

Pedagogies for Autonomy: PDP – Encouraging reflection minus the *five* pitfalls of reflective writing

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Presentation Overview

- What is the Personal Development Portfolio (PDP) & who sets it?
- Rationale behind the PDP
- Exploring an (optional) workshop for students
 - Why reflect & tools for reflection
 - David Kolb's Learning Cycle (1984)
 - The Do's and Don'ts of PDP Writing
 - Exercise demonstrating the **five** common pitfalls
 - Sample rewrites
- Summary & Tips
- Q&A

What is the PDP & who sets it?

- PDP...
 - Personal Development Portfolio
 - Personal Development Planning
 - Professional Development Plan
- = A [written] process through which individuals reflect on their learning, performance, achievements & weaknesses on a personal basis, or in association with team members
- Set by Schools, Colleges, Universities, Companies (e.g.: SDR/PDR)
- BME Preessional (UoB): PDP set post Booster Week

Google Search – PDPs in UK Universities

Search Result: First 3 pages

	University	Support Offered on the PDP
1	Bangor	Pro Forma & SWOT analysis
2	Bath	Separate PDPs for: UG (new & continuing), PG (taught & research)
3	Bournemouth	Resources & guidance for students; toolkit for staff
4	Cambridge	Template; training courses by University Advisors
5	Cardiff	3 Stages: 1) Preparing for HE, 2) Progress, & 3) Pathways Progression
6	Exeter	ePDP – an online tool
7	Leeds	32-page PDP Guide for Students
8	Leicester	PDP support for a) Staff, & b) students
9	Nottingham	3 example plans; self-assessment questionnaire
10	Royal College of Surgeons	PDP for Continuing Professional Development
11	Royal Holloway	1) PDP Record, & 2) Accomplishments, Skills, Values Form
12	Ulster	PDP Leaflet; PDF Forum; 2 nd Year PDP Experience Survey
13	Wolverhampton	ePDP; videos on the PDP
14	The QAA	Developed an in-depth PDP Toolkit (sections A-P)

Rationale behind the PDP

- Strengthens learner autonomy
- Encourages insightful analysis/critique
- Provides a means of personal enrichment
- Records progress & areas requiring development
- Provides a forum to highlight a broad skillset to reader
- Enables writer to learn from their mistakes
- Allows the setting of future goals (academic & work-related)

The (Optional) Student Workshop >

Workshop for Students

Why reflect?

- *'...Anyone who wants to know the human psyche...would be advised to abandon exact science, put away his (sic) scholar's gown, bid farewell to his study, and wander with human heart throughout the world. There in the horrors of prisons, lunatic asylums and hospitals, in drab suburban pubs, in brothels and gambling-hells, in the salons of the elegant, the Stock Exchanges, socialist meetings, churches, revivalist gatherings and ecstatic sects, through love and hate, through the experience of passion in every form in his own body, he would reap richer stores of knowledge than text-books a foot thick could give him...'*

Carl Jung (1875-1961)

Swiss Psychiatrist & early follower of Freud

How to reflect

- *'...Reflection is the analysis of an event or thought...or insights into the impact of an experience or projected goals for the future...'*

(Danielson, 1996:53)

- Common tools for reflective learning...
 - learning logs/journals/diaries
 - mind maps/lists/bullet points
 - audio &/or audio-visual recordings
 - formal evaluations/workshops

