



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

SELF-REFLECTION

Academic and Employability Skills

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Module Code: BMSW4001
Lecture name: MD Kalam

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Introduction

The objective of this report is to conduct a self-reflection on what I have learned on the academic and employability skills module, during the first and the second term. Analyse some employability skills such as, cover letter and curriculum vitae writing skills. Evaluate some academic skills namely: paraphrasing, summarising and some interpersonal skills such as critical thinking and time management. Throughout this report, I will reflect on each of these skills, with the aim of at the end, being able to identify which of them are or not my strengths and my action plan to improve the weaknesses.

According with Husebo, O'Regan and Nestel (2015, cited in Jasper and Rosser, 2013, p.368) reflection is a process of evaluating past events, to see what was done wrong or not, to learn from mistakes so as not to repeat them in future events. Which means that a self-reflexion is a capacity to go through your own past actions, reflect about it and learn with it. Reflexion is not just reflecting or reminding something that happened in the past, the main objectives is to go through past events, analyse them, extract some new information that grants you a better understanding of what to do, not to do and how to do it (Paterson and Chapman, 2013, cited in Moon, 2004, p.133).

There are several models that can help or guide to a good reflection however, the most spoken on this module was David Kolb, Honey and Mumford, and John Gibbs.

David Kolb (1974)

McLeod (2017) points out that Kolb's reflective cycle (appendix 4) is based on four stages: the concrete experience (having an experience), reflective observation (reflect on the new experience), abstract conceptualisation (conclusion, learning from the experience) and active experimentation (apply what you have learned). According to these, for an effective learning the learner must go through all the four stage of the cycle, and each stage leads to the other one. They can enter in any stage of the cycle but they need to follow is logical order.

Kolb says that based on the learning cycle, is possible to differ four learning styles: diverging (feel and watch), assimilating (think and watch), converging (think and do) and accommodating (feel and do). For him, the learning style differs with different people, and may be influenced by variables as environment, culture etc. (McLeod, 2017).

Honey and Mumford (1986)

Peter Honey and Alan Mumford model was created based on the Kolb's theory. The reflective cycle (appendix 5) is based on four stage: have an experience, review the experience, conclude from the experience and plan the next steps.

The four reflective stage leads to a four effective learning styles: activist, reflector, theorist and pragmatist respectively. To the effective learning is necessary to accomplish all the four stage of the cycle (Cepeda, 2018, p. 56).

John Gibbs 1988

Gibbs reflective cycle (appendix 6) is based in six stages: description (what happened), feeling (what was your feelings), evaluate (what was good and bad about the experience), analyse (sense that you can make from the situation), conclusion (what have you learned) and action plans (what to do if it happens again). According to Gibbs reflection begins with experience and effective learning occurs after going through all six stages of the cycle (Husebo, O'Regan and Nestel, 2015, p. 369).

This self – reflection report will be based on Gibb's reflective cycle. According with Timmins et al. (2013, cited in Rolfe et al., 2009 and O'Donovan, 2006, p. 1372), is the reflective cycle most used in educations institutions and I chose it too because for me, it is the most composed and leads to a more detailed reflection about the situation. The six stages allow to know all the variants, particularly the feelings, that may have determined or influenced what happened.

Description

In October 2019, I started a course in Certificate oh Higher Education (Health and Social Care) at University of Wales Trinity Saint David. The course has six modules in total, and one of them is the subject of this self-reflection, Academic and Employability Skills. In this module we spoke about various subjects, but mainly about skills, as we can see by the module's name. However, as mentioned on the introduction, I will focus particularly on academic skills, as paraphrasing and summarising, employability skills, as cover letter and curriculum vitae writing skills, time management and critical thinking skills. We need skills to accomplish many tasks, I just never thought about them and how important they are until attending this module.

Feelings

The first day of academic and employability lessons I was apprehensive, anxious, happy and nervous. At first, I was very afraid. Afraid that my English was not good enough to communicate and I wouldn't be able to understand the content of the lessons and complete my assignments. At the same time, I was happy for the opportunity I had and very excited about the contents that I was going to study. During and at the end of the class, I was very surprised, after all it was not as complicated as I was imagining, and mainly there were things that I deal with every day, and that I have been learning over the years, I just never realised that.

