

## **Assignment 2 - Professional Reflection**

Northumbria University Newcastle

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## **1 Introduction**

The author argues that this assignment is based upon a personal professional reflection on the presentation in the building of the previously created research proposal. He will be writing about his experience and what he has learnt.

Furthermore, this personal professional reflection writing delivers a chance for him to acquire additional understandings from his work through deeper reflection on his experiences, and through additional consideration of other perceptions from academia and theory.

### **1.1 Reflective Practice**

The idea of reflection has been accepted lately for the method in which knowledge and skills are acquired and developed. Predominantly, practice of reflection is described as the ongoing and dynamic course of learning through and from practical events which contribute to acquire deep comprehension of a person and or practice (Boud et al 1985; Boyd and Fales, 1983; Mezirow, 1981; Jarvis, 1992).

Several published reflective models exist, including Atkins and Murphy (1994); Gibbs (1988); Kolb (1984) which provides procedures to evaluate circumstances in detail which support practitioners of the practice.

This paper will focus on Gibbs' reflective cycle, after reviewing the various models of reflection, as it best assists with the learning experience.

## **1.2 Gibbs' Reflective Cycle**

It is a hypothetical model of reflection which consists of six stages as shown in Figure 1. It is often cited and used as a framework in academic scripts that require reflective writing and for assessing thoughts and actions, for personal continuous learning and development.

This model provides accurate procedures which permit for the description, analysis and evaluation of the experience aiding the practitioner interpret experiences and scrutinise their actions.

Furthermore, the knowledge and new intelligence acquired, needs to be rehearsed continuously as reflection alone is not satisfactory. It could be argued that this allows the reflective process update the practitioners practice.

According to Gibbs, the practitioner is required to create a plan. Taking an action is the key. The reflective practitioner is empowered to review their practice and make positive amendments.



*Figure 1: Gibbs' Reflective Cycle ( Gibbs 1988)*

Assignment 2: Professional Reflection, delivers an individual proficient reflection of the author's presentation in the writing of Assignment 1: Research Proposal. This document narrates the challenges the author faced when writing the paper.

## **2 Critical discussion of challenges encountered in the construction of each section of the proposal.**

For the research proposal, the author found out that the most difficult step was starting to write the assignment. Furthermore, choosing the research topic, refining the topic discarding unrelated search results were also problematic and time consuming for the author. However, the author conducted further searches for information utilizing multiple strategies such as, querying librarians and contacting academics specialist in the subject matter, to cross-reference information sources find relevant resources.

Another challenge faced was, the author relied on search engines as it offered speed, convenience, reliability and ease of use, and failed to use scholarly materials to support their research initially but after much research on academic work and writing long research papers for the different modules, the author identified relevant materials for inclusion, such as books, popular or scholarly articles and peer reviewed information.

During the research topic selection phase, the first step the author took in formulating the thesis for the paper was to identify a broad topic and categorise them. Gathering general background research helped to develop a focus for the paper. When choosing the topic for research papers, the author initiated the research process by brainstorming possible academic articles and reading books. Since this topic was obscure, the author had to use a variety of search terms to produce relevant results. Over time, the research techniques used, has now become more thorough and a skill acquired to use for future papers. It would have been easier to change the research topic, but as the topic was interesting, the author persevered.

### **3 Critical discussion of your interaction and use of support tutors/peers/supervisors.**

Consultations between the research topic supervisor and author were held, obtaining practical support regarding various aspects of the research proposal. The primary focus was to discuss the objectives, the selection of the research approach, devising research questions and objectives and clarifying the expectations from the research experience.

During subsequent meetings, after writing about the background, motivation, relevance and sources of knowledge sections of the paper, the feedback the author got was comprehensive and enlightening.

The author states that advices given by the Masters Programme teaching staff were very helpful in terms of increasing the quality of the research proposal.

Moreover, the teaching staff, when approached, did not only emphasize on the deficiencies that were related the proposal, but also provided thorough clarifications on why the changes were necessary in a zealous manner.

Furthermore, the author discovered, consulting with the staff to be an extremely motivational and enlightening experience because of the increased level of interest in the cyber security studies.

Frequent collaboration with peers on the Masters programme provided an understanding to the importance of critical analysis and writing and now armed with knowledge to effectively complete the dissertation.

#### **4 Critical discussion of skills required /used for successful construction of the proposal.**

During the reflection cycle phase, the author discovered to his amazement that, not only did he have most of the necessary skills essential to do research but he also found out that there were experienced, knowledgeable librarians who were willing to assist. Time management was one of the not so strong skill that the author possessed so small realistic work package targets were set which were achievable.

#### **5 Critical discussion of lessons learnt from the process and strategies to adopt to move forward.**

Wisdom gained from learning experience is incontestable. It is argued that reflecting on experiences encourages one to learn and self-improve.

According to Gibbs reflective cycle, the learning cycle started during the listed phases:

##### **5.1 Description**

This paper provided a reflection on a research proposal assignment. The author was required to write a maximum of 3000-word assignment on the topic the author had chosen for his dissertation. To achieve this goal, he had to search for and read academic papers, attend lectures and symposiums. The author's method of learning was predominantly by reading, listening and visual however the due to the sheer size of information the author was not able to read all the available information out there.



