



Personal Development Portfolio (PDP) Syndicate/Individual Reflective Writing Tasks

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MINISTERSTVO ŠKOLSTVÍ,
MLÁDEŽE A TĚLOVÝCHOVY



OP Vzdělávání
pro konkurenceschopnost



INVESTICE
DO ROZVOJE
VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

Why reflect?

“...Anyone who wants to know the human psyche...would be advised to abandon exact science, put away his (sic) scholar's gown, bid farewell to his study, and wander with human heart throughout the world. There in the horrors of prisons, lunatic asylums and hospitals, in drab suburban pubs, in brothels and gambling-hells, in the salons of the elegant, the Stock Exchanges, socialist meetings, churches, revivalist gatherings and ecstatic sects, through love and hate, through the experience of passion in every form in his own body, he would reap richer stores of knowledge than text-books a foot thick could give him...”

Carl Jung (1875-1961)
Swiss Psychiatrist & early follower of Freud

What is reflective learning?

- “...the analysis of an event or thought...or insights into the impact of an experience or projected goals for the future...”

(Danielson, 1996:53)

- Tools for reflective learning...
 - learning logs/journals/diaries
 - ...?
 - mind maps, lists and bullet points
 - recordings: CDs, digital recorder, video –documenting by voice recordings
 - formal evaluations/workshops

Handout: Exercise 1 - Warm-up

1. How might reflective learning be of benefit to your students in their academic discipline?
2. Which pitfalls should students avoid in reflective writing?
 - Being too descriptive
 - ...?
 - ...?

Learning Styles

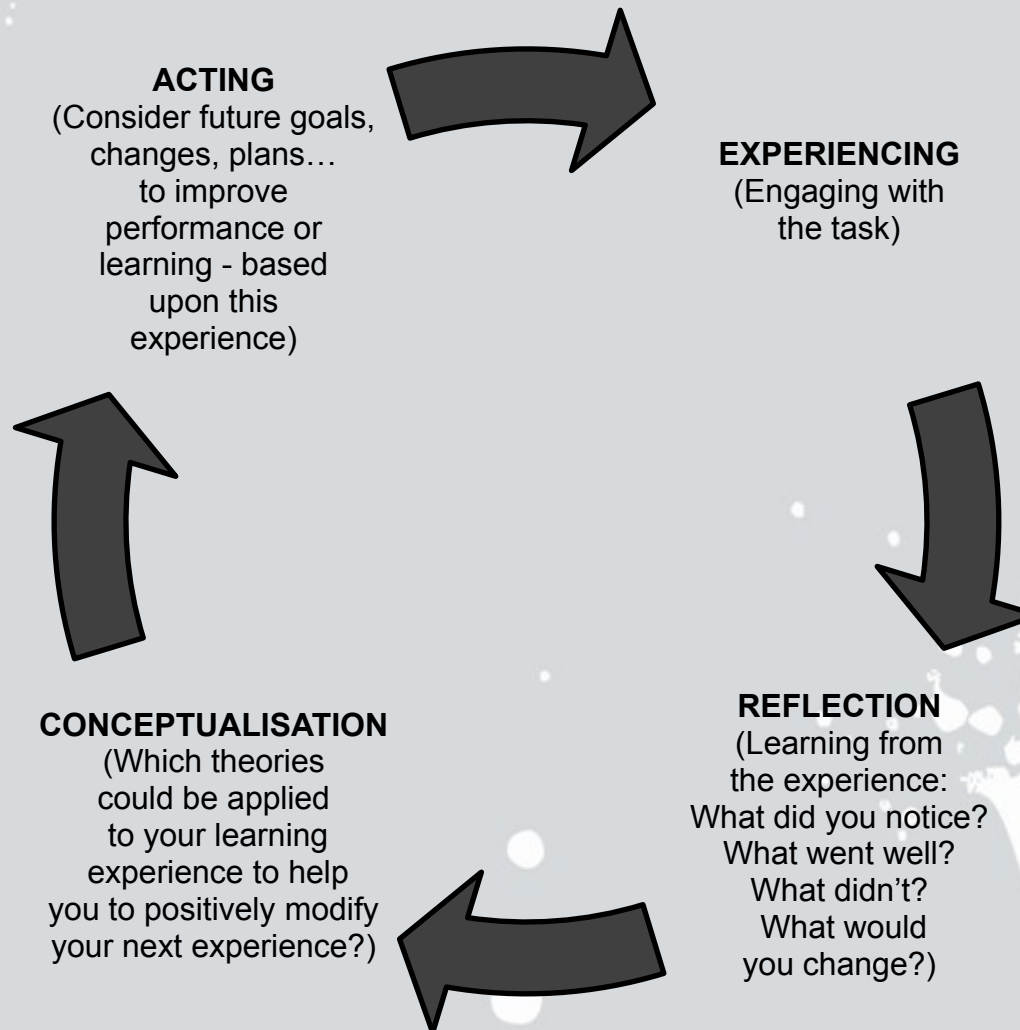
The Active Learner	The Reflective Learner
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• retains and understands information best by discussing it, applying it or explaining it to others• prefers group work• finds it difficult to be passive in lectures (i.e.: simply taking notes); requires interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• retains and understands information best by first considering it• tends to think before acting• prefers working alone• needs thinking time during lectures• likes to apply theory/models to information at hand

