

1 The reflective teacher

The most distinctive of these very good teachers is that their practice is the result of careful reflection . . . They themselves learn lessons each time they teach, evaluating what they do and using these self-critical evaluations to adjust what they do next time.

(Why Colleges Succeed, Ofsted 2004, para. 19)

What this chapter is about

- Reflective practice – what is it? Why and how should we do it?
- Reflection ‘in’ and ‘on’ action
- Some models of reflective practice
- Using reflection as a basis for improving learning and teaching
- Writing your personal development journal (PDJ)
- Your individual learning plan (ILP)
- What makes a good teacher in lifelong learning?

LLUK standards

This chapter covers, at least, the following standards:

AS 4; AK 4.2; AP 4.2; AK 4.3; AP 4.3
CK 1.1; CP 1.1; CK 4.1; CP 4.1
DS 3; DK 3.1

What is reflective practice?

The LLUK Professional Standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector state that those working in the sector should value ‘Reflection and evaluation of their own practice and their continuing professional development as teachers’ (AS 4). In addition, their professional knowledge and understanding includes: ‘Ways to reflect, evaluate and use

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research to develop own practice and to share good practice with others'. As part of their professional practice, they should: 'Share good practice with others and engage in continuing professional development through reflection, evaluation and the appropriate use of research'.

Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills status requires trainees to begin the practice of continuing professional development (CPD) right from the start of their training by keeping a development journal. This practice continues after completion of training; all teachers in lifelong learning are required to provide evidence of a minimum of 30 hours CPD each year in order to maintain their licence to practice.

There is one quality above all that makes a good teacher – the ability to reflect on what, why and how we do things and to adapt and develop our practice within lifelong learning. Reflection is the key to successful learning for teachers, and for learners. As the LLUK standards make clear reflection is an underpinning value and is the key to becoming a professional teacher.

A commonsense view of reflection is that it involves just thinking about things. Perhaps, thinking about the structure of the universe or why you disagreed with your partner last night could be regarded as reflection – others might consider it nothing more than idle and self-indulgent speculation. Most of us spend time thinking about what we do and the effects we have on others, but we don't always take it a step further and reflect on our actions and make plans to do things differently.

In a professional setting, reflection is:

- deliberate;
- purposeful;
- structured;
- about linking theory and practice;
- to do with learning;
- about change and development – becoming a reflective teacher.

Jenny Moon suggests:

Reflection is a form of mental processing that we use to fulfil a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome. It is applied to gain a better understanding of relatively complicated or unstructured ideas and is largely based on the reprocessing of knowledge, understanding and, possibly, emotions that we already possess.

(Moon 2005: 1)

From ‘help!’ to ‘second nature’

The process of reflection helps us to monitor our own development from raw beginner to experienced professional. Reynolds’s (1965) model of developing competence in social work suggests the stages seen in Figure 1.1. Those of you who recall learning to drive will recognise these stages. Mastering, for example, clutch control is a deliberate practice of trying, sometimes failing, trying again, becoming confident, until it eventually becomes an unconscious process. Our teaching careers follow a similar process: early fears about the timing of activities or the use of information technology (IT) are initially difficult, even frightening, but eventually become second nature.

Another, uncredited model, suggests a movement through the stages of:

- *unconscious incompetence* – in which we are unaware of what we can’t do or don’t know;
- *conscious incompetence* – in which we become aware of our development needs and start to do something about them;
- *conscious competence* – where we are using our new skills and knowledge, but watching and monitoring ourselves;
- *unconscious competence* – the skills become naturalised. This is like Reynolds’s notion of ‘second nature’.

Many of our skills, our knowledge and competences will become, like driving a car, second nature. However, we must ensure that ‘second nature’ doesn’t become complacency. Success in teaching requires us always to challenge and develop our practice by regular reflection and review.

