REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

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Thinking about 3 activities on your list....

• What did you learn?
• How did it impact on you practice?
• How did it contribute to the service?
• How did it impact on service users (how would they know you have undertaken this activity?)
• What evidence would you choose?
Of course something must be done!

The case must reach the threshold, resources are scarce.

PRACTITIONER

hungry

sad
tired
unloved
dirty

X

System

guidance
categories
multi-agency
resources

assessmen

SIMPLE

COMPLEX
Reflection: A Definition

‘Reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull over & evaluate it. It is this working with experience that is important in learning’.

Reflection: the claims

‘We learn through critical reflection by putting ourselves into the experience & exploring personal & theoretical knowledge to understand it & view it in different ways.

Reflection: Informal & formal

Informal Reflection
• Involves self-questioning
• Develops our awareness of our own assumptions

Formal Reflection
• Draws on research & theory
• Provides guidance & frameworks for practice.
Models of Reflection (2)
Schon’s (1983) ‘Reflection in Action’

Reflection in action concerns thinking about something whilst engaged in doing it, having a feeling about something & practicing according to that feeling.

This model celebrates the intuitive & artistic approaches that can be brought to uncertain situations.

Models of Reflection (3)
Kolb’s (1984) Learning Cycle

1. **Concrete Experience**: The event
2. **Reflective observation**: Consider what has happened from a variety of perspectives e.g. own feelings, the group’s, an individual student’s view
3. **Abstract conceptualisation**: Re-package & process your reflections into a theoretical understanding (use theory to analyse the event)
4. **Active Experimentation**: Armed with this new understanding, you do it again, differently this time.

Reflective practice (Kolb)

Active experimentation

Conceptualisation

Experience

Reflection
Models of Reflection (4)

Boud’s (1985) Experiential Learning

1. Return to an event, incident or experience & record it
2. Consider it in detail at an emotional and cognitive level
3. Re-evaluate the event in the light of experience, knowledge & experimentation. Seek to understand the meaning of the experience

Models of Reflection (5)
John’s Ten C’s of Reflection (2000)

- **Commitment** Accept responsibility & be open to change
- **Contradiction** Note tension between actual & desired practice
- **Conflict** Harness this energy to take appropriate action
- **Challenge** Confront your own typical actions, beliefs & attitudes in a non-threatening way
- **Catharsis** Work through negative feelings
- **Creation** Move beyond old self to novel alternatives
- **Connection** Connect new insights in the world of practice
- **Caring** Realise desirable practice
- **Congruence** Reflection as a mirror for caring
- **Constructing** Building personal knowledge in practice

THREE MEANINGS OF REFLECTION

- Thinking things through
- Questioning our own guidelines and developing our theories to respond to new situations
- Understanding how our relationships with clients reflect their own experiences and relationships and give us access to how they are experiencing the world (Payne, 2014)
Reflective Practitioners (Banks, 2006:140)

- Recognise ethical dilemmas and conflicts and how they arise. They are more confident about their own values and how to put them into practice; they integrate knowledge, values and skills; reflect on practice and learn from it; are prepared to take risks and moral blame"
Defensive Practitioners (Banks, 2006:139)

- Go by the book and fulfil duties/ responsibilities defined by the agency and the law. There is no need to take blame if prescribed rules and procedures have been followed. Social workers are “officials” or “technicians”. Doing my duty means fulfilling my obligations to the agency, rather than doing the right action; personal and agency values tend to be separated, and the latter adopted whilst in the role of social worker”
Reflective and defensive practice

• How reflective and/or defensive is practice in your team?
• What is the evidence of defensive and/or reflective practice?
• What factors promote reflective practice for both you and your team members?
Barriers to Reflection

Practical Barriers

Kolb (1984) sees that to reflect effectively on your experience, you should actively set aside part of your working day to reflect & analyse.

Barriers to Reflection

Psychological Barriers

Fear of judgement, fear of criticism, being closed to feedback, defensiveness, professional arrogance.
Bridges to Reflection

• Non-judgemental support, e.g. mentor, manager
• Feeling ‘safe’ enough – or we may use ‘expedient’ learning & do what we expect will get us through
• A role model, e.g. a mentor who reflects on their own practice
• Knowledge of as many methods as possible
• As many opportunities as possible for engaging in reflection, e.g. pairs, groups
• Time & Energy.

Methods of Reflection

Critical Incident

A critical incident is an incident that is in some way significant to the individual recounting it.

Should record:

• What the situation was
• What you did in it
• What happened as a result of your actions
• A reflection on the situation or event & the process by which it unfolded
• Common in professional training.
The Importance of Reflection

Reflection potentially enables us to:

- Be conscious of our potential for bias & discrimination.
- Make the best use of the knowledge available.
- Challenge & develop the existing professional knowledge base
- Avoid past mistakes
- Maximise our own opportunities for learning
- (nb evidence base limited – mostly claimsmaking).
Some conclusions

- Reflective practice is not about the internal world of the practitioner/manager

- It’s is widely agreed to promote better outcomes through more attuned, sensitive responses to individuals and families

- It is also possibly linked to professional resilience

- There is not a recipe or “solution” to becoming more reflective

- It is about creating mind-sets and team cultures and will be/should be a process rather than a goal
References


