

4

How does reflection help to support workplace learning?

Mary Northrop

Introduction

In this chapter we demonstrate how reflection enables you to understand workplace and course events as learning incidents. We focus on introducing the concept of reflection and provide an overview of different models of reflection. We introduce some of the skills required to become a reflective practitioner which will be developed further in Chapter 5.

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 1 Understand the concept of reflection.
- 2 Identify different models of reflection that promote learning in the workplace.
- 3 Understand the role that reflection plays in demonstrating evidence of learning in the workplace.
- 4 Apply different models of reflection to practice.

What is reflection?

Defining reflection

Common descriptions of reflection describe it as the skill of being able to look at situations in order to understand what has been learnt and what future learning needs to occur. Most agree that using reflection increases your self-awareness as a practitioner and this in turn can lead to your development within the workplace.

For example, Boud et al (1985: 19, cited in Ghaye and Lillyman 2006: 7) describes reflection as 'a generic term from those intellectual and effective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to a new understanding and appreciation'. The importance here is that reflection is seen as learning from experience (experiential learning) whereby understanding and knowledge are developed through action. This is addressed in more detail in Chapter 2.

The following Time Out activity is designed to help you consider the purpose of using reflection in the workplace.

Time Out: Using reflection in the workplace

Think of an occasion where you found yourself thinking about something you had performed in practice. (This could be a skill you are doing for the first time or interacting with a client or colleague.)

- **What did you focus on?**
- **Why did you think this was important?**
- **What did you learn from thinking about what you did and why?**
- **What knowledge did you realize you already had?**

The situation you choose will differ in terms of what the focus of your reflection was. You may have chosen something practical, or to put into action something you have recently learnt, or develop new ways of working. The important thing is that you tried to identify what went well and what could have been improved. This may have resulted in a range of feelings including being happy with what worked, or feeling anxious with things that did not go well. An important aspect of learning from the situation you have chosen is to consider how a work colleague you respect may deal with this differently. Your workplace mentor might be a suitable role model for you to share this exercise with to find out how they may have handled the situation. This will enable you to highlight gaps in your knowledge or skill base and how you might address these in a supportive environment. Useful questions you might ask to structure this process (Ghaye and Lillyman 2000: 61) include:

- What is my practice like?
- Why is it like this?
- How has it come to be this way?
- What would I like to improve, how and why?

These questions enable you to look at taken-for-granted routines or practices in order to alter care delivery and either improve the quality of your existing practice or develop new practice.

Why would you apply reflection to your practice?

The ability to reflect on practice in the workplace helps you to learn at work for work, and can enhance your ability to solve work based problems and the quality of the care you provide, ensuring a deep approach to your learning. The literature reports the many benefits of using reflection at work. Ghaye and Lillyman (2000: xiv) list 12 principles of reflection that are useful for understanding the contribution that it can make to enhancing your learning and your practice:

- 1 Reflective practice is about you and your work.
- 2 Reflective practice is about learning from experience.

- 3 Reflective practice is about valuing what we do and why we do it.
- 4 Reflective practice is about learning how to account positively for ourselves and our work.
- 5 Reflective practice does not separate practice and theory.
- 6 Reflective practice can help us make sense of our thoughts and actions.
- 7 Reflective practice generates locally owned knowledge.
- 8 The reflective conversation is at the heart of the process of reflecting-on-practice.
- 9 Reflection emphasizes the links between values and actions.
- 10 Reflection can improve practice.
- 11 Reflective practitioners develop themselves and their work systematically and rigorously.
- 12 Reflection involves respecting and working with evidence.

Undertaking the following Time Out activity will enable you to relate this to your practice.

Time Out: How do you apply reflection in your workplace?

Consider the 12 points above in relation to your own practice. Can you think of how you may apply these in your own workplace?

Having discussed the principles of reflection, Taylor (2006) suggests some useful tips for planning and developing reflection skills. Think about these and determine whether any of these tips are useful for your own development. She includes:

- *Taking and making the time to do so by consciously committing to the process and fitting it into an already busy life.* How would you do this?
- *Making the effort by recognizing the value of reflection.* How can you work with your mentor to recognize the role that reflection plays in your learning?
- *Being determined to gain the skills and continue to use them regardless of other commitments or barriers.* What barriers might prevent you from reflecting in the workplace?
- *Having the courage to look at oneself and one's practice and developing solutions which may affect both oneself and others.* How can you develop this confidence and courage?
- *Using humour.* Seeing the 'funny side of life' can also be beneficial in changing practice. When might humour be appropriate and inappropriate?