The Learning Cycle: David Kolb

- David Kolb: American educationalist and specialist in the field of organisational behaviour and education
- Kolb & associate, Roger Fry, developed models for experiential learning
- Kolb created the Learning Cycle model wherein he proposed a cyclical pattern with 4 stages:
 - Experiencing
 - Reflecting
 - Thinking/Conceptualizing
 - Acting
- Identify what happens in each of the four stages...

Kolb's Learning Cycle (1984)

[adapted from: <http://www.businessballs.com/kolblearningstyles.htm>]



Reflective Writing: The Benefits

- Strengthens learner autonomy
- Encourages insightful/critical* analysis (*both +ve/-ve)
- Provides a means of personal enrichment
- Records progress and areas requiring development
- Allows a better understanding of learning styles (pertaining to self and team members)
- Provides a forum to highlight skills [to teaching staff]
- Enables students to learn from their mistakes
- Can facilitate swift(er) completion of assignments
- Offers a tool for the setting of future goals (academic and work-related)

The Do's of Reflective Writing

- Think proactively, rather than reactively
- Maintain written notes of the processes behind syndicate/individual tasks
- Write in an academic style, but **use** the first person pronoun for this genre (in moderation)
- Support all points with specific but succinct examples
- Demonstrate critical and analytical thought
- Reflect with honesty (whether positive or negative)
- Apply theories/tools/models; cite relevant sources

The Don'ts of Reflective Writing

- Simply summarise or describe events
- Name group members (use Person A, Person B instead) or make cultural/racial generalisations
- Collaborate or collude with syndicate group members on individual reflective assignments
- Exaggerate, or conversely, be overly modest
- Write in a style that suggests 'thinking aloud'
- Use reflective writing for confessions/to betray confidences/reveal sensitive or confidential data
- Ramble or be repetitious

Handout: Exercise 2 – Effective Reflections?

1. Every group has structural features that define the way individuals interact with each other; this includes group composition and size, group norms, role relationships, group role clarity, group cohesiveness and status difference. The ways in which these factors are understood and managed determine the effectiveness of the group (Stephen & Arnold, 1997).
 - Relevant citation; suitably paraphrased
 - Offers a useful lead-in to syndicate work
 - Also provides an opening to refer to individuals
 - Presented in an academic style (clear, concise & in formal register); contains some repetition (i.e. group)

Cont'd

Handout: Exercise 2 – Effective Reflections?

2. The Indians usually have their way: they have been able to influence the Russian to agree with them even when it is glaringly obvious that some of the ideas are not noteworthy. Stefka, Jutta and I tend to just agree with their idea because of time constraints, while the Spanish group member only smiles without saying a word.