During my years of study, I have been developing my academic skills, although I had never studied about it, thus it was as if I was familiar with something that I didn't know what it was. Some of them, like paraphrasing and summarising, I was already, somehow, good at it. However, I cannot say the same about employability skills, especially cover letter and curriculum vitae writing, I had to improve in this matter as well as in critical thinking. Critical thinking has never been my strength however, on the other hand, I have always been good at managing my time.

On the second term I was calmer, happy to be able to move onto the second term and a little disappointed with me because of my grade on my first term assignment. By the end of the term I was even more disappointed, not with me, but with my classmates as I felt like they were there just to learn how to do the assignment, every day was the same, the lecture had to explain the same matter about the assignment all over again.

I believe that now I am in a better place than when I started, but there are always areas to improve.

Evaluation

The module, made me realise that academic skills are fundamental for our academic path. Among all that we study, I will talk about paraphrasing and summarising. Paraphrasing is the ability of to explain in your words what has already been said by someone else and summarising is the ability to make a brief summary of what has been said by someone else. Both are very important especially on academic writing: report, assignment, dissertation, giving more credibility to your work. A good example is when you are explaining the content of a book to someone. I love to read, especially romance books, and whenever someone asks me about the book I'm reading, I have to give a brief summary of the book.

The module made me realise as well, how important employability skills are, since they are the skills that makes a person employable (Gravells, 2010, p.19). Within various skills belonging to employability skills, those that really needed my attention was cover letter and curriculum vitae writing skills. Cover letter is a professional letter that briefly introduces the candidate to the employer and is accompanied by the curriculum vitae, which is a document that provides the employer information such as academic qualification, professional experience and mainly the candidate's skills (Morgan, 2017, p. 339). As we can see both are extremely important, because they are the gateway to the professional life, they are the first contact that the employer has with the candidate, and the first opportunity that the candidate has to impress the employer.

We also talked about critical thinking and time management. Critical thinking is the ability to question, evaluate, analyse, synthesise information received, collected, observed, lived, felt, etc. (Snyder and Snyder, 2008, cited in Scriven

and Paul, 2007, p. 90). Critical thinking is very important because is the key to learning. According to Morgan (2017, p. 69) a good example of these skills is when the students can identify errors, gaps etc. committed by others mainly by the teacher, what I understand perfectly. As teachers we do not expect them to make mistakes, sometimes we forget that they are also human beings. Time management is the ability to manage the time you have in order to finish all your tasks on time. Managing time effectively is important to achieve goals, increase performance amongst other things (Grissom, Loeb and Mitani, 2015, cited in Britton and Tesser, 1991; Jex and Elacqua, 1999, p.774).

Analyses

With this module I was able to improve my academic skills, as I mentioned above, I already had some knowledge on the subject, however I was able to improve more and I did a class exercise on the first term, with regards paraphrasing and summarising, that is available on the appendix 2 and 3 respectively. According to the lecture I had good paraphrasing and summarising skills, which I believe I had the chance to develop further because of the assignments that I have been doing.

My employability skills, was the one that benefited the most, in fact I hardly had an idea of what it was important to take into account when writing a cover letter and curriculum vitae. Not that I never made them before, but after the teacher's explanation I saw that I was, what the teacher called a lazy person, that I was doing some big mistakes. Please do not judge me, but sometimes, I didn't even have the patience to read the all the job roles. However, I can say that, I was able to develop a lot in relation to cover letter and cv writing, although there is always room for more development, at least now I am receiving feedback from my job applications.

Critical thinking skills is a subject that I need to improve the most and this experience served to confront me with this reality, to question and analyse my actions. Although, this still remains one of my weaknesses, it is difficult for me to question, or doubt of something that was said to me by someone who is in a higher position than me, mainly the lecture.

Time management has always been one of my strengths, even before I studied it in this module. I have always been very organised; I like to control the time I have in relation to the work I have to deliver and I always try to use the most of the time I have in an efficient way.

Conclusion

This module, provided me essential tools that helped me to develop myself. Looking back, on where I was before, without proper notion about skills or how important they are, although they were part of me. I never stopped to think, that it was an ability that I had and that was very important and it could help me in the

future or could differentiate me from other people. After these two terms, I am very familiar with the importance of each skill and the importance it represents to a person and also how important is to continue developing and gaining more abilities.