David Berliner (2001) outlines the stages of teacher development as going from the Novice – raw recruit who is learning the basics and is relatively inflexible – to the Expert, who is very much like the racing driver or the

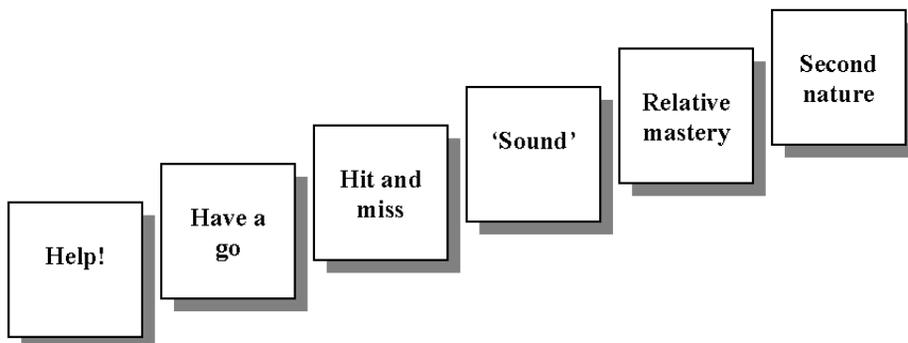


Figure 1.1 From Reynolds’s (1965) model of developing competence.

professional footballer who is completely at one with their art, performing effortlessly and naturally. Experience and length of service do not, however, necessarily make an expert; experience needs reflection if we are to become expert teachers.

Rollett (2001) describes what it means to be an expert teacher. This is a very useful model and is worth quoting at length:

Experts rely on a large repertoire of strategies and skills that they can call on automatically, leaving them free to deal with unique or unexpected events ... The wealth of knowledge and routines that they employ, in fact, is so automatic that they often do not realise why they preferred a certain plan of action over another. However, when questioned, they are able to reconstruct the reasons for their decisions and behaviour.

(Rollett 2001: 27)

Reflection – some theory

John Dewey was a leading educational philosopher of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries whose ideas are still influential. He believed that traditional education, as then practised in his native America, was rigid, static and inadequate for the rapidly developing society and economy of the time. (The same criticism is frequently made of education today!) Dewey advocated child-centred learning and stressed the importance of each individual's lived experience as a starting point for learning.

Key to Dewey's philosophy was the development of thinking, particularly, reflective thinking. In *How We Think*, he states that:

Thought affords the sole method of escape from purely impulsive or purely routine action. A being without capacity for thought is moved only by instincts and appetites, as these are called forth by outward conditions and the inner state of the organism. A being thus moved is, as it were, pushed from behind.

(Dewey 1933: 15)

Such a person is, in other words, not in control. They are dragged along by events, unable to understand or change them. To use more up to date terminology, such a person is merely reactive, rather than active or proactive – things happen to them; they don't make things happen. We must, as Dewey says, move from routine action to reflective action which is characterised by ongoing self-appraisal and development.

Dewey believed that reflection begins in a state of doubt or perplexity which, for teachers, is most likely to be encountered when working with

learners, particularly new or unfamiliar learners. When we are faced with difficulties and uncertainties in practice, when things don't go according to plan or don't fit with the theory, we may feel powerless and unable to resolve the situation. For, Dewey, however, these are key moments for learning; we can reflect on these problems to solve the perplexity and learn from it.

Donald Schön (1983) developed the notions of *reflection in action* and *reflection on action*. For the purposes of this book I will explain these two concepts very simply as 'reflecting while you're doing it' and 'reflecting after you've done it'. When delivering the learning you have so carefully planned and prepared, you need to be constantly aware and monitoring the session as it develops. This awareness allows you to make changes as the situation demands, to be able to 'think on your feet'. When the session is complete you can reflect on, analyse and evaluate the learning and teaching. This post-action reflection then informs your subsequent planning and preparation leading to a cycle of continuing improvement. We can represent the process as in Figure 1.2.

A further development in Schön's work is the distinction between *technical rationality* and *tacit knowledge*. This distinction could be characterised more simply as the 'theory-practice gap'. Like Dewey, Schön believed that reflection begins in working practice, particularly those areas of practice where professionals are confronted with unique and confusing situations – 'the swampy lowlands of practice' as Schön calls them. Teachers may have acquired the theoretical knowledge (technical rationality) of their subject or of the practice of teaching and learning, but whilst this might explain their classroom practice as it should be, it might not explain it as it actually is. From these real-life experiences teachers can develop tacit knowledge – a synthesis of theory and practice which they have developed for themselves. It is vital that these learning experiences are recorded in journals and discussed with mentors and fellow trainees.

Trainee teachers might express the opinion that 'this theory stuff is all very well, but it doesn't work in the real world'. Teacher trainers may be offended by such rejections of theory, but their trainees may have a point – theory is only of any use when it is applied and developed in practice. The real teaching environment is where theory is applied, tested and evaluated. Theory is never used rigidly, nor does it provide all the answers to the problems teachers encounter. It is, however, the starting point for developing teaching and learning in practice. Reflection, in and on action, allows teachers to continually improve their practice and even to the development of *practice-based theory*.

