

# Writing about your reflection: An introduction to reflective practice

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# What we will discuss today

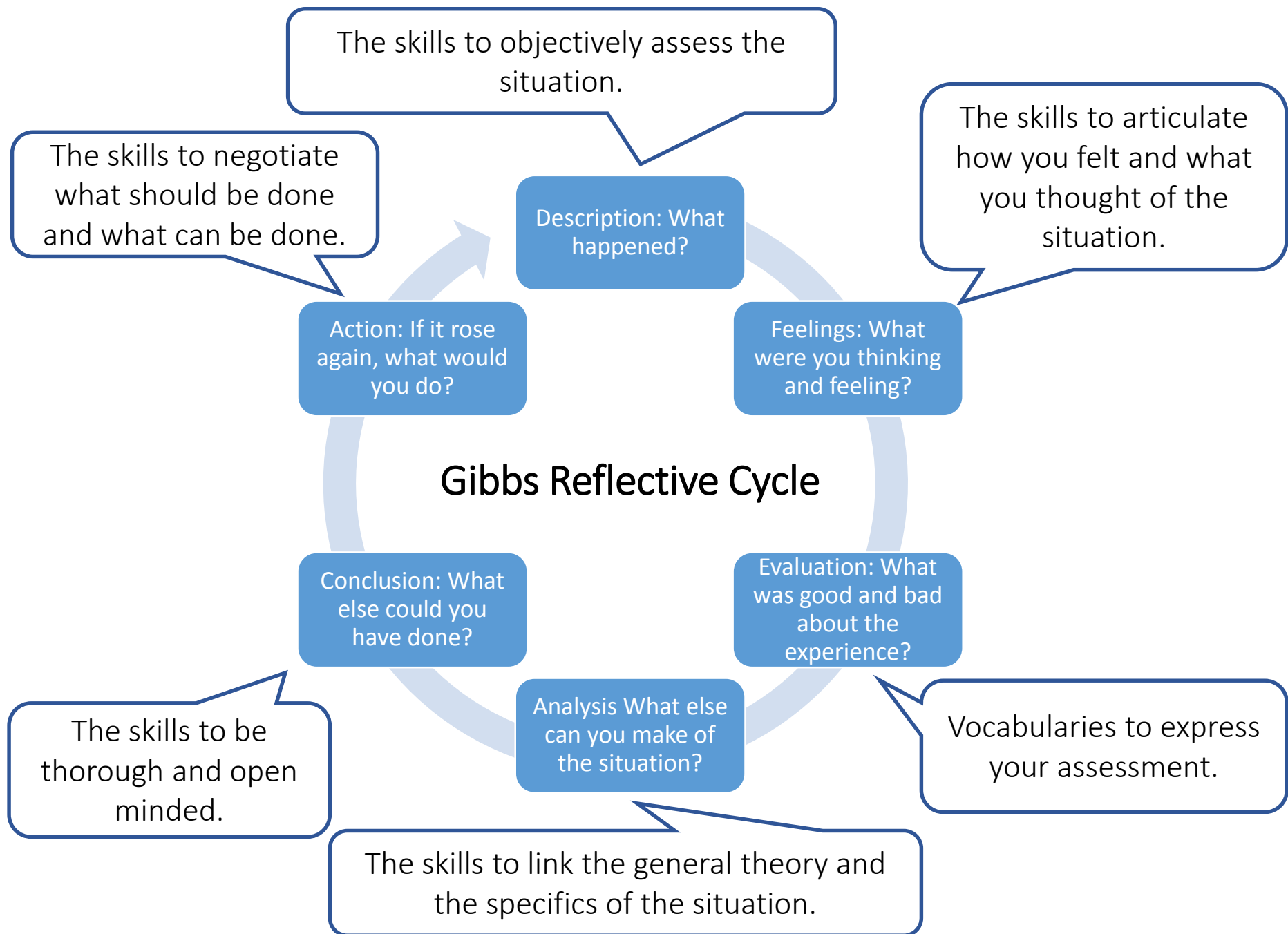
- What is 'reflective practice'?
- Why is it important?
- How do we write about it?

# Reflective practice

- What is 'practice' anyway???
- Reflective practice: Practice (i.e. experientially yet systematically learnt practical knowledge) based on reflection.
- Reflection is a process to (systematically) make sense of a given complex situation, and implement an action based on a thorough evaluation and analysis of the situation.
- Reflection can be shallow or misguided, but realising the shallowness/misguidedness is (often necessary and useful) part of reflection.

# Reflection in professional practice

- An essential component of professional development (see ACS Code of Practice, Value 5, for example)
- Any professional practice should be reflective anyway.
- It is not just a personal inclination, but a set of professional skills to be developed.
- Theory and professional values/protocols guide you orientating yourself.



# Communicating your reflections

- Your reflection should:
  - Be specific to your situation, feeling and thought,
  - Aim towards (both short- and long-term) changes, and
  - Have a sense of purpose.
- It sounds good, but why do we bother communicating with others? What are the reasons for you to share your reflections with others?

# Motivations for reflective practice

- In reality, doing the tasks well is not enough.
- You need to be competent at not only doing the tasks given, but learn from the experience, and
- Recognise yourself, and demonstrate to others your skills to do just that as part of your professional practice (and increasingly so in this fluid professional environment).

# Writing about your reflection

- Students' reflective writing often:
  - Is not specific enough,
  - Does not aim towards both short- and long-term changes, and/or
  - Does not have a sense of purpose.



How did you establish your knowledge of the situation? (We don't know what we don't know...)

Did you feel shy, embarrassed, happy, proud, sad, unfair, angry, uninterested, or could not care less...