Despite all the initial fear, my journey was not so bad, in fact it was quite pleasant. I have done some mistakes as well, in particular on my first assignment on the first term, I did not dedicate myself as much and that was reflected on my grade. If you ask me if I would do something differently, I will say yes. I would pay more attention, participate more in the classes and dedicate myself more doing the assignment especially on the first term.

All the experience, helped me to get confident on my capacities and abilities, not being afraid of making mistakes as I can always learn from them.

Action Plan

The module allowed me to learn about my abilities, those that are my strengths such as time management, those that are my weaknesses, mainly critical thinking and those that need some attention. On appendix one, I made the professional development plan (PDP), in which I identified the abilities that need to be developed, their importance and what are my actions plans to develop them.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Professional Development Plan (PDP).

Objectives/ Skills to improve	Importance	Do I have it or Not	Action plans	Revision day
Critical Thinking	Is essential to develop your knowledge	I do have a lot to improve on critical thinking	Develop the ability to question through more readings, more research and see more news etc.	In 4 months, by the end of the course. With one more term, I will be able to develop even more my skills, so by the end of the course I will reflect in all my developed skills.
Self-confidence and self-motivation	Is the key for success and to achieve your goal	I do have some, however still need some improvement	Try to thrust more in myself and on my capacities.	
Leadership	Very important employability skills	I may have or not leadership skills, I did not have much opportunities to be a leader, and those I had I let to other people	I first have to take advantage of the opportunities that I will have to lead and then discover what needs to be improved.	
Referencing, Paraphrasing and Summarising	Give more credit to your research	In average I am good in these skills, but I do need to be excellent	Do a lot more exercises and research.	
Job application	Important to find a job.	I have some, but do need improvement	Read and pay attention in all aspect of the job roles and compare the job required skills with mine. See some tutorials	
Writing and reading English	Important to communicate, express yourself and to understand others.	I do have some of these skills, but need some improvement as well	Expend at least 10 minutes every day doing some reading and writing	

Appendix 2 - Paraphrasing in class exercises.



Academic and Employability Skills – BMSW4001 Term 1

In-class exercise 1: Paraphrasing (Oct 2019)

Student Name: Jamima Correia

Student ID: 1908756

Time allocated: 1 hour. Please return your paper to the lecturer upon completion. It will be returned to you at the next session. You will need to include a scanned copy of this exercise in the form of an appendix together with you Task 1 (part of the Assignment for this module).

Ex.1 Write a paraphrase of the following passage.

Chocolate has always been considered an affordable little luxury, associated with romance and celebrations. Therefore in 2001, revelations that the production of cocoa in Ivory Coast involved child slave labour deeply shocked chocolate companies, consumers and governments alike. The USA passed legislation mandating that standards be created to permit companies who could prove that their chocolate was produced without forced labour to label their chocolate "slave-labour free." The chocolate industry agreed to an international protocol that would give chocolate producers four years to limit abusive practices.

Chocolate has for long been used especially for lovers and for commemorate special dates. However, ~~the~~ the discovery that the fabrication of cocoa in Ivory Coast was made by child slave labour in 2001, ~~the world~~ let everybody ~~to know~~ that every ~~one~~ chocolate producers has to ~~provide~~ evidence that their products was made without children slavery "slave-labour free" and this is due to a ~~new~~ law created by the United States of America. ~~And~~ The chocolate producers was given four years to eradicate ~~slavery~~ slavery by an international agreement made by chocolate industry.

Lecturer's comments: Some good paraphrasing skills. Try to reduce the number of errors.

Lecturer's signature: CH

Date: 15/11/2019

Ex.2. Complete the blanks in such a way that the meaning of the second sentence is as close to the original sentence as possible, using the word in brackets where given. Pay attention to grammar and make sure what you write matches what is already given.