During your training, and as a result of reading this book, you will acquire a body of theoretical knowledge related to teaching and learning which you will want to apply in your learning sessions. For, example, humanist theories of teaching and learning stress the development of the whole person and the

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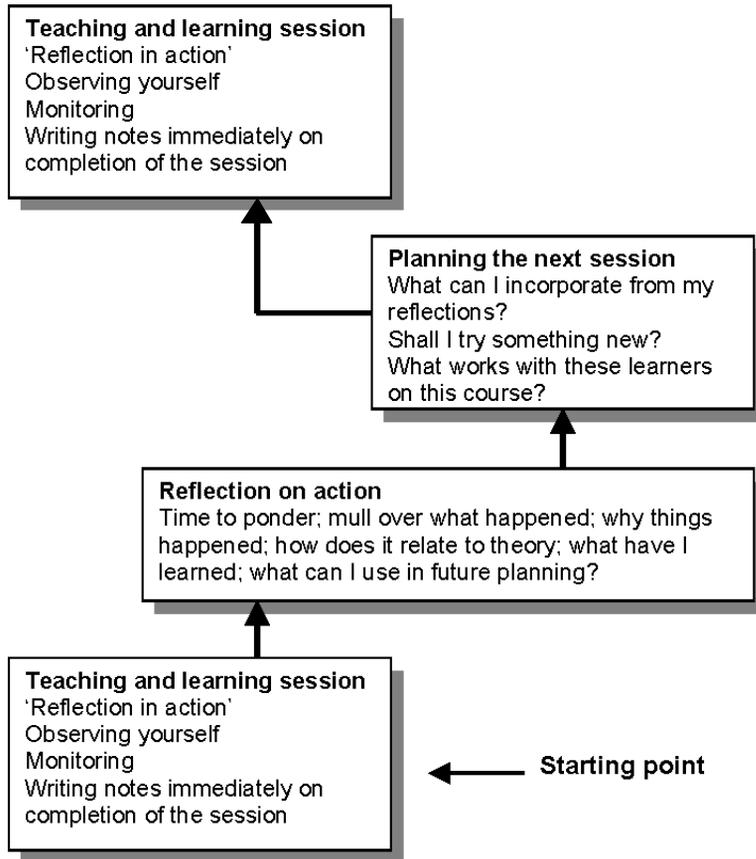


Figure 1.2 Using reflection *in* and *on* action to improve teaching and learning.

creation of a non-threatening, positive learning environment. In practice, this might not be as easy as the theory suggests. However, this does not invalidate the theory, but it does mean you will need to adapt and experiment with it in practice. Schön calls this application and development of theory in the real world *theory-in-use*.

The notion of reflection linking theory and practice underlies the work of Kolb and of Gibbs. The models of learning and reflection they developed are sometimes called 'iterative' because they are based on a repeating, but continually evolving and improving, cycle of learning.

Kolb (1984) is explained in detail in the chapter on learning theory. Essentially, his Experiential Learning Theory shows a four-stage cycle of activity. These four elements are:

- concrete experience;
- reflection;
- abstract conceptualisation;
- active experimentation.

The learner, in this case the teacher, can begin the cycle at any point but must follow each step in order.

Consider, for example, that a trainee teacher uses role play in a session (concrete experience). The role play is partially successful. The teacher reflects on the use of this learning method and considers how it could be improved and made more effective (reflection). She reads up on the use of role play and talks to more experienced colleagues and, as a result, formulates an improved version of the activity (abstract conceptualisation). The next time she plans to use role play she incorporates her new ideas into the planning (active experimentation). This leads to a new concrete experience and the repetition of the cycle.

Activity

Consider a recent example from your own teaching when you have tried a new method or resource. Using Kolb's four stages, consider the development of the technique in practice.

Several writers on reflective practice have emphasised the importance of the teacher's feelings as part of the reflective process. This fits in with the development of emotional intelligence, which is discussed later in the book. We may experience a wide range of feelings during and after our teaching – elation, confusion, anger, helplessness, blaming the learners – and it is important to recognise and reflect on them.

Gibbs (1988) adds feelings to his model of 'learning by doing'. See Figure 1.3 for the stages of learning in his model.

Gibbs's model provides key points in development, especially description, evaluation, analysis and action, which we will consider further in the section on methods of reflection. Before then we need to examine the reasons for reflective practice.