Having answered these questions, make a note to yourself to revisit your thoughts and feelings at a later date during your FD course. You may choose to use these notes as part of a course assignment or as evidence in your portfolio.

Simon, a first year FD student, explains how he has begun to develop his skills of reflection.

During the first term of the Foundation Degree we were introduced to reflection. This was a word that I had not heard of before but soon realized that this was something which I did in my everyday life but did not consciously engage with this activity. The use of questions to make sense of what I was doing really helped me engage with reflection and to give meaning to my learning.

I chose a really good reflective framework which enabled me to structure my thinking, and I kept a reflective diary to make notes about critical incidents that occurred in the workplace, on aspects of my learning which needed to be further developed, questions to ask my course tutors and workplace mentor, and general notes about links to reading on the course to help me deepen my learning about key concepts. Those notes were invaluable to me during the course as I was able to reflect on the stages of my own personal development as well as rechecking my learning. When it comes to writing the portfolio I will have a range of really useful evidence I can draw upon to demonstrate how I have met the course learning outcomes.

What models and frameworks can you use for reflection?

There are a range of models and frameworks that have been developed and applied across a variety of settings to enable reflection to be a rigorous and structured process. Here we will focus on four approaches:

- 1 Schön's Theory of Reflection;
- 2 Kolb's Learning Cycle;
- 3 Gibb's Reflective Cycle;
- 4 Driscoll's Developmental Model.

Each approach will be described in turn, with a range of Time Out activities, to enable you to apply them to your practice.

Schön's Theory of Reflection

Schön's (1996) theory of reflection has three main aspects:

- knowing-in-action;
- reflecting-in-action;
- reflection-in-practice.

'Knowing-in-action' is integral to what you do. In order to practise you bring into play what you know and apply this to your actions. The second aspect, 'reflecting-in-action', relates to the ability to think while doing and adapting your own actions to meet the needs of the situation. Schön suggests that this change of action may become part of later practice because if it works you will incorporate this into your repertoire of skills. 'Reflection-in-practice' is explained as looking at the individual's practice as a whole and examining different aspects. Schön suggests that because much of practice is repetitive or similar you can become automatic and 'burnt out'. You see what you expect to see, rather than what is there. By reflecting-in-practice you may be able to recognize where the use of tacit knowledge may be affecting practice and correct this.

Schön suggests reflection-in-practice includes both looking at the situation when it is occurring (reflection in action) and looking back at practice (reflection on action). He also considers that part of reflection includes pre-planning of what you want to reflect on. This is an important consideration when you are undertaking your FD course as you may undertake structured learning activities which ask you to reflect on an aspect of your existing knowledge base or skill set. Undertake the following Time Out activity to help you apply Schön's theory of reflection to a pre-planned aspect of your practice.

Time Out: Pre-planned reflection

Applying Schön's theory of reflection

One of the main functions associated with admission of patients or clients to hospital or to a clinic is that of assessment. Reflect on the last time you completed an assessment and consider the following:

- 1 How did you complete the assessment?**
 - a. Did you use closed or open questions?**
 - b. Who did most of the talking, you or the client?**
 - c. Were there any aspects of the assessment that you completed without asking a question?**
- 2 Is there a different approach you could use and still get the same information?**
- 3 What factors influenced your approach to the documentation?**
 - a. Who are you emulating and why?**
 - b. What is your attitude to completing the assessment?**
 - c. Do you adapt your approach to the needs of the client?**

Next time you complete the assessment form, try changing how you collect the information for one of the aspects being assessed.

- 1 When you changed your approach, how effective was it?**
- 2 Would you incorporate the new approach to your future practice?**
- 3 In completing the exercise, what did you learn about your attitude to completing assessment documentation?**

However, Schön's theory also incorporates unplanned reflection where you adapt within a situation when something unexpected occurs, by reflecting-in-action. Try the following Time Out activity to help you apply this theory to your practice.

Time Out: Reflection-in-action

Think back to an occasion where you changed what you were doing because the situation was not as expected. What was it about the situation that prompted you to adapt what you were doing? What knowledge did you have to enable you to adapt? What was the result?