- 1) There will be a few changes around in the office. (announce)
The boss announces that they will make new arrangements in the office.
- 2) He doesn't write to me as frequently as I wanted.
I wish he wrote to me as much as I liked.
- 3) We were concerned about her health.
We had some preoccupation about her well being
- 4) You weren't careful, so you made so many mistakes. (had)
If you had payed more attention, you had not done so many mistakes.
- 5) The council cut funding so we could not provide free parking.
Because of the ~~cancel~~ cancellation of the funding by the council we wasn't able to provide non-payd parking. were n't
- 6) His proposal was a failure as it was too theoretical. (relied)
His proposal
- 7) It was Mary who stole money.
He accused Mary for stealing the money.
- 8) He seems well-educated. However, he's not very bright. (although)
He seems a educated person. Although he is not so smart.
- 9) Universities place the burden of understanding plagiarism and attribution conventions on students.
The responsibility for the plagiarism according to the Universities is due to the burden of understanding by the students.
- 10) 33% of adolescents who have one baby, have a second baby within two years of the first baby's birth. (third)

Lecturer's comments:

Lecturer's signature:

Date:

Appendix 3 - Summarizing in class exercise.



Academic and Employability Skills (ACE) – term 1 BMSW4001 G2 In-class exercise 2: Summarising (Oct 2019)

Student Name: Romina Corrao Student ID/Group: 1908756

Time allocated: 1 hour. Please return your paper to the lecturer upon completion. It will be returned to you at the next session. You will need to include a scanned copy of this exercise in the form of an appendix together with your Task 1 (part of the Assignment for this module).

Ex.1

Read the following text and make notes on the main ideas. You can do this on a separate piece of paper which you do not have to hand in.

To be a great leader, you need to start by leading yourself

Most people go into top positions with good intentions, but those often crumble due to the demands — and perks — of the job. If you want to succeed, devote some time and energy to self-leadership, says consultant Lars Sudmann. Being a leader is a little like being a parent; beforehand, we have all these rosy visions of how we're going to do it, how incredible we're going to be, and how we'll sidestep the mistakes that we see other people make. But when it's our turn to assume the role, we find that reality doesn't match our expectations or imaginations. Sudmann, for example, believed that he would ace his first leadership role. Then, he held his first major staff meeting, an employee asked a question about the company's email signature, and the proceedings — and his command of them — completely fell apart.

After some months, Sudmann realized he was fighting against certain entrenched factors that keep all leaders from improving. Like many in the working world, leaders have too much to do and not enough time to do it; they don't clearly think through their priorities and strategies; and being in a position of power causes them to assume that the people beneath them will take care of a lot of problems.

Sudmann found a potential solution to these "classic leadership problems" in Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher. Rather than spending his time trying to learn to rally and guide others, Marcus Aurelius focused a surprising amount of his energy on mastering self-leadership. Sudmann has found this orientation tremendously helpful. Below he breaks down three actions that go into self-leadership.

First of all, you need to be aware of your shortcomings; leaders need to know all of their biases, predilections and weaknesses. Another idea is to take 5- 10 minutes every day to think about the challenges you've recently handled and the ones you'll soon face. While Marcus Aurelius was fond of reflecting in the evening, Sudmann likes doing this over morning coffee. Questions to pose include: "How did my leadership go yesterday? How would the leader I'd like to be have faced the challenges I faced? What about my challenges today? What could I do differently?" Write down your thoughts so you can refer back to them and learn from them.

Also, regulate your feelings; no matter how much preparation and reflection you put in, there will be employees, colleagues, clients and associates who anger, frustrate or annoy you. That's where the practice of "reframing" comes in; stopping and asking yourself ... on a scale from 1 to 10, how important is this issue right now? Then, give yourself a moment to think: "How would the leader I aspire to be handle this situation?" The answer will come to you.

Lecturer's signature: _____

Date: 12-12-2019

Ex.2

Re-read the text 'To be a great leader, you need to start by leading yourself' on the previous page.
Summarise main ideas from the text in your own words. Write about 175 words.

Being a leader is a very difficult task. For Lars Sudmann to be a good leader first you have to know to lead yourself, but it wasn't like this at the beginning. In fact the ~~thought~~ ^{idea} ~~that~~ ^{reality} was far from the expectations.

After some months Sudmann was facing a time management problem, having a lot to do and not enough time.

He found a solution for this problem in Marcus Aurelius; instead of trying to lead other, he first tried to mastering selfleadership.

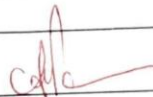
First you have to know yourself. you can spend ~~so~~ some minutes thinking of the challenges you have faced or will face, and have a critical thinking about your leadership.