Reflective practice – why should we do it?

An obvious answer is because we've got to! However, this is not a good reason for doing it.

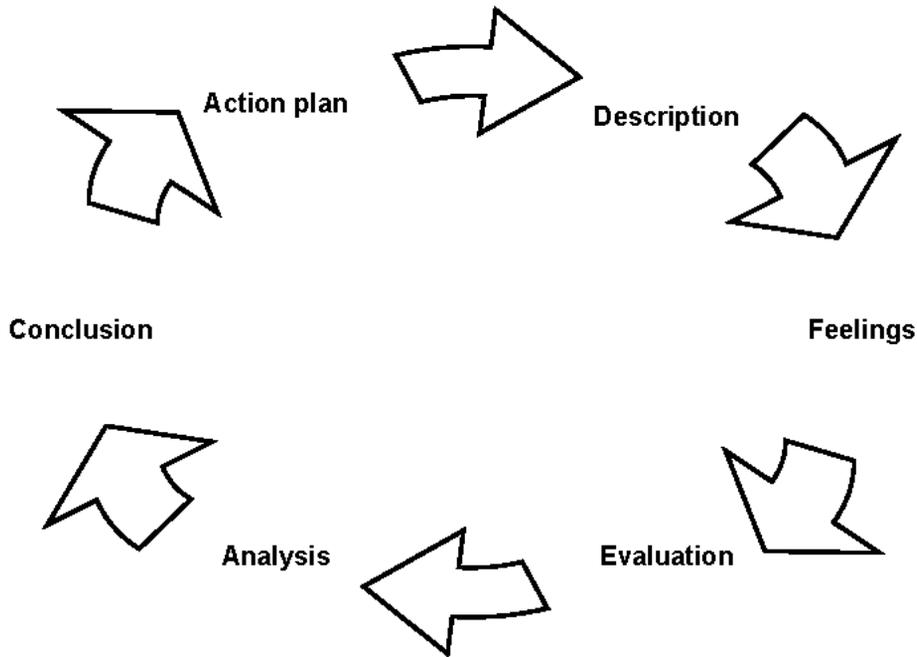


Figure 1.3 Gibbs's model of 'learning by doing'.

As we have already agreed, reflective practice is a professional requirement that we have to provide evidence of, usually in a journal or log. This requirement brings teachers in the lifelong learning sector up to date with other professionals, such as nurses, social workers and human resource professionals. Just as we wouldn't want to be cared for by a nurse who wasn't familiar with the latest techniques, we probably won't want to be taught by someone who doesn't know their subject or the best ways of teaching and learning.

Another reason for reflective practice is because it encourages us to understand our learners and their needs and abilities. Every learner is different and there are likely to be varying interpretations of what we say and do within any group of learners. There are 'different worlds' within our classrooms and skilled teachers will try to see themselves as their students see them. Stephen Brookfield believes that: 'Of all the pedagogic tasks teachers face, getting inside students' heads is one of the trickiest. It is also the most crucial' (Brookfield 1995: 92).

This book is based on the principle that active learning is preferable to passive learning and that active learning requires reflection. Reflective teachers are more likely to develop reflective learners. If we practise reflection we can more effectively encourage learners to reflect on, analyse, evaluate

and improve their own learning. These are key skills in active learning and the development of independent learners.

Reflection can also help us to develop our emotional intelligence, particularly if we include a consideration of feelings as part of our reflections. The concept of emotional intelligence, developed by Daniel Goleman (1995, 1998), encourages the development of self-awareness of feelings and the recognition and management of emotions.

Finally, and most importantly, reflective practice is the key to improvement. If we don't think about, analyse and evaluate our professional practice we cannot improve.

Activity

Empathy (see Chapter 4, 'Communication and the teacher') is important in developing your reflective practice, particularly the ability to imagine what it would be like as a learner in your own class.

I can well recall a staff development session in which a colleague talked to us for more than an hour. At the end of it I was extremely annoyed at just being a passive object. It was a salutary experience and made me realise what it would be like to be a student in a passive, non-stimulating environment.

When you're teaching you have considerable freedom of movement and activity – you can stand up; sit down; walk around and, generally, direct operations. This is not usually the case for learners.

Next time you're in 'learner mode', at a conference or staff development session, think about how you feel. Do you feel stimulated, interested, engaged, or restless and fidgety? Would you like to move around a bit, stand up for a while, say something, do something?