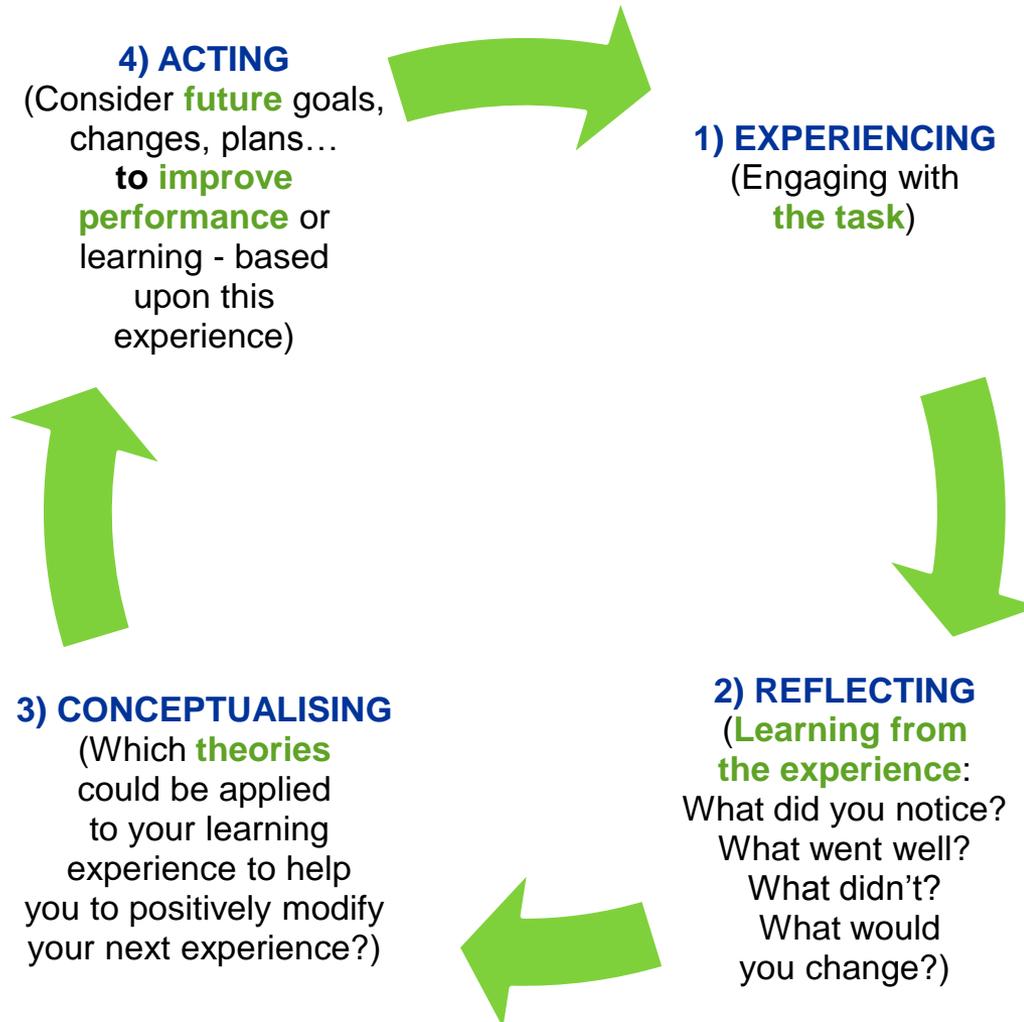
The Learning Cycle: David Kolb

- David Kolb: American educationalist and specialist in the field of organisational behaviour and education
- Kolb & associate, Roger Fry, developed models for experiential learning
- Kolb created the Learning Cycle model wherein he proposed a cyclical pattern with 4 stages:
 1. Experiencing
 2. Reflecting
 3. Thinking/Conceptualizing
 4. Acting

What happens in each of the four stages?

Kolb's Learning Cycle (1984)

[adapted from: <http://www.businessballs.com/kolblearningstyles.htm>]



Handout: Exercise 1 - Warm-up

1. Work with a partner to discuss how reflective learning might be of benefit to you in your academic discipline.
2. Which **pitfalls** should be avoided in reflective writing?
 - ...?
 1. Description (excessive ~)
 2. Generalisations, including racial &/or cultural stereotypes
 3. Incoherence & poor exemplification
 4. Emotive reflections
 5. Irrelevant &/or absent citations

The Do's of Reflective Writing

- Think **pro**actively, rather than reactively
- Maintain written notes of the processes behind syndicate/individual tasks
- Write in an academic style, **but use** the first person pronoun for this genre (in moderation)
- Support all key points with specific & succinct examples
- Demonstrate critical & analytical thought
- Reflect with honesty (whether positive or negative)
- **Apply theories/tools/models; cite relevant sources**

The Don'ts of Reflective Writing

- Simply summarise or describe events
- Name group members (use **Person A**, **Person B** instead)
- Make cultural &/or racial generalisations
- Collaborate or collude with syndicate group members on individual reflective assignments
- Exaggerate, or conversely, be overly modest
- Write in a style that suggests 'thinking aloud'
- Use reflective writing for confessions/to betray confidences/reveal sensitive or confidential data
- Ramble or be repetitious

Handout: Exercise 2 - Practice

- Write a short reflective sentence to demonstrate each of the following:
 1. An academic strength that has been advantageous to you in your studies.
 2. A personal skill that you must develop to secure greater success at university.
 3. Why syndicate group tasks are/are not beneficial for the development of skills.

Linguistic Features of Reflective Writing

- Clear & **concise** narrative style
- Non-biased language (i.e.: not emotive/judgmental)
- Exemplification to create objectivity
- More verb phrases; fewer noun phrases
- Multi-clause sentences
- Academic caution/hedging phrases
- Temporal and causal/consequential lexis
- Smooth transitions with connectors/cohesive devices

Handout: Exercise 3 – Effective Reflections?