It is important to not let anyone ^{have an} influence on your emotions, and to not ~~not~~ waste time or energy with questions ~~or~~ that doesn't matter.

Lecturer's comments:

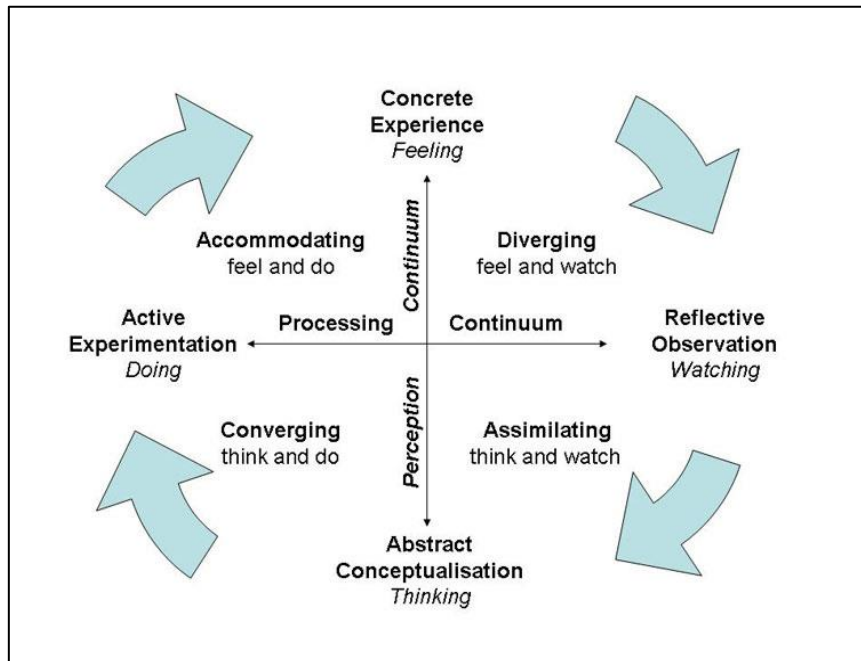
Good Summarising skill. Try to reduce the number of language errors

Lecturer's signature:



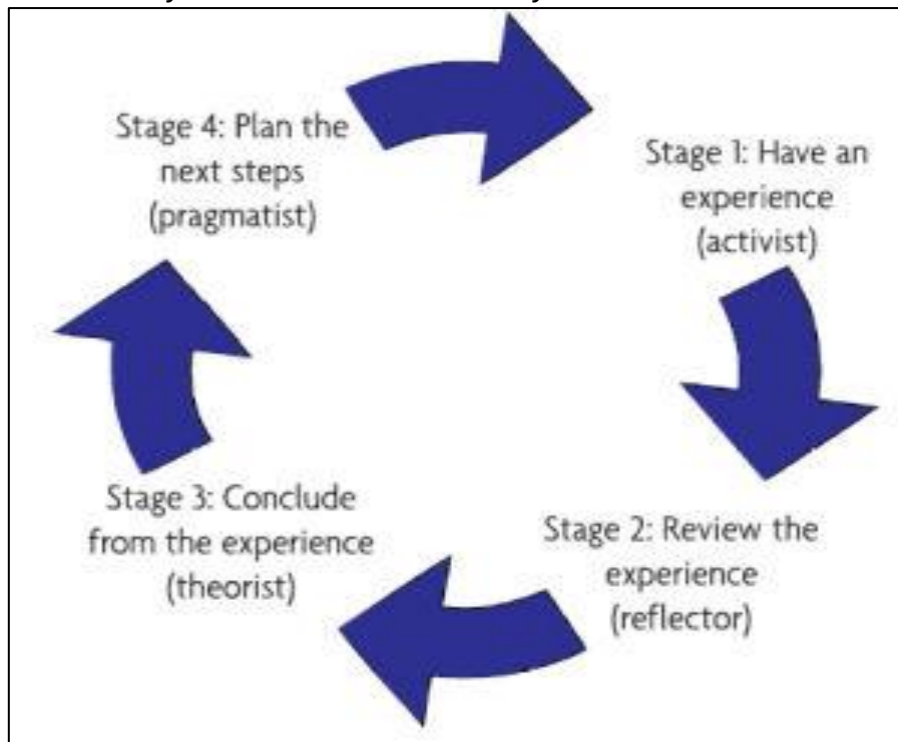
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Appendix 4 – David Kolb reflective cycle.