Reflective practice – how to do it

Reflection is a process and an activity which teachers undertake primarily for themselves. It is not about the production of mountains of paper evidence at the behest of teacher trainers or managers – such 'other-directed' activity becomes a chore for trainees and teachers from which they will derive little value. Reflection will, however, lead to a product – diary, log, PDJ – which will contribute to assessment and, subsequently, be used as evidence of CPD.

The right mental attitude

We should remember that reflection is not an end in itself; it is the starting point of becoming a reflective practitioner. For Jenny Moon reflection is used, 'with the sense of saying something not so much about what a person does as what they are' (Moon 1999).

The basis of all reflection is a willingness to undertake the process and to value it as means of improvement and development. Reflection can be difficult, even threatening, because it forces us to be honest with ourselves and recognise not only our successes but areas where we need to improve. It makes us take responsibility for our teaching and learning. Being a reflective practitioner is like being your own observer and your own critical friend. We can refer to this willingness to reflect and develop as the 'right mental attitude', without which the whole process of reflection is pointless.

The professional development journal (PDJ)

There are many forms of reflection and occasions on which you will reflect, but as a trainee teacher the main form of reflection will be through your reflective journal, commonly referred to as the professional development journal.

Your PDJ is a written record of your experiences of, and feelings about planning, preparing and delivering teaching and learning. It will contain general accounts of learning sessions but, more importantly, will identify critical incidents which can be the basis for learning and continuing professional development (CPD).

The PDJ is subjective; it is written by you and for you and gives an opportunity to conduct a dialogue with yourself. You must remember, however, that as a trainee your tutors and mentors will see the journal, so it pays not to be indiscreet or make personal comments. The journal is also a place where you can relate theory to practice. We have already established that theory is only useful if it is used, tested and evaluated in your teaching and learning.

Success, or otherwise, in teaching is not just a matter of luck. It results from thorough planning and preparation, knowing your students, and reflection on, and evaluation of, your practice. You will experience the wonderful feeling you get after a class has gone well; the learners, and you, have enjoyed themselves and, above all, learned. You will also experience the depths of despair following a session which just hasn't worked, where the learners don't seem to want to learn and you just long for the end of it all. The reflective teacher uses both extremes to learn and develop. If it went well, are there general conclusions you can draw to try with other learners? Are there specific points you can use with this group again – remember each group of learners is

unique and reflection helps you to get to know them and work effectively with them. After the dreadful session, you might be chastising yourself (or worse, your learners) for the failure. Neither course is appropriate. You must reflect, analyse, evaluate, learn and change.

One of the most valuable functions of your PDJ is to help you identify development points for action planning. You should review your journal regularly to see if there any recurring themes which you need to pick up on for your training and development. It will be useful to summarise your journal at the end of your course. This summary can have two functions; first, you can see how far you have come since you started your training and, second, you can use it as the basis for your CPD. Remember, evidence of CPD is a requirement in getting and maintaining QTLS.

Writing your PDJ

Many trainee teachers in PCET worry about writing their journals – what form should it take; typed or handwritten; how much; how often; is it right? The main message is – don't worry. When it comes to journals, you can't do them wrong! There are, however, guidelines and advice to help you make them more useful and more effective.

Writing and written style

Writing is a very effective way to make sense of experience – to organise, evaluate and learn from it. Creative writing is often used as a form of therapy by which people can work things out and find solutions for problems. Cognitive behavioural therapy requires clients to recognise and write down examples of mistaken thinking and to imagine more positive scenarios – in other words to reflect, analyse, evaluate and, most importantly, change.

It is important to get into the habit of writing and to do it as soon as possible after the event. It's a good idea to include a reflection box at the end of your session plans in which to record some immediate thoughts which will form the basis of your journal entry. When you start writing, don't spend too much time thinking about it. Let the writing flow and try to capture the experience and some critical incidents (see below). Once you've recalled the events, then you can start to learn from them.

Little and often is a good rule, particularly in the early days of journal writing. You should always be regular in your journal writing habits. You might find it useful to track a particular group of learners or, perhaps, to compare groups. Your course tutors will advise you regarding how much you should write and what period of time your journal should cover.

As for writing style, you should be free, spontaneous and informal. There's no need for the impersonal, academic style; some of the best journals I've seen

are quirky and idiosyncratic. You must, however, avoid inappropriate language or too much slang or colloquialism and never make personal comments about teachers or colleagues – unless, of course, you are referring to their good practice. There will be times when you are frustrated and annoyed in your training or in your work. You can use your journal to get some of this out of your system, it can even be therapeutic, but you must use it as a basis for learning and development – extended moaning is not acceptable.