Schön provides a range of opportunities for reflection and learning in the workplace. As an FD student and/or a practitioner, you bring with you some 'know how' and will be able to apply this to new situations. This knowledge may have been gained from the classroom or your own reading around an issue, or alternatively from observing others (social learning). The concept of social learning is explored in Chapter 3. Knowing-in-action combined with reflection-in-action then allows you to realize when your practice or knowledge base needs changing or adapting. Depending on the task at hand, you may also be supervised, perhaps by a workplace mentor, allowing you to learn from their experience, and this in turn can provide a safety net and sounding board for you to explore your learning needs. As you become more experienced, reflection-in-practice will become integral to your lifelong learning (LLL) and allow you to make informed decisions at the point of care delivery.

Figure 4.1 demonstrates how Schön's theory of reflection can be applied to your practice.

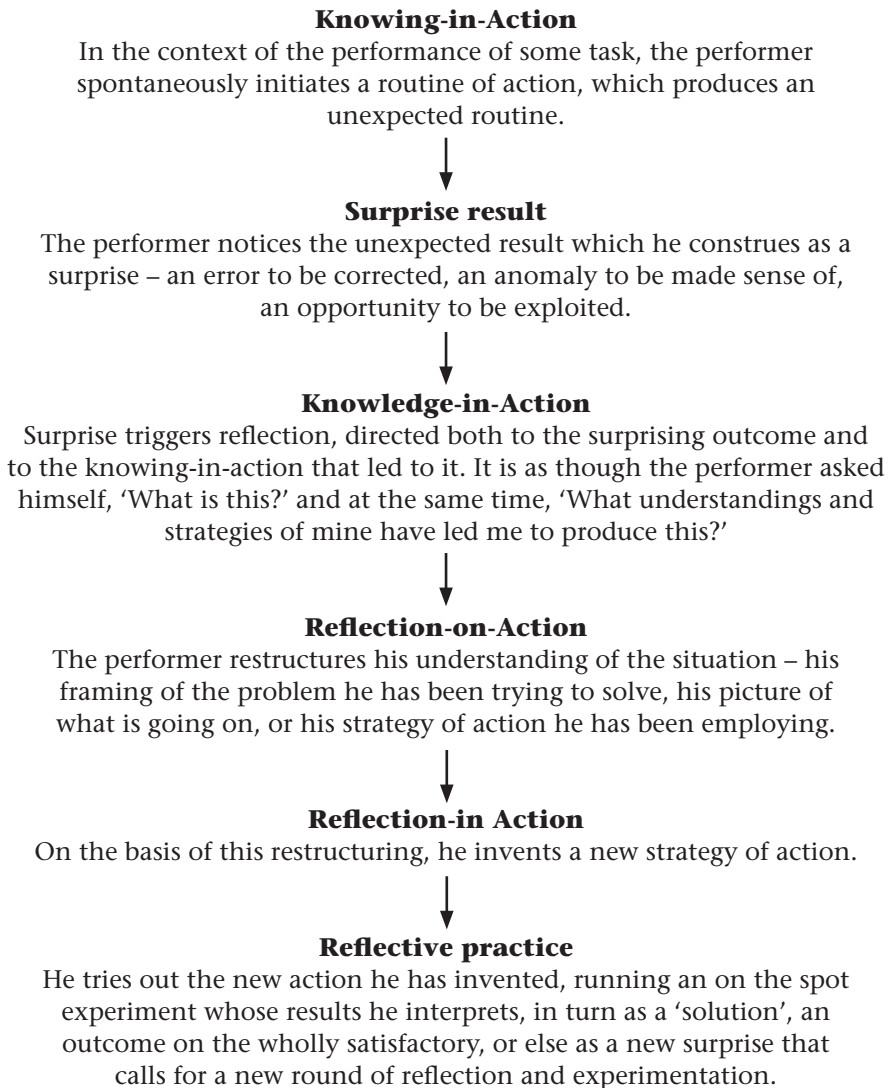


Figure 4.1 Reflection in Action

Source: Redmond, B. (2006) Reflection in Action. Aldershot: Ashgate Press, p. 37.

Adapted from Schön (1983: 49–69, 1992: 58).

Reproduced with permission from Ashgate Press.

Kolb's Learning Cycle

Kolb's learning cycle (1984) has, as the central focus, the concept of learning through experience and includes reflection as part of this process. It describes four main stages to learning from experience within the workplace: abstract conceptualization; active experimentation; concrete experience and reflective observation. These aspects

interlink to form a cycle of learning. The cycle can be repeated to continue the learning process. In order to apply this learning cycle to your own practice we have designed the following Time Out activity so that you can move through each phase of the cycle.

