

## Reflecting on professional practice in the biosciences

Reflection is thinking about something you are doing, have done or something that has happened (Hickson, 2011).

- Reflection in action: thought we take whilst doing something/undergoing something
- Reflection on action: thought we take after doing something/undergoing something

What is critically reflective practice?

Not just thinking about what happened, but also on our beliefs and values underpinning our assumptions and decision making. Thinking about the social context, and about how we can develop our practice in the future.

But how do I do it (Bassot, 2013)?

Reflective writing is not:

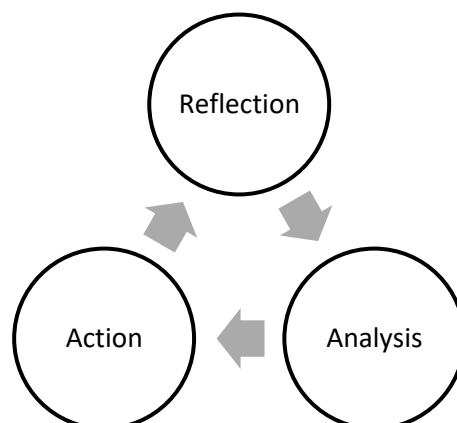
- Simply a description of what happened
- Written in the third person
- Objective
- About planning what you will do next time
- Something that can't be rushed

Reflective writing is:

- Written in first person and more personal
- Useful for evaluating your experiences
- Honest
- Subjective
- Record of your thoughts and experiences
- Investment of time

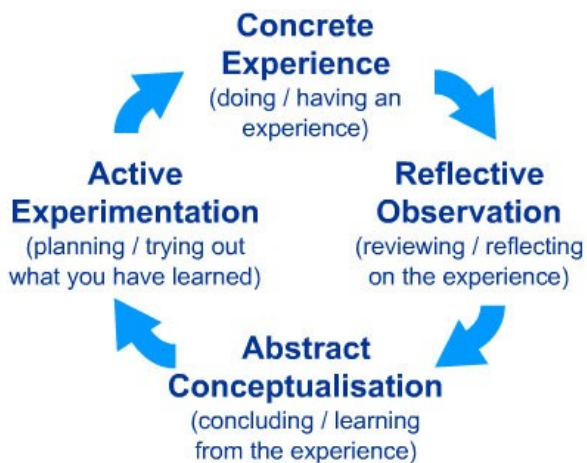
A useful structure for reflective writing (Knott and Scragg, 2011)

- Reflection: focus and write freely on an issue or concern relating to your practice
- Analysis: what is happening? What assumptions am I making? What does this mean? How else can I look at this?
- Action: What am I going to do? How can I learn from this? What do I do if it happens again?

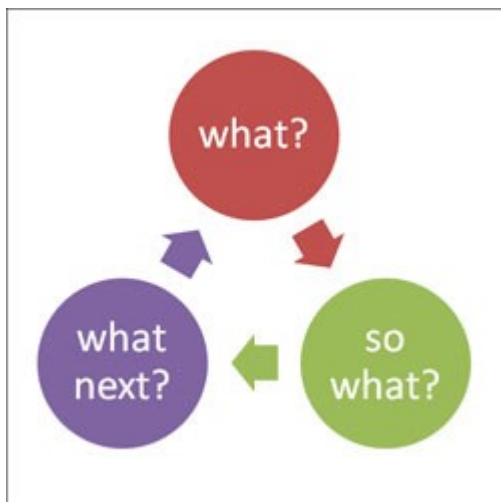


Other models for reflection exist

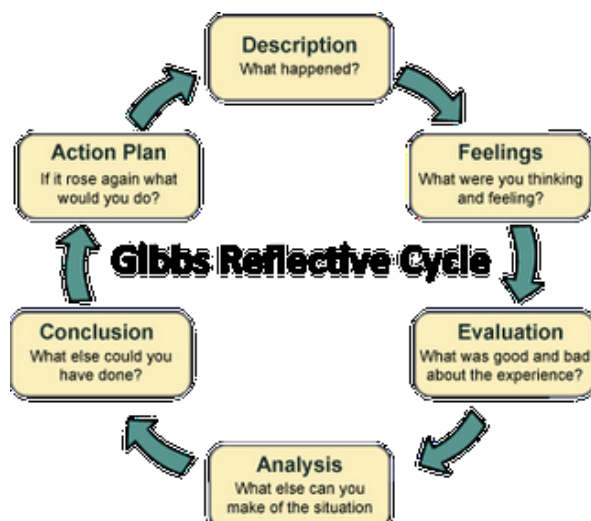
- Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle



- Driscoll's "What?" model



- Gibbs' Reflective Cycle



Question: What do these models all have in common?

Answers:

An example of critical reflection on practice (Williams *et al.*, 2012)

Grace wrote ...	The reader sees ...
<p>When placing children in ability sets following initial assessments, it is important not to assume that English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners should necessarily be in low ability groups. I found it surprising at the time that the child I observed on placement was in a high ability group since he clearly has limited language skills. I now realise that learners should be placed according to their cognitive ability across the curriculum rather than their English language skills alone, an observation that is supported by Druse and Rahill (2007). The DfES (2009) go further and suggest that learners of EAL will benefit from access to secure learners demonstrating good models of English, who are more likely to be found in higher ability groups.</p>	<p>A <i>clear voice</i> and clear argument, expressed in this first (topic) sentence. The paragraph provides the evidence for this argument.</p> <p><i>Observation</i> and first reactions.</p> <p><i>Reflection</i> – leading to ... a later (and fuller) understanding of one situation from which Grace is able to generalise and bring this understanding to her future practice as a teacher ... Something she observed herself ... reflected on and confirmed through her reading, which moved her thinking on ... and links back to the discussion about ‘ability groups’ in the first sentence.</p> <p>It’s a well-written paragraph – by a reflective practitioner.</p>

Essay: Researching effective practice (Education).

## References

- Bassot, B. (2013) *The reflective journal: Capturing your learning for personal and professional development*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hickson, H. (2011) Critical reflection: reflecting on learning to be reflective. *Reflective Practice*. **12**(6), 829–839.
- Knott, C. and Scragg, T. (2011) *Reflective practice in social work* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Exeter: Learning Matters.
- Williams, K., Woolliams, M., Spiro, J. (2012) *Reflective writing*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.