of the many ways we influence our research AND thereby the findings
- Hugely important in the social sciences, Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology and Archaeology
- Circular relationship
- Being reflexive requires that parties examine their priorities **before** they enter into the 'arena' ...

Reflexivity is considered to occur when ...

- The observations or actions of observers (i.e. us, the researchers) influence the very situations we are observing,
 - The theories we formulate actually influence or affect the outcome especially when we are trying to be objective, (avoids us making ill-informed , personal or judgemental statements)
 - We as observers can influence outcome by very presence.

Observations are not independent of the participation of the observer.

Reflexivity is a methodological issue in the social sciences analogous to the observer effect

- Reflexivity expands the frame to include an examination of the underlying assumptions and priorities that shape interaction within a given time, place and situation
- Reflexivity is an interactive process that takes into consideration the relationship between oneself and the 'other' – the other being an aspect of what we may be studying.
- Recognising that our belief systems influence our outcomes

= a recognition of our ignorance prior to research may produce ill informed conclusions or value laden judgements about the situation

Methodology: different perspectives

- Reflective – thoughtful, evaluative, insightful regarding something you want to understand (and want to improve)
 - An event, or body of knowledge, attempts to understand what you know now compared to what you knew before
- Reflexive – personal insight – of your position
 - questions yourself, as a researcher, your stance – tries to be 'unbiased' whilst acknowledging that we are biased and shows how we 'deal' with that.

In a nutshell....

Reflective

- Requires you to question
- Looks back at what you did
- Measures what you knew or experienced now, compared to before
- = post-hoc (after the event)

Reflexive

- Requires you to question
- Before and while it happens
- Forces you to examine what you will do, how you will do it, how it will change the outcome by the process of doing something

Back to the report (and your assignment)

- The report should have two appendices:
 - Bibliography
 - Project Management Plan (e.g., Gantt Chart but a table is also fine)

What is a bibliography?

- A bibliography submitted at the beginning of a period of research is a bibliography of the materials (primary and secondary) that you **expect** to use.
- It **will** change over the course of your work.
- It's there to show that you have done the necessary **preparation** to proceed with your project.

But how do I know what I am going to use?

- What are the primary sources (literary, epigraphical, papyrological, iconographical, archaeological) that you have already identified?
- What are the main pieces of scholarship that you have already read or identified as necessary reading?

So what do I put in?

- In some disciplines you need to divide your bibliography into two sections: one for primary sources and one for scholarship.
- Remember to include translation details if you know them.
- You should have at least 15 items (books or articles) in the part of your bibliography on scholarship.

How should a bibliography look?

- Follow the guidelines according to the reference style used in your programme(i.e., Harvard style)
- you can find the different reference style guidelines on the library website

The Project Management Plan

.... can be

- A mind map
- A Gantt chart
- A table
- And so on

What is this?

- Your project/dissertation takes about 8 months from proposal to the deadline.
- In the meantime, you have to also complete a number of other modules.
- The project management plan is there to identify what you need to do, and when, what your goals are, and when you will reach them.
- Also, the project management plan will allow to schedule your supervision meetings, and what and when you will give chapters, etc. to your supervisor.

How to project manage

- It is useful to create a chart, like a Gantt chart.
- You can create Gantt charts on excel, word, visio.

Easy example

Time	Task	Target (milestone)
Block 1	Finalise topic	Meet your supervisor
Block 2	Discuss topic with supervisor Get an overview of resources and skills needed Research literature Write short comments on readings	Submit reflective report on 12 th November
Block 3	Gain an overview of key literature (you could even start writing the Literature review)	Discuss it with your supervisor
Block 4	Finalise structure of dissertation (i.e., chapter headings)	Discuss it with your supervisor
Block 5	Write draft of chapter	Send to supervisor

Time	Task	Target
Block 6	Prepare presentation about dissertation Finalise dissertation Revise dissertation (i.e., spell check)	Presentation with structure of dissertation
End of Easter Break	Finalise bibliography Prepare dissertation for submission	Submit dissertation on 4th May