

Exercise – Reflective writing



Introduction

This exercise focuses on developing your understanding of reflective writing.

Read the guide 'writing in a reflective style' before attempting these exercises.

There are three exercises from pages 2 to 4.

Answers are presented on pages 5 to 7.

Further information

The Learning Resources Study Hub provides a range of opportunities (such as self-help resources some of which are named within this guide, workshops and drop-ins) for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information, visit:

lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub



Exercise 1

Read the extract below and underline the main incident that is being reflected in the paragraph.

As part of my project I undertook secondary research on the rate of teenage pregnancy among females with care leaver experience. This led me to reflect on the methods I was using to gather sources and identify that if I was not always getting my research right then it was possible that other members of the group might also be misguided in their research strategies. I was surprised at how other members of the group appeared to automatically trust the content of peer-reviewed journals and I sometimes felt that what was presented back to the group was generally accepted as factual as long as there was a reference attached to it. As I questioned the credibility and ethical practice of research journals, this prompted me to delve more deeply into what I now realise is referred to as publication bias and has been widely documented in recent years. Dawes (2005) argued that although reputable journals adopt a robust peer review process, articles still get published with significant flaws. It therefore seems that purely reading journal articles that have been identified through other sources such as journal article bibliographies, may lead to unrepresentative sources of information being identified and thus unreliable findings. In the future, I could overcome this issue by specifying where I searched, inputting keywords when using databases and specify my inclusion criteria in order to conduct a more rigorous research methodology to select sources to be used in my dissertation and only select sources that match my search criteria.

Source: Adapted from University of Plymouth (2016)

Exercise 2

Read the extract below and highlight the three elements of reflective writing: description, interpretation and outcome

Specific tasks were shared out amongst members of my team. Initially, however, the tasks were not seen as equally difficult by all team members. Cooperation between group members was at risk because of this perception of unfairness. Social interdependence theory recognises a type of group interaction called 'positive interdependence', meaning cooperation (Johnson and Johnson, 1993, cited by Maughan and Webb, 2001). Many studies (Brodie, 2008; Somerville & Keeling, 2004; Revans, 1998) have demonstrated that "cooperative learning experiences encourage higher achievement" (Maughan and Webb, 2001 p.46). Ultimately, our group achieved a successful outcome, but to improve the process, we perhaps needed a chairperson to help encourage cooperation when tasks were being shared out. Briggs (2005) argues that the role of a chairperson is desirable as it keeps discussions focused and allows for a fairer distribution of tasks. In future group work, on the course and at work, I would probably suggest this.

Source: Hampton (2015)

Exercise 3

Read the extract below and underline the language features that are used to:

- Highlight personal experience
- Show supporting literature
- Suggest future improvement

In a placement during my second year when I was working on a surgical ward, I was working under the supervision of my mentor, caring for a seventy-two year old gentleman, Mr Khan (pseudonym), who had undergone abdominal surgery. I removed the dressing under my mentor's supervision, using a non-touch procedure, and cleaned the wound, as requested by the doctor. My mentor was called to another patient at this point, so at her request I stayed with Mr Khan while we waited for the doctor to come to see him. The doctor had been with other patients, examining their wounds, and I noticed that she came straight to Mr Khan to examine his wound, without either washing her hands or using alcohol gel first. I was alarmed by this. However, I felt intimidated because I felt that the doctor was more experienced than me and I did not want to embarrass her. Later, I spoke to my mentor about the incident. She suggested that we speak to the doctor together about it. My mentor took the doctor aside, and asked her whether she had washed her hands before examining Mr Khan. She said that she had been very busy and had not thought about it. My mentor discussed the importance of hand hygiene with her, and the doctor assured her that she would wash her hands before examining every patient in the future. The Royal College of Nursing (2005) states that hand hygiene is the single most important activity for reducing cross-infection, and points out that many health care professionals do not decontaminate their hands as often as they should. Recent guidance published by the Department of Health (2007) highlights the possibility of staff transmitting infections via uniforms, and the need to review policies on staff dress. The Nursing and Midwifery Council Code of Professional Conduct (2015, section 3) go further and state that in order to minimise the risk to patients and clients a nurse must confront poor practices and take the role of advocate. As the student nurse caring for Mr Khan under my mentor's supervision, this also applies to my own practice as a student nurse. Looking back on this incident, I can see that I should have acted sooner, and that I should have ensured that the doctor washed her hands before examining Mr Khan. I can now see that my inaction in this incident put Mr Khan's well-being at risk. After discussion with my mentor, I recognise that I need to develop the confidence to challenge the practice of colleagues, putting the well-being of clients at the forefront of my mind.

