

Incorporating Reflective Learning into Work Based Learning

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The aims of the session were to consider:

What do we mean by reflective learning

Why do we use it

How can it help- the individual and the organisation

How does it challenge other forms of learning

This session considered this issue in the context of current practice using examples which are relevant to healthcare.

The session was undertaken as a guided discussion around the key issues.

What do we mean by reflective learning?

The session began with a discussion of what is meant by reflective learning: this looked especially at the work of a number of writers notably Revans' original definition of Learning = Programmed knowledge plus Questioning insight; the combination of Kolb's experiential learning cycle with Honey & Mumford learning cycle and styles as activist, reflector, theorist and pragmatist. Finally Schon's work on the development of the reflective practitioner through the sequence of moments as part of reflection in action. This sequence of moments proceeds from routine response followed by surprise then by reflection then by questioning assumptions which lead to on the spot experiment.

Why do we use it

The issues identified as important are:

Because it is a developmental and educational process

It highlights the differences between learning and training

It clarifies "what has been going on" to all the stakeholders

This is seen by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education as of increasing importance because the distinction between taught, research and reflective elements of postgraduate study are increasingly combining two or more of these elements.

The current challenge for both the academic and management community is in developing an understanding of how to assess reflective learning, and reference was made to Tom Bourners recent 2003 article on the subject published in Education and Training Vol 45(5) p267-272 in which he sets out a useful guide to both Questions as tools for critical thinking and Questions as tools for reflective thinking.

How can it help the individual and the organisation?

Through its capacity to increase both personal and organisational development. Examples of this were shown from an award winning management project undertaken at Middlesex University. This text taken from Shaun Lincolns dissertation showed the integration of single ,double and treble loop learning , developed by both Argyris and Schon, as part of the integrated write up of the text for his masters dissertation. In so doing it surfaces and challenges management theory in practice through a work based learning project.

This approach is particularly important to the motivation of adult learners who seek practical application for learning; this was then further operationalised in the seminar through reference to Hargroves model of transformative coaching which summarises *single loop learning* as Acting - changing our behaviour, *double loop learning* as Reframing - changing our thinking, and *treble loop learning* as Transforming through changing our perceptions, often by acknowledging who we are and the influence that has on how we interpret things.

How does it challenge other forms of learning?

It puts the learner into learning

Developing self awareness leads to change

Learning becomes an iterative process

Challenges certainty and self

Can be individual or group

Reference was made in this section to both Carl Rogers' 10 Reflections on significant learning taken from his 1969 book *Freedom to Learn*, and Dorothy Rowes 1988 book *The Successful Self* in which she suggests increased awareness and understanding are critical developmental tools for the individual.

Key Text recommended for further reading and reflection was:

Reflective Learning in Practice 2002 A. Brockbank I McGill & N. Beech Gower
Publishing Abingdon