Time Out: Applying Kolb's learning cycle to your workplace

Demonstrating a skill – consider a skill which you need to develop i.e. preparing a trolley for an aseptic procedure and then work through the stages below.

Abstract conceptualization

Part of your learning in the workplace and acquiring new skills will involve you demonstrating your skill development to your mentor. You will need to plan how you will demonstrate that you are competent in your new skill. You will need to show that you understand the evidence base and your organization's policy and procedures; that you are able to safely perform the skill taking into consideration the client's needs; your role and boundaries and that you clearly document your actions.

Active experimentation

This stage of Kolb's cycle involves you designing and planning your demonstration and how you will perform this with your mentor.

Concrete experience

This stage involves you demonstrating your chosen skill to your mentor.

Reflective observation

The reflective observation will incorporate your own reflections and that of your mentor. Consider what went well and what you would change next time you perform your chosen skill. Your mentor may agree with your views and will suggest how your skill performance could be enhanced.

Continuing the cycle

Having worked through the cycle once, you will see that the above example can follow the cycle through again, based on what was decided following the reflective observation.

Gibb's Reflective Cycle

Gibb's (1988) reflective cycle is a well-known cyclical model used for reflection. The model consists of six stages: (1) description, (2) feelings, (3) evaluation, (4) situational analysis, (5) conclusion, and (6) action plan and can be repeated to continue the learning process. Gibb's cycle is designed to relate to a chosen critical learning incident and unlike Kolb, the cycle starts with the description of the event and stops at the action plan. The description of the event allows you to consider factual aspects that place the reflection into context.

The *second stage* enables you to consider your thoughts and feelings. This is where the model differs from others in that it encourages you to address both the factual and subjective aspects of the chosen event.

The *third stage*, evaluation of the event, encourages you to consider areas that went well and those that could be improved and therefore begins the identification of what knowledge or skills you need to develop.

The *fourth stage*, the analysis of the situation, directs you to look at what you know and what you do not know from the chosen incident, but by also examining actions, it enables you to link theory with practice and vice versa, which is an integral part of WBL.

The *fifth stage*, conclusion of what could have been done differently, allows you to consider other strategies which were not used and whether they would have been applicable. The last stage is the formulation of an action plan. This encourages you to consider the way forward, and how the knowledge and skills identified may be applied to your future practice. Gibb's cycle is commonly used in FD courses because it offers a rigorous and structured approach to reflection which helps you to develop the skill of reflection in and on practice. The following Time Out activity will enable you to compare and contrast Kolb's and Gibb's cyclical frameworks and apply these to your own learning needs.

Time Out: Applying Kolb's and Gibb's models to your own learning needs

Both Kolb and Gibb use a cyclical approach in their models. Consider the points below and note down your thoughts:

What are the main differences between the two approaches?
What are the similarities?
What type of learning opportunities do you think will be more appropriate for you to use Kolb's model for reflection?
What type of learning opportunities do you think will be more appropriate for you to use Gibb's model for reflection?

You may have noted that Kolb's cycle can be applied to any learning that occurs in practice, whereas Gibb's model has more of an emotional component and therefore lends itself to complex situations which include examining relationships and ethical aspects of practice. Gibb's model provides more structure than Kolb's cycle, but both emphasize the experience of an event and re-applying the knowledge at a future date. Kolb's and Gibb's models suggest that reflection is cyclical and, like Schön, emphasize the importance of applying learning back into practice and reflecting on its usefulness.

All three models are relevant to your workplace and it is up to you to work with whichever model you feel most comfortable with. This may vary depending on the focus of your reflection. Ask your FD tutors and your workplace mentor to support you in your choice and application of an appropriate model for reflection.

Driscoll's Model of Reflection

John Driscoll's (2007) model of reflection differs from the former models described as it is based on a linear or developmental approach. The model offers trigger questions that enable you to develop your practice and is based on Borton's (1970) education model which uses three developmental questions:

- What?
- So what?
- Now what?

Within these three areas you are encouraged to select the questions you feel are appropriate to your reflection on practice. These are described in Figure 4.2.

1 A description of the event

WHAT? Trigger questions:

- Is the purpose of returning to this situation?
- Happened?
- Did I see/do?
- Was my reaction to it?
- Did other people do who were involved in this?