Adapted from Oxford Brookes University (2018)

Answers

Exercise 1

As part of my project I undertook secondary research on the rate of teenage pregnancy among females with care leaver experience. This led me to reflect on the methods I was using to gather sources and identify that if I was not always getting my research right then it was possible that other members of the group might also be misguided in their research strategies. I was surprised at how other members of the group appeared to automatically trust the content of peer-reviewed journals and I sometimes felt that what was presented back to the group was generally accepted as factual as long as there was a reference attached to it. As I questioned the credibility and ethical practice of research journals, this prompted me to delve more deeply into what I now realise is referred to as publication bias and has been widely documented in recent years. Dawes (2005) argued that although reputable journals adopt a robust peer review process, articles still get published with significant flaws. It therefore seems that purely reading journal articles that have been identified through other sources such as journal article bibliographies, may lead to unrepresentative sources of information being identified and thus unreliable findings. In the future, I could overcome this issue by specifying where I searched, inputting keywords when using databases and specify my inclusion criteria in order to conduct a more rigorous research methodology to select sources to be used in my dissertation and only select sources that match my search criteria.

Source: Adapted from University of Plymouth (2016)

Main incident - [Blue](#)

Tip:

Notice that the writer only writes about the important incident. It is important that you avoid writing about events that are irrelevant to the main incident. Focus on how this experience has changed you as a person /your practice.

Exercise 2

Specific tasks were shared out amongst members of my team. Initially, however, the tasks were not seen as equally difficult by all team members. Cooperation between group members was at risk because of this perception of unfairness. Social interdependence theory recognises a type of group interaction called 'positive interdependence', meaning cooperation (Johnson and Johnson, 1993, cited by Maughan and Webb, 2001). Many studies (Brodie, 2008; Somerville & Keeling, 2004; Revans, 1998) have demonstrated that "cooperative learning experiences encourage higher achievement" (Maughan and Webb, 2001 p.46). Ultimately, our group achieved a successful outcome, but to improve the process, we perhaps needed a chairperson to help encourage cooperation when tasks were being shared out. Briggs (2005) argues that the role of a chairperson is desirable as it keeps discussions focused and allows for a fairer distribution of tasks. In future group work, on the course and at work, I would probably suggest this.

Source: Hampton, (2015)

Description - Brown

Interpretation - Blue

Outcome - Purple

Tip:

Notice that the writer wrote more about interpretation and outcome. It is important that you focus your writing more on these two elements compared to the description.

Exercise 3:

In a placement during my second year when I was working on a surgical ward, I was working under the supervision of my mentor, caring for a seventy-two year old gentleman, Mr Khan (pseudonym), who had undergone abdominal surgery. I removed the dressing under my mentor's supervision, using a non-touch procedure, and cleaned the wound, as requested by the doctor. My mentor was called to another patient at this point, so at her request I stayed with Mr Khan while we waited for the doctor to come to see him. The doctor had been with other patients, examining their wounds, and I noticed that she came straight to Mr Khan to examine his wound, without either washing her hands or using alcohol gel first. I was alarmed by this. However, I felt intimidated because I felt that the doctor was more experienced than me and I did not want to embarrass her. Later, I spoke to my mentor about the incident. She suggested that we speak to the doctor together about it. My mentor took the doctor aside, and asked her whether she had washed her hands before examining Mr Khan. She said that she had been very busy and had not thought about it. My mentor discussed the importance of hand hygiene with her, and the doctor assured her that she would wash her hands before examining every patient in the future. The Royal College of Nursing (2005) states that hand hygiene is the single most important activity for reducing cross-infection, and points out that many health care professionals do not decontaminate their hands as often as they should. Recent guidance published by the Department of Health (2007) highlights the possibility of staff transmitting infections via uniforms, and the need to review policies on staff dress. The Nursing and Midwifery Council Code of Professional Conduct (2015, section 3) go further and state that in order to minimise the risk to patients and clients a nurse must confront poor practices and take the role of advocate. As the student nurse caring for Mr Khan under my mentor's supervision, this also applies to my own practice as a student nurse. Looking back on this incident, I can see that I should have acted sooner, and that I should have ensured that the doctor washed her hands before examining Mr Khan. I can now see that my inaction in this incident put Mr Khan's well-being at risk. After discussion with my mentor, I recognise that I need to develop the confidence to challenge the practice of colleagues, putting the well-being of clients at the forefront of my mind.

Adapted from Oxford Brookes University (2018)

Highlight personal experience - pink

Show supporting literature – blue

Suggest future improvement - purple

Tip

Notice that the **first person**, 'I' is used to give details of events and insights. In reflective writing, a **formal writing style** is still required. **Supporting evidence** can be used to justify why you did something a particular way, why you think you have encountered a particular problem (like the writer in this extract) or why you might do something differently next time (*examples in purple*). It is essential to demonstrate **Critical analysis** as it allows you to make meaning of the experience you are presenting.

Also, you will need to check your lecturer on the number of references you should include and the type of literature you should use eg, books, journals etc.

References

Department of Health (2007) *Uniforms and Workwear: An evidence base for developing local policy* Available at:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_078433 (Accessed 16 May 2018)

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The University of Plymouth (2016) *Wrasse writing for assignments e-library* Available at: <https://wrasse.plymouth.ac.uk/> (Accessed 8 November 2016).

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