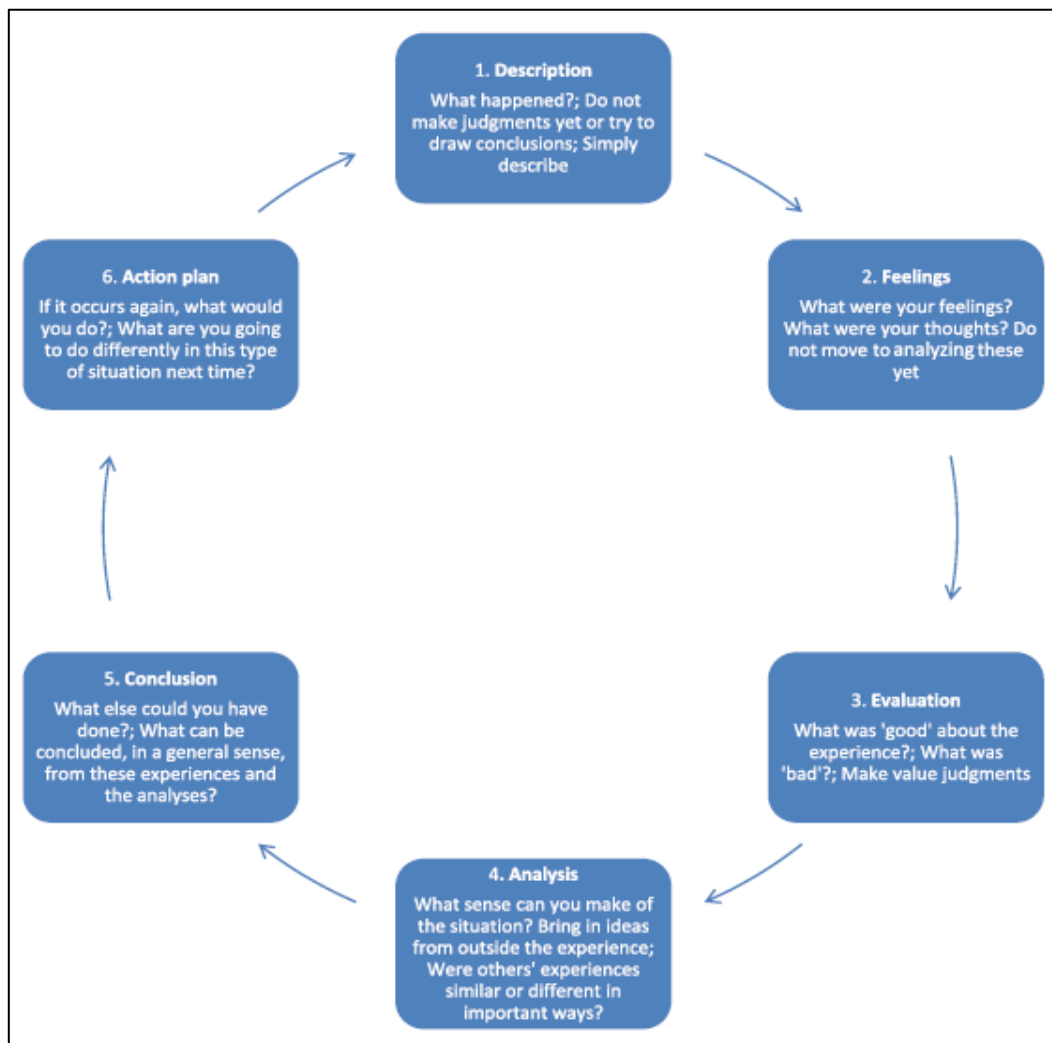
David Kolb reflect cycle (McLeod, 2017).

Appendix 5 – Honey and Munford reflective cycle.



Honey and Mumford reflective cycle (University of Wales Trinity Saint David class lecture notes, 2020).

Appendix 6 – John Gibbs reflective cycle.



John Gibbs reflective cycle (Husebo, O'Regan, and Nestel 2015).