Excerpt from

Reflective Practice -Why different points of view matter

From a workbook developed for National Disability Services by: Barbel Winter, Managing Director, futures Upfront and Maria Katrivesis, Consultant and Trainer

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The Workbook

What is reflective practice?

Reflective practice is “a set of abilities and skills, to indicate the taking of a critical stance, an orientation to problem solving or state of mind” (Moon, 1999: 63).

It is the process of reflecting on our experience to improve our actions and professional practice. It involves looking at **how** and **why** we think and behave in any given situation. It’s about being conscious and aware of our actions and their consequences. It forces us to question **what** it is that we know and how we have come to know it.

A wide range of activities associated with thinking and learning about our work practices such as:

* self and peer assessment,
* problem-based learning,
* personal development planning, and
* group work

Can all be used to support a reflective practice approach.

Reflective practice encourages you to develop self-awareness and critically think about how our cultural frameworks, values and beliefs impact on our interactions with others. Regular reflective practice helps increase your awareness of your personal lens(es). It can support you to develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of your work performance, which can lead to opportunities for professional growth and development.

Thoughtful Action vs Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is different to the everyday thoughtful action, or reflection on the go:

| Thoughtful Action | Reflective Practice |
| --- | --- |
| Is instantaneous – one decides what to do next, thinking about it for only a split second | Requires one to take time out to reflect. It involves a conscious attempt to plan, describe, and reflect on the process and outcomes of the action |
| There is no cycle of clearly defined separate phases. It is an unpredictable sequence because one responds to events in the situation itself. | It is a clear cycle of separate moments in which one engages in completely different activities. |
| There is no describing moment, because one is engaged in acting. | As reflection occurs after action, one creates an observational record and describes the results of the action. |
| One is not aiming at an improvement to the practice. One is thinking about how best to do what one always does. | The major aim is to produce an improvement to the practice. |
| There is no element of inquiry and one is not deliberately setting out to learn something from experience. | One designs and uses inquiry strategies to find out more about one’s practice. |

(Phillips, Bain, McNaught, Rice, & Tripp; 1999)

Thinking on your feet vs Reflective Practice

All of us, at some moment in our day or week, will need to react and make a decision very quickly. We reflect briefly on the situation and make a decision based on that momentary reflection. This is sometimes called: “thinking on our feet” or “reflection on the go”. People say that during these times they are operating on their instincts and are relying on previous experience and their skills to get them through the situation. These are very valuable skills to have. They enable us to act quickly. During these moments we are thinking about how best to do what we have always done. There is no element of inquiry and we are not deliberately setting out to learn something from this experience.

Reflective Practice is a conscious attempt to plan, describe, and reflect on a process and outcomes of an action. The major aim is to produce an improvement to work practice. To do this we need to consciously take time out to reflect. It involves a clear cycle of separate moments in which you are engaged in completely different activities. This is quite different to “thinking on your feet”, and allows you to share your thought processes with others, thereby not just benefiting your own learning but the learning of your teams and organisation as a whole.

How do we do Reflective Practice?

There are many tools and resources available to help you reflect on your work practice: what they all have in common is a process that enables you to look back or observe what happened, reflect and learn, and identify and apply a different approach next time.

This section will introduce you to two of them:

* Reflective Practice Cycle
* Johari Window Model
  + 1. Reflective Practice Cycle:

One simple approach uses four discreet stages. Each stage involves asking yourself a series of critical questions in order to ‘unpack’ a situation and understand it from a range of standpoints, including your own and other people’s. It challenges you to think about your assumptions and identify any underlying issues that may have impacted on the situation. It acknowledges that it is okay to make mistakes as long as we learn from them.

The simple diagram below describes the four stages of reflective practice. These are:

1. Describe
2. Reflection
3. Implementation
4. Evaluation

Fig 1: Reflective Practice Cycle:

**Reflective Practice Key Questions:**

Below outlines some of the key questions for each stage of the reflective practice cycle to help you unpack and reflect on the situation or event.

1. Describe (the situation)  
Consider:   
- What do I understand about the current situation?  
- What assumptions am I making?  
- What are the underlying issues?

2. Reflect (on what happened)  
Consider:  
- From whose point of view am I seeing the situation?  
- How do I test my assumptions?  
- Do I need to address any of the underlying issues?  
-What skills do I have?  
-What skills do I need to develop?

3. Act (Determine how you would respond next time/in a similar situation)  
Consider:  
-(New) strategies I will now implement?  
-What impact will this have on my work practice?  
-What impact will this have on my organisation?

4. Review (your actions)  
Consider:  
-Has there been change?  
-How have I shared the learning?

Like everything, it takes practice to get used to asking yourself these types of questions, especially when you have to think about your assumptions and preconceptions. It can be easier to reflect on our work practice when we can sit with others and think critically about it. The reflective practice framework described above in figures 1 and 2 is a great tool that can be used as an individual exercise or in a team environment. By developing and using reflective practice you will be able to bring forward ideas to help improve and enhance you own practice and the practice of others. Reflective practice can be a useful tool for sharing individual learning and improving overall team work-practice. In this context, reflective practice becomes a powerful tool for building individual and organisational cultural competence. For more information about cultural competence and person centred practice see Workbooks 2.3 and 2.4.

Have a look at [**this video**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ahg6qcgoay4).

What did you notice? What didn’t you notice? Why?

Building our self-awareness is a critical skill and the first step for developing person centred practice across cultures. It can be difficult to develop self-awareness on our own. As the video above “Test your awareness” demonstrates, we don’t see our own blind spots but we can be a mirror for other people’s blind spots as they can be for ours.

* + 1. The Johari Window:

The Johari Window is a simple tool for looking at and developing self-awareness and understanding between individuals within a group. Initially developed by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham it is used in both business and organisational contexts.

The Johari Window can be used to document information; including feelings, experience, views, attitudes, skills, intentions, motivation, within or about a person, or in relation to their group.

It is a very useful tool to help you identify your blind spots or those of your team. It is most effective when used by teams that have already established trust and have confidence in each other.

This is viewed from four perspectives:

Know to self Not known to self

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Open | Blind |
| Hidden | Unknown |

Know to Others

Not Known to others

1. What is known to you about yourself and also known by others **(open area)**?
2. What is unknown by you about yourself but which others know   
   **(blind area**)?
3. What you know about yourself that others do not know   
   **(hidden area)**?
4. What is unknown to you about yourself and is also unknown by others **(unknown area)?**

This model can be used in a reflective practice session with your team to increase self-awareness of individuals and groups to managing response to change.