- Highly biased, subjective and opinionated
- Inconsistencies: some students have been named, for others – nationalities are given
- No solutions appear to have been sought/provided
- Some non-academic features (particularly description)

Cont'd

Handout: Exercise 2 – Effective Reflections?

3. Communication is a vital factor in interpersonal interaction; one of the most important aspects of effective group work is open communication. We have not been able to tap into each other's potential, hence we have been unsuccessful in distinguishing ourselves from the other syndicate groups.
- Attempt made to reflect; examples are needed
 - Reasonable opening statement, but first and second sentences are incoherent
 - Point about 'potential' appears unrelated to opening sentence, and to second clause within the sentence
 - Register is reasonably academic (tap into = informal)

Cont'd

Handout: Exercise 2 – Effective Reflections?

4. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a self-report instrument that establishes individual preferences, has been used to assess the behaviour of my group members. When I related each member's personality trait in the group to The Big Five Personality Model of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience, I discovered that most of us scored poorly on each part of the model (see appendix 2).

- An attempt has been made to cite a model for individual/group type classification
- Self-report instrument? (= psychometric questionnaire)
- Tense-use is inconsistent; has been = was
- Reference to appendix suggests some analysis has been done

Cont'd

Linguistic Features of Reflective Writing

- Clear and concise narrative style
- Non-biased language (i.e.: not emotive/judgmental)
- More verb phrases; fewer noun phrases
- Multi-clause sentences
- Use of the first person pronoun
- Academic caution/hedging phrases
- Temporal and causal/consequential lexis
- Smooth transitions with connectors/cohesive devices

Handout: Exercise 3 - Practice

- Write a short reflective sentence to demonstrate each of the following:
 1. An academic strength that has been advantageous to you in your studies.
 2. A personal skill that you must develop to secure greater success at university.
 3. Why syndicate group tasks are/are not beneficial for the enhancement of skills.

Non-Emotive Reflections

- ‘...He always wants to dominate. He feels his judgment is superior to others and so all members of the group must abide by any suggestions put forth by him...’ >
- ‘He could be defined as a self-elected leader who prefers to take control of group discussions.’
- ‘...I love challenges and always want to learn something new...’ >
- ‘I relish/thrive on the opportunity to be challenged and acquire new knowledge.’

Handout: Exercise 4 – Emotive Reflections

- Look at the excerpts in exercise 4 on your handout. These are authentic examples taken from a reflective assignment produced by an MBA student.
- Work with a partner to improve each excerpt by reducing the strong emotive reflections.

Characteristics of Reflective Writing

- Presents facts/feelings – in an intellectual discussion
- Synthesises processes and outcomes
- Demonstrates reflection on course materials
- Includes reference to theories
- Reveals decision-making processes
- Refers to skills used to fulfill individual/team goals
- Highlights skills needed for personal development
- States what was learnt from self and group members
- Identifies how conflicts and problems were managed
- Mentions actions planned to secure future success

Theoretical Reflections

- Cite theories/authors when referring to complex or controversial issues, or to support a reflective claim being made, e.g.:

Different discipline areas might be taught in a way that encourages either surface or deep learning. Ramsden (1979) shows that students can switch strategies to suit tasks, whilst Thomas and Bain (1982) argue that students develop a certain learning style and do not change it. A useful learning activity to encourage is the development of an awareness of how you are learning. This reflective assignment has provided us with an ideal opportunity to explore our learning approaches and to modify these in line with the tasks at hand. I felt that while one or two members of our syndicate group struggled with this concept, the majority were able to manage this with success to fulfil their roles within the group.

[Extract taken from Wisker, 2001: 88]

Exercise 5: Theoretical Reflections – Practice

- Look at the excerpts on your handout in exercise 5.
- Write a reflective paragraph incorporating and synthesising some of the theories or ideas presented here.

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Inovace jazykového vzdělávání

Thank you for your attention.

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