In keeping with the spontaneous and informal approach you will probably write your journal by hand, but it's best to check if your tutors have any preferences regarding written or word-processed documents. Some of you will prefer to type your reflections straight on to your computer, possibly using a template you have designed to suit your needs. When you are reviewing your journal it's useful to highlight key points for your summary, for action plans, or as discussion points for tutorials.

I have known trainees who recorded their journals on to dictation machines (digital rather than tape). This can increase the spontaneity but, obviously, necessitates transcription into written form – if you've got voice-activated software this is less of a problem. Increasingly, trainees are experimenting with using blogs for their reflective journals. This provides some interesting opportunities for sharing ideas with a whole range of people and even the development of 'communities of practice'. Again, you must check with your tutors regarding the acceptability of this format.

Communities of practice don't have to be online. You can share your reflections with fellow trainees in taught sessions or group tutorials. It can be very helpful to find that colleagues are experiencing the same uncertainties or difficulties as you and, hopefully, enjoying successes. Sharing ideas and developing strategies together is an extremely valuable collaborative activity. You may even wish to build in presentations to colleagues on particular issues.

Many teachers, like many learners, have a visual learning preference and, as such will want to include diagrams, drawings or any other visual modes. I always encourage this, particularly as visuals can help you get the big picture and explore relationships between ideas. One of my former students who taught art produced a wonderful journal full of written entries, pictures, sketches, quotes and jokes – quite a work of art in itself. Personalise your journal by all means, but remember you will need to share it with your tutors, and possibly submit it for assessment, so be prepared to summarise and translate as necessary.

More than just description

The most inadequate reflections are those which merely describe what happened in a teaching and learning session. On its own, this is of no value.

But it is a start. To the *description* (what happened?) you need to add *analysis* (how, why?); *evaluation* (how effective was it?) and *conclusions* (suggestions for future practice).

Driscoll and Teh (2001), working in nursing and clinical practice, provide a simple but very useful framework for reflection based on three questions:

- What? Description of the event
- So what? Analysis of the event
- Now what? Proposed actions following the event

They also provide a range of ‘trigger questions’ for each stage. For example:

WHAT?

- What happened?
- What did I see/do?

SO WHAT?

- How did I feel at the time?
- What were the effects of what I did (or did not do)?

NOW WHAT?

- What are the implications of what I have described and analysed?
- How can I modify my practice?

Perhaps the most complete model of reflection is provided by Gibbs (1988). This makes explicit the need for conclusions and action plans. The trigger questions he suggests are shown below:

- Description:* What happened? Don’t make judgements yet or try to draw conclusions; simply describe.
- Feelings:* What were your reactions and feelings? Again, don’t move on to analysing these yet.
- Evaluation:* What was good or bad about the experience? Make value judgements.
- Analysis:* What sense can you make of the situation? Bring in ideas from outside the experience to help you. What was really going on? Were different people’s experiences similar or different in important ways?
- Conclusions:* What can be concluded, in a general sense, from
(*general*) these experiences and the analyses you have undertaken?

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<i>Conclusions:</i>	What can be concluded about your own specific, unique, (specific) personal situation or way of working?
<i>Personal action plans:</i>	What are you going to do differently in this type of situation next time? What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learned?

Critical incidents

When writing your journal you will almost inevitably identify critical incidents. These are specific occurrences within teaching and learning sessions which you consider significant or important. Critical incidents may be positive or negative. They can be moments in which you suddenly become aware of a problem, or a solution to a problem; when you realise that you have a particular development need or a particular strength. They could be described as 'light bulb' moments when there is a particular incident or a sudden realisation. For example, as young and naïve teacher, I made what I considered to be a humorous comment about a student's name. His strong, negative reaction was a critical, and memorable, incident for me when I realised that people's names are precious to them and should be respected.

You will have many critical incidents in your training and during your working life as a teacher; they are all occasions for learning. You might, for example, be faced with behavioural difficulties with learners or a refusal by one, or all, of a group to engage. You might suddenly realise that you have talked for too long and the answer is to provide a change of activity. Critical incidents will often lead to generalisable ideas and solutions which are transferable to other groups and learning situations.

