



Good practice guide: Reflective practice

November 2024

Introduction

As an Education Workforce Council (EWC) registrant, you have a responsibility to review and develop your practice in order to help maintain standards and enhance your professionalism. Reflective practice is an important part of professional learning and development, and one of the key drivers of continuous improvement in the education sector. This good practice guide considers the essential elements of reflective practice, outlines its benefits, and offers practical tips for using it effectively.

The Code

All EWC registrants are subject to the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice (the Code), which sets out the key principles of good conduct and practice for registrants.

The principles and expectations in the Code which refer to ensuring and maintaining suitable competency in your practice are:

4. Personal and Professional Responsibility

Registrants:

- 4.1 know, use, and take responsibility for the relevant professional standards for their particular profession throughout their career
- 4.2 know, understand and comply with current policies, procedures and guidelines which are relevant to their practice

5. Professional Learning

Registrants:

- 5.1 demonstrate a shared commitment to their continuing professional learning by reflecting upon, and evaluating, their practice, keeping their professional knowledge and skills up to date and taking steps to improve their practice where necessary

What is reflective practice?

Reflection is a process which helps you to gain insight into your professional practice by thinking about and analysing your actions and experiences.

Effective reflection involves a continuous process of inquiry, critical analysis, evaluation, and subsequent action. It embraces active learning and the ongoing critical assessment of your personal assumptions, beliefs, and implicit theories. It can allow you to develop a deeper understanding of your practice and refine your approach to professional challenges, helping you to become a more agile, adaptive, innovative, and effective practitioner.

Engaging in reflective practice not only deepens your understanding of your work, but also supports your commitment to continuous learning, ensuring you remain responsive to the evolving demands of your profession.

Being a reflective practitioner can enhance your knowledge and understanding of the wider initiatives and educational policy associated with your profession (beyond those within your own organisation) and help you to understand their relevance to your practice.

There are three key stages of reflection which are outlined below:

Reflection-for-action

Planning/thinking through before engaging in practice.

Reflection-in-action

Thinking and drawing on our professional knowledge base while engaged in practice.

Reflection-on-action

Stepping back and drawing out the learning after having engaged in practice. This should inform the subsequent reflection for action.

Thompson and Thompson 2023, cited in Campbell and Ceau 2023¹

Reflecting encourages you to critically question established norms and practices, helping you to acknowledge the complexity of your work, and the need to carefully consider and learn from your experiences.

Learning by doing or even learning from doing is insufficient, a more advanced meta-cognitive process of reflecting on thoughts, feelings, assumptions, decisions, and actions is needed to inform professional learning, knowledge, and practice. The central reflective question is not “what did I do?”, but rather “what did I learn during and from this experience?”, “how will this learning inform my future professional practice?”, and “what will I do next?”

Campbell and Ceau 2023¹

¹ Campbell, C and Ceau, M (2023): [Leading Reflective Practice – Reviewing the Evidence. Paper Commissioned by the Education Workforce Council and National Academy for Education Leadership Wales](#)

What are the benefits of reflective practice?

There are different types of reflective practice and how you reflect will depend on the nature and scope of your practice, the activity you are reflecting on, and your personal style of learning. Reflection can be flexible, or more structured depending on your preferences, but it is important that you engage with the process continually to maintain and improve your practice. This allows you to target your learning outcomes in a way that is directed to your needs and ensure that your practice remains up to date.

Key benefits of reflective practice

Learning more about yourself

Reflective practice can provide new insights into your abilities, skills, strengths, and weaknesses.

Enhanced strategies

Reflection can help you to refine your methods and develop improved strategies, based on your experience of what works, and what does not.

Improved decision-making

By critically analysing the outcomes of past actions, you can make more informed and effective decisions.

Supporting professional growth

Continuous reflection encourages lifelong learning and professional development.

Increased wellbeing

Engaging in reflective practice can reduce stress and increase job satisfaction by promoting professional growth and reinforcing a sense of accomplishment.

Creating a culture of improvement

Reflective practice can help to foster a culture of continuous improvement in your setting, with you and your colleagues continually evaluating and refining methods and approaches.