Is your action plan realistic?

Description: What happened?

Feelings: What were you thinking and feeling?

Action: If it rose again, what would you do?

## Gibbs Reflective Cycle: *Points to consider*

Evaluation: What was good and bad about the experience?

Analysis: What else can you make of the situation?

Conclusion: What else could you have done?

Have you looked at all the possible ways to analyse the situation?

Saying it was good/bad isn't sufficient. On what basis are you making your assessment?

Have you sufficiently linked the general idea of what you should have done, and the specifics of what you can/could have done?

# Reviewing a sample piece of reflective writing

It was when I was doing my first group assignment in first year. My group members and I didn't know much about each other, and didn't really enjoy working together though we didn't hate each other or anything.

Then on the day before the due date, I suddenly realised that the due date was on the next day, and I got freaked out. We missed the due date in the end of course, and we failed this assignment.

I suppose I could do something about it before it got too late. I wasn't lazy or anything, but I sort of waited for someone else to start doing things. If I am going to do something differently next time, I'd try starting assignments early, I guess.

# Lessons learnt: Reviewing a sample piece of reflective writing

- Reflective writing reflects the writer's own personal and professional development.
- Your critique of the sample piece would have reflected your own values and approaches to the things, i.e. another important function of reflective writing.
- No reflection is more superior than another, as long as it is thorough!

It was when I was doing my first group assignment in first year. My group members and I didn't know much about each other, and didn't really enjoy working together though we didn't hate each other or anything.

Then on the day before the due date, I suddenly realised that the due date was on the next day, and I got freaked out. We missed the due date in the end of course, and we failed this assignment. I suppose I could do something about it before it got too late. I wasn't lazy or anything, but I sort of waited for someone else to start doing things.

I also did not want to be the one who create work for everyone by starting the work, and I think this was something that happened to everyone else in the group though. Maybe this was a moment of 'groupthink' when we didn't do anything in order to keep the conformity of the group, and in retrospect, there was no 'norming' stage in our group beyond 'forming' stage.

As a strategy for future, I think I will articulate the roles of each member early on, so that everyone has a clear understanding of what they are doing. I will also try taking stronger leadership to make the group functioning more as a team, I think.

The reader cannot make sense of your reflection.

Description: What happened?

Your writing will be too generic and superficial, and your reflection will not be very useful.

There is a potential risk of ending up with just a thought, not an action that follows.

Action: If it rose again, what would you do?

Feelings: What were you thinking and feeling?

## Gibbs Reflective Cycle:

*What happens if you miss this in your writing...*

There'd be a weak link between what is general and what is specific to your situation.

Conclusion: What else could you have done?

Analysis: What else can you make of the situation?

Evaluation: What was good and bad about the experience?

Your writing will lose a focus, obscuring the focus of the analysis as a result.

Your 'analysis' can be limited, biased or misguided.

# Common mistakes: Feeling and thought

“When the due date got closer and no one was taking an initiative, I was so angry, like ‘why doesn’t anyone do anything about this’? That was unpleasant and so unfair...”

“As I realise that the due date was getting closer, I first felt quite panicked, and then felt quite frustrated about my team members for not doing the work. I also felt it was unfair for me to take on everything. I now think that some of the frustration came from the fact that I did not know what to do, where to start, and what exactly we needed to do to manage the situation.”

# Common mistakes: More like a journal

“As a team, the first thing we did was to decide that we will use a Facebook group for communication. We then also decided that we will use emails to do other communications if necessary. ...”

“As a team, we quickly agreed that we will be using both a Facebook page and emails for communications amongst the team. We thought that this was a natural choice, but in retrospect we agreed on this without much thinking about what kind of information should go in each communication channels.”

# Common mistakes:

## Plugging in some theory

“In the first two weeks of doing the assignment, we have gone through a forming stage, followed by a storming stage.”

“In retrospect, the forming stage took place in our group very early on, but the storming never quite took place. I think it was because anyone in the group was not quite sure about how to take an initiative, and we were also scared of offending anyone by being bossy. There was also a lack of direction in what kind of norms could be established amongst ourselves, until the due date became too close.”



# Common mistakes:

## All positive...

“I think we all did really well in our team, and produced really good outcomes. We enjoyed working each other, and it was a great experience.”

“I think that there was a sense amongst the group that all were enjoying the process of working together, and achieving something together. In the hindsight, though, it obscured our goal at times, by focusing too much on the process than the outcome. In the end the approach worked, as exemplified in the positive outcomes, but the awareness around the outcomes, and the balance between the outcomes and the process is something to improve next time I work in a group.

# Common mistakes:

## All the things you 'ought to' do...

“As a team, we should be setting a set of common goals and work together to achieve these goals. Communications should also be managed well, so that we all get necessary information to conduct our project.”

“The team could also have established a set of common goals more systematically, as there was a sense that we were agreeing on the goals as we went. This worked okay given the size of the team and the project, but there were times some of us were frustrated by this DIY approach. As for me, I could probably take stronger initiatives, given the leader role I was having. I sometimes neglected this role and left the discussion unfocused.”

# Assignment specific information

500 words isn't too long; don't try to cover everything.

It is a form of communication with your teachers; see the marking criteria for what we'd be interested to hear about your experience.

Know what you are writing before you start writing. Structure well before you start writing please.

# What we discussed today

- What is 'reflective practice'?
- Why is it important?
- How do we write about it?
  
- In reality, neither a success nor mistake is the end point. Your professional life still goes on, and you have to do something to keep it going...
- Reflective practice and its dissemination through communication are the essential part of fostering communities of practice.

Thank you...