## **5.2 Feeling**

The author had the uncomfortable feeling he might not achieve the best grade but he is willing to improve after knowledge gained from the reflection. Also, he will take note of the feedback provided by the lecturers/markers and act upon it which will help with his dissertation.

## **5.3 Evaluation**

The author discovered, with this experience that there where limitation in his ability to complete all the reading required due to lack of time and volume of reading. However, the author later found out that using a cloud solution which gave better eminence to words that appear more frequently in the source text could have been used for searches to narrow down searches.

The use of a Microsoft Words reference manager which the author used was cumbersome and lengthy. Through collaborating with peers, the author discovered a reference manager tool which he used and made writing more enjoyable as well as saving valuable time.

## **5.4 Analysis**

Upon reflecting on the scenario, with the knowledge gained, the author recognises the actions he took which led to good and bad actions.

The author overlooked the SMART objectives during the writing phase, however it was included after a peer review.

A point to reconsider is the lack of deeper depth in the arguments, which is a lesson the author learnt. Valuable marks will be lost but through reflection, which clearly shows that there are no guidelines to cover every event, the author will endeavour to provide and include in-depth critical discussion to his dissertation.

## 5.5 Conclusion and Action Plan

Whilst writing this paper, the author reflected on events that had occurred and felt he had done everything possible to complete the assignment and achieve the best grade in the circumstance.

However, after reading through a variety of reflective models, the author noticed that when applying Driscoll's model of reflection, which has a setup of three meek and humble questions; What, So What and Now What, with the further generated interrogations, an extensive and more significant reflection process to place making him question his actions and leading to the creation of an action plan, like Gibbs Reflective cycle. The author realises that there is more room for improvement on factors namely,

- Time management,
- Smart researching methods which minimises information overload a situation when more information is available than can be processed. Hao, et al (2014).
- Critical analysis, discussion and writing.

## 6 Summary

This experience made the author realise that Gibbs's Reflective Cycle assist individuals learn from experiences continuously and dynamically and even especially in situations where there is negative progress.

It is a clear and concise process which assist the practitioner to be able to critically and systematically think about each of the six stages and to use their analytic skills. The author found out that using a combination of Gibb's Reflective Cycle and Driscoll's Model which is easy to

follow and use, balance each other as it is argued that Driscoll's Model reflection about an individual is not in depth and only the experience is.

It is argued that, there are several ways to reflect and any method chosen will benefit the practitioner. This process helps practitioners become better learners by letting them comprehend their strength and weaknesses.

At the start of the research proposal, the author was nervous but after reflection, he has confidence in writing the dissertation. However, as discussed earlier, the author is keen on developing skill in the areas which have been identified to lack strength in.

**7 Professional Development Plan**

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Resources Required</b>	<b>Planned Start Date</b>	<b>Planned End Date</b>	<b>Actual start date</b>	<b>Actual end date</b>	<b>Evidence of outcome</b>	<b>Review date</b>	<b>Actions following reviews</b>	<b>Career or Personal Goal</b>	<b>Reflection</b>
										<i>Skills used, weaknesses identified, lessons learnt</i>
Improve Cognitive Skills: Critical Analysis and writing	Participate in group discussions and e-learning	02-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	02-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	Receive feedback from university	18-Aug-17	Completed with success. No action	Career and Personal Goal	
Research Skills: Literature Knowledge	Undertake e-learning module on subject	04-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	04-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	Informal one-to-one review discussions	18-Aug-17	Completed with success. No action	Career and Personal Goal	
Research Skills: Problem solving	Undertake e-learning module on subject	06-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	06-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	Receive feedback from university	18-Aug-17	Completed with success. No action	Career and Personal Goal	
Self-management	Undertake e-learning module on subject	07-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	07-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	Formal and informal appraisal	18-Aug-17	Completed with success. No action	Career and Personal Goal	

Career development	Advice from Line Manager	08-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	08-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	Informal one-to-one review discussions	18-Aug-17	Completed with success. No action	Career and Personal Goal	
Research Skills: Data analysis	Undertake e-learning module on subject	11-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	11-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	Assignment followed by review	18-Aug-17	Completed with success. No action	Career and Personal Goal	
Leadership and Management Skills:	Book and attend a Leadership and Management training course	18-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	18-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	Appraisal to assess performance and potential	18-Aug-17	Completed with success. No action	Career and Personal Goal	
Professional Skills: Oral presentation	Practice Oral presentation with colleagues	22-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	22-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	Ability to present to a large audience	18-Aug-17	Completed with success. No action	Career and Personal Goal	
Professional Skills: Manuscript writing	Book and attend a Manuscript writing course	22-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	22-Jun-17	23-Aug-17	Achieve a high score for the dissertation	18-Aug-17	Completed with success. No action	Career and Personal Goal	

Table 1: Professional Development Plan

## 8 References

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