Adapted from Campbell and Ceau 2023², and Newcastle University 2024³

2 Campbell, C and Ceau, M (2023): [Leading Reflective Practice – Reviewing the Evidence. Paper Commissioned by the Education Workforce Council and National Academy for Education Leadership Wales](#)

3 Newcastle University (2024): [Reflective Practice. Build a habit of reflecting on your practice to help you develop as a learner](#)

Ideas and strategies

It is important to note that, as individuals, we all learn and reflect in different ways. You should think about a method that suits you and will provide the greatest benefit.

Strategies to consider

Set aside time to reflect

It can be difficult to find time to properly reflect. Try to regularly set time aside where you will not be interrupted, in an environment where you feel relaxed and able to think deeply and with clarity about your experience.

Visualise

Use visualisation techniques to explore different ideas and possibilities. Imagine a photograph of 'my day' and examine the details of the picture.

Write things down

Written reflection allows you to document and analyse your daily experiences and can help you identify themes, patterns, and areas for improvement.

Working with peers

Talking to peers, sharing insights, and providing feedback to one another can encourage you to question your assumptions and consider different perspectives.

Structured reflection

Engage in regular, structured reflection sessions, such as after-event reviews, where you can reflect on both positive and negative experiences and learn key lessons from them.

Five fundamentals of reflective practice

1. Regularly reflect

Make a commitment to yourself to reflect regularly. This can involve reflecting on new learning experiences or on practices that you regularly undertake in your role. A consistent approach ensures that reflective practice becomes an integral part of your daily professional life, underpinning the principles outlined in the Code.

2. Set yourself goals (and review them)

Set clear, achievable professional development goals. Regularly review and update these goals based on ongoing reflection upon your practice.

3. Collaborate to gain insights from colleagues

Engage in collaborative reflection and use feedback from others to gain new insights and help you to refine your practice.

4. Use an approach that suits your own professional style

Find an approach that works for you to embed reflection into your daily practice and ensure that reflections and goals are aligned with organisational priorities and objectives.

5. Use reflective questions, prompts, challenge, and research

Use questions and prompts to guide your reflections. Asking yourself questions such as “What did I learn from this experience?” or “How can I apply this learning to my practice?” can help you glean insight and deepen your reflections.

The Professional Learning Passport (PLP)

Available to all EWC registrants, the PLP is a flexible online e-portfolio designed to support you in capturing, reflecting, sharing, and planning your learning. It is also designed to support the development of enquiry and pedagogic skills. As part of the PLP, registrants have access to EBSCO, the world's largest full-text research database for education professionals covering all levels of education and specialities including reflective practice.

Recording learning activities

The PLP helps you to record your professional learning activities, including formal training, workshops, conferences, and informal learning experiences such as reading professional literature, or collaborative discussions with peers.

Structured templates

The structured templates built into the PLP can help guide your reflections. You can also get creative and use the PLP's template builder to create a customised document that suits your reflective needs.

Reflective journals

You can keep reflective journals within the PLP to document your thoughts, insights and reflections on your practice, and professional development activities through text, audio, and video.

Goal setting and tracking

The PLP allows you to set your own professional development goals and track your progress over time. This feature can help you stay focused on your objectives, measure your achievements, and continually reflect on your practice.

Collaboration and sharing

The PLP supports collaborative learning by allowing you to share your reflections and professional learning records with colleagues, mentors, and supervisors. This fosters a community of practice and encourages collaborative reflection.

Confidentiality and privacy

The platform ensures that all entries and documents are kept confidential, providing a safe space for you to reflect honestly and openly on your experiences.

Evidence collection

You can upload evidence of your professional learning, such as certificates of attendance, planning notes, feedback, and other relevant documents that showcase your growth and development. The PLP's ability to collect and store evidence of professional learning provides a visible record of your experiences and professional growth over time. This can be valuable in assessing the benefits of your reflective practice approach, as well as helping you in relation to performance reviews, career advancement, and (where relevant) meeting professional standards.

Useful resources

[Find out more about the PLP](#), the flexible online e-portfolio, available to all EWC registrants.

For more detailed insights into reflective practice, read the paper [Leading Reflective Practice – Reviewing the Evidence](#) by Professor Carol Campbell and Maeva Ceau, which was commissioned by the EWC, in partnership with the National Academy for Education Leadership (NAEL).

The EWC's June 2024 masterclass event, [Leading reflective practice – from evidence to effective action](#), led by Professor Carol Campbell, further explores the conditions required for effective reflective practice and the role that it can play in supporting registrants in maintaining their professional competency and enhancing their practice.

