

Reflection on Practice

Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning. It involves paying critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively.

Reflective practice can be an important tool in professional learning settings where people learn from their own professional experiences, rather than from formal learning or knowledge. It is an important way to bring together theory and practice and through reflection, a person is able to see and label forms of thought and theory within the context of his or her work. A person who reflects throughout his or her practice is not just looking back on past actions and events, but is taking a conscious look at emotions, experiences, actions, and responses, and using that information to add to his or her existing knowledge base and reach a higher level of understanding.

Carroll, Smith and Whewell (2008)¹ describe reflection as “...a process to be engaged in rather than a product that can be acquired by ticking the appropriate box.” The authors suggest that asking questions of those ‘taken for granted moments’ acts as a key to reflective practice and they suggest that tools that can be used are ones such as learning journals, critical incident analysis as well as coaching and mentoring. Mentoring and coaching is also highlighted as a tool for reflective practice in the Cosán Framework for Teachers’ Learning.²

The emergence in more recent years of blogging has been seen as another form of reflection on experience in a technological age. The Teaching Council plans to further explore how;

“...cycles of planning, evidence gathering, reflection and ongoing learning” will inform reflection for leadership learning. Their exploration of models of portfolio-based learning and the potential of ICT based solutions likewise could be helpful tools for reflective practice by both aspiring and established leaders.

¹Carroll M, Smith S and Whewell C. (2008) Creating Contexts for Practice-Based Learning cited in Reeves J. and Fox A, Practice Based Learning Developing Excellence in Teaching Dunedin Academic Press Ltd

²<http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Teacher-Education/Cosan-Framework-for-Teachers-Learning.pdf>