Layout and form of your PDJ

PDJs can take many forms – notebook; a ring-binder with loose-leaf pages; a file on your computer – whatever is easiest for you. Again, you should check with your course tutors to see if they have any preferences, although generally teacher trainers avoid giving too many guidelines for PDJs, for fear of producing uniformity and stifling the student's own approach. If you use a notebook, an A4 size with perforated and hole-punched pages will be the easiest to use. You can design your own template for use with word-processing, perhaps using categories such as:

- description;
- analysis and evaluation;
- conclusions for future practice.

I favour just a straightforward written narrative without too much preconceived structure which might detract from the spontaneity.

A useful device has been developed by Heath (1998) which involves a split-page or two page approach, using the left-hand side to record the description of the events and the right-hand side is used for reflection.

Left-hand page

Time/date/contextual details
Description of the session
Describe critical incidents
Initial feelings

Right-hand page

Reflection
Analysis and evaluation
Reference to theory (if appropriate)
Thoughts added during review or tutorials

Individual learning plans (ILPs)

In your work or on your teaching placements you will very likely have negotiated and used ILPs with your learners; you will be expected to do the same as a trainee on a course leading to QTLS.

Your ILP can be considered as the starting point of reflection and of your CPD. It can take the form of an audit of your existing knowledge, skills, attitudes and personal qualities; to identify your strengths, and to highlight any uncertainties you have about becoming a teacher in the lifelong learning sector. It is most likely that your course tutors will provide an ILP format which you will be expected to use as an initial audit, but also as a document to refer to during tutorials and as a measure of the distance you have travelled at the end of your course. The important point is to use the ILP to kick-start your personal and professional development, not merely something you produce because you've been asked to.

If you haven't been provided with an ILP pro-forma, here are a few areas you might wish to consider for your development. You can develop a rating scale for these so that you can see your starting point and the distance travelled.

What do you know about or how confident are you about:

- the roles and responsibilities of a teacher?
- learning styles?
- planning a course?
- planning a session?
- how people learn?
- Skills for Life and Key Skills?
- communication skills?
- presentation skills?
- demonstration skills?

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- questioning and explaining?
- using a range of teaching and learning methods?
- designing and using resources?
- using ICT?
- health and safety?
- assessing learning?
- reflection?
- equality, inclusion and diversity?
- subject knowledge and skills?
 - how up to date are you?
 - latest ideas in teaching and learning
 - sources of information
 - subject specialist professional development.

An ‘autobiographical’ approach to your ILP

Stephen Brookfield (1995) suggests we have four ‘critically reflective lenses’ through which we can reflect on our teaching. These are:

- our autobiographies as learners and teachers;
- our students’ eyes;
- our colleagues’ experiences;
- theoretical literature.

We will concentrate here on the first of these lenses – our autobiographies as teachers and learners.

Our preferred learning style will significantly affect our teaching style. Without reflection, there is a danger that we will teach in the ways we ourselves like to be taught. For example, if your school experience was of didactic, teacher-centred lessons or of formal lectures at university, these could become your dominant mode of teaching. If you have happy memories of making discoveries in science or researching a project for history, you will probably want to incorporate such methods into your teaching. Many people have bad memories of school and how these affected their learning. Maths, for me, was just an alternative spelling of the word ‘fear’; answers were either right or wrong and wrong meant trouble. No one told me that maths could be interesting and useful, even fun.

So, a useful starting point on your critically reflective journey might to be recall and discuss some of your experiences of being a student and of being taught.

What makes a good teacher?

When you start teaching it's useful to have some sort of guidelines or role models of good teachers to provide something to aim at, especially when you're starting your ILP.

'Good teachers are born not made'

You might have heard this old maxim and thought yourself not suited to be a teacher. The main problem with this saying is that it's wrong. True, there are those who exhibit confidence and an ability to inspire and motivate groups of people. Such people, however, are not necessarily good teachers. They may struggle to plan classes, to explain properly, to assess, and are deficient in a whole range of other necessary skills. They might occasionally provide a stimulating session – but they fly by the seat of their pants. This is no way to teach. Teaching in lifelong learning is a profession and requires you to behave like a professional by learning and developing the necessary skills and practice.

Activity

Best and worst teachers.

- 1 Think back to your days at school, college or university. Think of someone who was a particularly good teacher.
- 2 List the top five personal qualities, skills or attitudes which made them so good.
- 3 Think of your worst teacher.
- 4 List the top five personal qualities, skills or attitudes which made them so bad.
- 5 As a group, identify any recurring themes.
- 6 Produce a top five for the group.