2 An analysis of the event

SO WHAT? Trigger questions:

- How did I feel at the time of the event?
- Were those feelings I had any different from those of other people who were also involved at the time?
- Are my feelings now, after the event, any different from what I experienced at the time?
- Do I still feel troubled, if so, in what way?
- What were the effects of what I did (or did not do)?
- What positive aspects now emerge for me from the event that happened in practice?
- What have I noticed about my behaviour in practice by taking a more measured look at it?
- What observations does any person helping me to reflect on my practice make of the way I acted at the time?

3 Proposed actions following event

NOW WHAT? Trigger questions:

- What are the implications for me and others in clinical practice based on what I have described and analysed?
- What difference does it make if I choose to do nothing?
- Where can I get more information to face a similar situation again?
- How can I modify my practice if a similar situation was to happen again?
- What help do I need to help me 'action' the results of my reflection?
- Which aspect should be tackled first?
- How will I notice that I am any different in clinical practice?
- What is the main learning that I take from reflecting on my practice in this way?

Figure 4.2 Driscoll's model of reflection

Source: Driscoll (2007: 44).

The first of the three questions, 'What?', enables you to consider the context in which reflection is taking place. It asks you to describe the situation and within that situation what is being reflected on. By providing a description of the event, either verbally or by writing things down, you may see different perspectives, or clarify the issue that you wish to reflect on.

The ‘So What?’ begins the analysis of the event. It enables you to try and make sense of the situation in relation to your own learning both emotionally and practically. It allows you to explore your perceptions of the event and whether they are similar to others involved. It will also enable you to reflect on any changes that are necessary in your own practice, either through changing your attitude or values, or by highlighting gaps in your knowledge or skills base.

The ‘Now What?’ aspect of the model follows on from the analysis and leads to new learning or applying what you have learnt back to the same or a similar situation. The following Time Out activity will help you to find a suitable model of reflection that will work for you.

Time Out: Finding a reflective model that works for you!

The previous section has outlined a range of models and frameworks for reflecting on learning in the workplace. From the models provided consider:

- **Which model/framework do you prefer and why?**
- **Which model/framework do you think you are less likely to use and why?**
- **Do any of the models/frameworks relate to how you have used reflection in the past?**

Your choice of model may be influenced by the amount of structure you need in order to reflect effectively. Some of you will prefer a broader approach such as Schön, where you decide what to ask. Others will prefer a more comprehensive list of questions, for example, those provided by Driscoll. For some of you, flexibility is more important and you may develop experience in using a range of models/frameworks. More detailed examples of how to apply Driscoll’s and Gibb’s models are provided in Chapter 5. After reading Chapter 5 you may like to review the exercise above and see if your initial thoughts have changed.

Fatima, an FD graduate student reflects on her experiences of using a range of different models.

When I began to formalize my reflection on my Foundation Degree, I chose Gibb’s model as I liked the structure it provided. This is because I was not really used to thinking in a structured way and lacked the confidence to reflect on my own. However, as I became more confident during the course I began to experiment with a range of different models.

I found that I liked Driscoll’s model because it was less formal than Gibb’s and gave me more chance to develop my skills of reflection. Our action learning set enabled me to understand that my peers have different preferences and needs when choosing a model of reflection. The

most important thing is that you should choose one that suits you. This may vary as you gain confidence in your ability to reflect in and on action and at different stages of your learning. My peers helped me enormously to understand how we all have different styles and preferences. The essential thing is that there is no 'one size fits all' approach. Choose what suits you best and works well for you.

How do you demonstrate reflection in your Foundation Degree course?

In Chapter 1, Tom Aird talks about the importance of your FD course helping you to identify your learning needs, developing learning opportunities to enhance your knowledge base, and recording your learning through a range of structured activities. Your FD course will enable you to focus on specific aspects of WBL and to aid your decision-making in relation to answering the questions: *What do I need to learn?*, *What do I already know?* and *How can I incorporate this in to my future work?*

For example, one of the assignments for your FD course might include discussing a **case study** and how you would implement change to practice in your clinical area. Consider the following case study example:

Case study

An FD student employed as a Health Care Assistant in a district nursing team regularly visits care homes to undertake leg ulcer dressings which have been prescribed by a registered professional. While doing so she notes that one client's legs are not being washed. She has learnt that this will impair wound healing (*learning identified*). She initially examines the evidence-base that underpins recommended care guidelines for leg ulcers (*learning added*), and then discusses this with her mentor and one of the care home managers. The result of this reflection is the development of a training programme as part of her FD assessment (*learning recognized*) for care home staff. This training programme provides best practice guidelines for leg ulcer care and is now being implemented in other care homes in the area. For this project she received a distinction in her FD course and an award for outstanding practice achievement.