[Students comment on each reflection]

1. “Every group has structural features that define the way individuals interact with each other; this includes group composition and size, group norms, role relationships, group role clarity, group cohesiveness and status difference. The ways in which these factors are understood and managed determine the effectiveness of the group (Stephen & Arnold, 1997).”
 - Could offer a useful lead-in to reflect on syndicate/group work
 - Also provides an opening to refer to individuals
 - Includes a paraphrase with citation
 - Is presented in reasonable academic register
 - Contains avoidable repetition
 - Is largely descriptive

Cont'd: Exercise 3 - Effective Reflections?

2. “The Indians usually have their way: they have been able to influence the Russian to agree with them even when it is glaringly obvious that some of the ideas are not noteworthy. Stefka, Jutta and I tend to just agree with their idea because of time constraints, while the Spanish group member only smiles without saying a word.”
 - Student has attempted an honest reflection
 - Highly opinionated, rather than objective
 - Inconsistencies: some students have been named, for others – nationalities are given
 - No examples &/or solutions appear to have been sought/provided
 - Some non-academic features (particularly in terms of description)

Cont'd: Exercise 3 - Effective Reflections?

3. “Communication is a vital factor in interpersonal interaction; one of the most important aspects of effective group work is open communication. We have not been able to tap into each other’s potential, hence we have been unsuccessful in distinguishing ourselves from the other syndicate groups.”
- A reasonable opening statement
 - Attempt has been made to reflect; examples are needed
 - Point about ‘potential’ is unrelated to a) opening sentence (re communication), and b) to second clause within the sentence
 - Register is inconsistent with idiomatic language

Cont'd: Exercise 3 - Effective Reflections?

4. “My group members are slothful, deviant, uncoordinated and full of excuses.”
- Succinct statement
 - Opinionated
 - Lacking in examples
 - Does not present solutions

Cont'd: Exercise 3 - Effective Reflections?

5. “The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)*, a self-report instrument that establishes individual preferences, has been used to assess the behaviour of my group members. When I related each member’s personality trait in the group to *The Big Five Personality Model* of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience, I discovered that most of us scored poorly on each part of the model (see appendix 2).”
- An attempt has been made to cite models/theories, but...
 - Reference to appendix suggests some analysis has been done
 - MBTI: self-report instrument? (= psychometric questionnaire)
 - Coherence could be improved

Example re-writes

- Authentic examples taken from a reflective assignment produced by an MBA student
- More suitable re-writes
- “...He always wants to dominate. He feels his judgment is superior to others and so all members of the group must abide by any suggestions put forth by him...”
 - > ‘He could be defined as a self-elected leader who prefers to take control of group discussions.’
- “I love challenges and always want to learn something new.”
 - > ‘I relish the opportunity to be challenged and acquire new knowledge.’

Cont'd...Example re-writes

- “We are a seven-member team from different parts of the world: Russia, Greece, Spain, Nigeria and India – each with diverse cultural backgrounds...Repeatedly, my team members exhibit some undesirable behaviour that makes me loathe working with them.”
>
- Our group consists of seven members from five countries. Through this project, I have discovered a critical need to improve my intercultural communication skills and to develop tolerance and an understanding of views that differ from my own.

Incorporating theory/citations

- Cite theories/authors when referring to controversial or complex issues, or to support a reflective claim being made, e.g.:
- “Different discipline areas might be taught in a way that encourages either surface or deep learning. Ramsden (1979) shows that students can switch strategies to suit tasks, whilst Thomas and Bain (1982) argue that students often develop a certain learning style and do not change it. A useful learning activity to encourage is the development of an awareness of how you are learning: This reflective assignment has provided us with the ideal opportunity to explore our learning approaches and to modify these in line with the tasks at hand. I felt that while one or two members of our syndicate group struggled with this concept, the majority were able to manage this with success to fulfil their roles within the group.”

[Extract taken from Wisker, 2001: 88]

PDP – Post Booster Week

- PDP seals a highly autonomous week
- Completed individually
- Worth 10% of final marks

Summary & Tips

The characteristic features of good reflections are that they:

- Identify what was learnt about self &/or from group
- Refer to skills used to fulfill individual/team goals
- Synthesise processes and outcomes
- Highlight how conflicts & problems were managed
- Reveal decision-making processes
- Provide succinct examples for key points
- Present facts/feelings in an intellectual discussion
- Demonstrate reflection on course materials
- Include reference to theories/models/tools, where relevant
- Highlight areas for personal &/or academic development
- Set goals to secure future success

Comments &/or Questions...?

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