The introductory statement to the LLUK standards states that:

Teachers in the lifelong learning sector value all learners individually and equally. They are committed to lifelong learning and professional development and strive for continuous improvement through reflective practice. The key purpose of the teacher, tutor or trainer is to create

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effective and stimulating opportunities for learning through high quality teaching that enables the development and progression of all learners.

(LLUK 2006: 1)

Lifelong learning is a diverse sector with millions of learners in a wide range of settings. You will need a variety of teaching and learning methods in your toolbox if you wish to be successful. In addition, you will need to know about your learners and what elements of good practice will develop effective learning. Fortunately, there is plenty of research to help you.

Rosenshine (1971) developed the following list of effective teaching behaviours. Although this research is over 30 years old now and is based on teaching in schools, it is still relevant today, to both the compulsory and post-compulsory sectors. According to Rosenshine, good teachers show these characteristics:

- 1 introducing (structuring) topics or activities clearly
- 2 explaining clearly with examples and illustrative materials
- 3 systematic and business-like organisation of lessons
- 4 variety of teaching materials and methods
- 5 use of questions, especially higher-order questions
- 6 use of praise and other reinforcement (verbal and nonverbal)
- 7 encouraging learner participation
- 8 making use of learners' ideas, clarifying and developing them further
- 9 warmth, rapport and enthusiasm, mainly shown nonverbally

A simpler and more reliable guide to teacher skills and qualities is provided by the Association of Colleges (AOC) and FENTO publication *Mentoring Towards Excellence* (2001). As part of this project 700 learners were asked what they thought makes for good teachers and teaching.

Top five professional characteristics:

Understanding and supportive
Committed, dedicated and hardworking
Fair with an inclusive and respectful approach
Warm
Humorous

Top five teaching skills:

Clear instruction and presentation
Strong communication and active listening

Patience
 Motivation and encouragement
 Organisation and classroom management

Top five favourite teacher qualities:

Sound subject knowledge
 Understanding and gives good advice
 Creative, interesting and imaginative
 Warm and cheery
 Clear instruction and presentation.

Adult expectations of teachers

Across the whole lifelong learning sector most learners are adults, some returning to learning after a considerable time away from it. Research, especially by Malcolm Knowles (1978), suggests that adults have particular characteristics. In addition to the guidelines above, adults expect teachers to:

- treat them as adults – this sounds obvious but adult learners often report that they have felt patronised or treated like children;
- recognise their life experiences – adults will have many experiences relevant to your sessions. They will expect to have them acknowledged and, wherever possible, integrated into the teaching and learning;
- provide them with support and guidance – despite their life experiences many adult learners will feel anxious and ambivalent about returning to learning, especially if they have bad memories of school;
- respect their self-concept – adults will want to take increasing responsibility for their own decisions and are capable of self-direction;
- help them develop autonomy and independence as learners.

Above all, teachers need to understand their learners, their characteristics, needs and motivations. They need to be able to adapt and adjust content and style to suit the needs of groups and individuals. Most importantly, they must be good communicators – this takes us neatly to the next chapter.

For your PDJ

If you are just starting your career in lifelong learning, the important thing is just to get yourself a notebook or set up a document on your computer and just begin writing.

You can begin by reflecting on your feelings of meeting learners for the first time. It's easy to be negative and just concentrate on what you feel went wrong, but try to consider the positives as well. If the learners became more attentive or responsive, try to work out what you did that made the difference.

Start reading and researching your subject and general texts on teaching and learning. Talk to colleagues and students; get some feedback.

Journal extract: Martyn, training to teach popular music

My journal ... records not just the disconsolate musings that follow an unsuccessful session but also episodes of naïve joy and moments of sudden enlightenment that the Japanese call 'satori'. Each evening at 8:00 pm my mobile phone alerts me to the need to complete my PDJ and it is in this *regularity* that I find most reward as it determines that *all* of the emotional ebb and flow of 'learning to teach and teaching to learn' is recorded. The mixed media format of my journal reflects not just an abiding passion for collage but also the cut and paste/record and overdub nature of 'pop'. My PDJ is a 'visual representation of (my) values, opinions and philosophy' and a working document to which I constantly refer. It is not simply a diary of critical incidents but something to read, question, amend and augment.

Further reading

- Brookfield, S. (1995) *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing*. London: Further Education Unit.
- Moon, J. (1999) *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development*. London: Kogan Page.
- Moon, J. (2005) *Guide for Busy Academics No. 4: Learning Through Reflection*. Higher Education Academy.