Jasper (2006) provides criteria for selecting a reflective framework which also acts as a checklist in relation to what you want to reflect on, how you wish to reflect and the purpose of reflection. These criteria may be useful in your FD course and you can see the framework in Figure 4.3.

What am I trying to achieve?

- My own learning or identification of my learning needs
- Increased understanding
- To take a different perspective on an experience or event
- Practice development

How do I want to reflect?

- In my head
- Verbally: in a dialogue, in a group, with facilitation
- In writing

Who do I want to reflect with?

- Myself
- One other person
- Other colleagues/students
- My supervisor/academic tutor
- Another group of people

What sort of structure do I want to use?

- Broad questions
- Specific questions
- A reflective cycle
- A framework that leads me towards action
- A framework that leads me towards a deeper understanding
- A facilitative and developmental framework

When do I want to reflect?

- Immediately
- After I get home from work
- During the next session at university
- During **clinical supervision**
- At some other convenient time

Where do I want to reflect?

- Within the clinical environment
- At home
- At university
- In a quiet area away from the clinical environment
- In a neutral place

What are the values underpinning and inherent to the model?

- How do these fit with my own values as a practitioner?

Figure 4.3 Criteria for selecting a reflective framework

Source: Jasper (2006: 62).

The following Time Out activity enables you to apply these criteria to your FD course.

Time Out: Using Jasper's criteria to select an appropriate reflective framework

An important part of WBL is to understand what you need to achieve in order to meet the learning outcomes for your FD course. Looking at one of your course's learning outcomes, identify an aspect of practice that you wish to reflect on. Use Jasper's criteria above in Figure 4.3, decide how you are going to carry out the reflection and why.

Developing new knowledge through reflection

Your FD course will encourage you to reflect on different types of knowledge. This is likely to include:

- *Scientific knowledge* – the evidence base which underpins your practice. Examples include national benchmark standards, National Institute Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines, research evidence, quality measures, policies and procedures.
- *Personal knowledge* – knowledge you have gained through experience, some of which you may not be aware of. This type of knowledge comes from your life experiences in general and interaction with those around you as well as your interests and passions. This is also known as **tacit knowledge**.
- *Practical/aesthetic knowledge* – understanding how you do things in practice and includes interpersonal skills. The use of touch, verbal and non-verbal communication skills helps you to demonstrate empathy and to build a relationship with the clients and their families within your care.
- *Traditional knowledge* – the way in which things have always been done in practice.
- *Knowledge from authority* – this can include policies, procedures and evidence based guidelines or national standards.
- *Trial and error* – experimenting until you find what works.
- *Role modelling* – emulating someone else who you respect and adapting your practice to include their ways of working/thinking/behaving in practice.
- *Ethical knowledge* – understanding right from wrong and applying professional values and attitudes to your practice. This might include, for example, understanding the legal aspects of drug administration or safeguarding vulnerable adults. It includes your duty of care, responsibility and accountability to abide by professional codes of conduct and maintain confidentiality.

(Ghaye and Lillyman (2000).

Try the following Time Out activity to help you think about the types of knowledge you use in your workplace practice.

Time Out: What knowledge do you use in the workplace?

Looking at an aspect of your workplace duties, write down the different types of knowledge which you drew on to carry out the task/skill.

You might find that you have used all of the types of knowledge we have referred to in this Time Out activity but you were unaware of this. Reflection therefore enables you to gain a better understanding of the types of knowledge you apply to your workplace practice.

This chapter has introduced different models and frameworks for reflection which you could use on your FD or in the workplace. In Chapter 5 we will discuss how you may use a range of different strategies and tools to help you develop as a reflective learner.

Key learning points

- Reflection will support a deep approach to learning as it allows you to consider a situation and identify what you have learnt and any further learning needs.
- The model or framework you choose is personal and may be influenced by the context of the event you are reflecting on.
- Jasper (2006) provides criteria for selecting a reflective framework which also acts as a checklist to ensure effective reflection on practice.
- Reflection enables you to explore a range of knowledge which may be required in your workplace, including scientific, personal, practical and trial and error.

Critical review questions

- Which model or framework of reflection suits your learning style?
- How can reflection enhance your workplace role?
- What new knowledge have you developed as a result of reflection?

Reading for interest

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