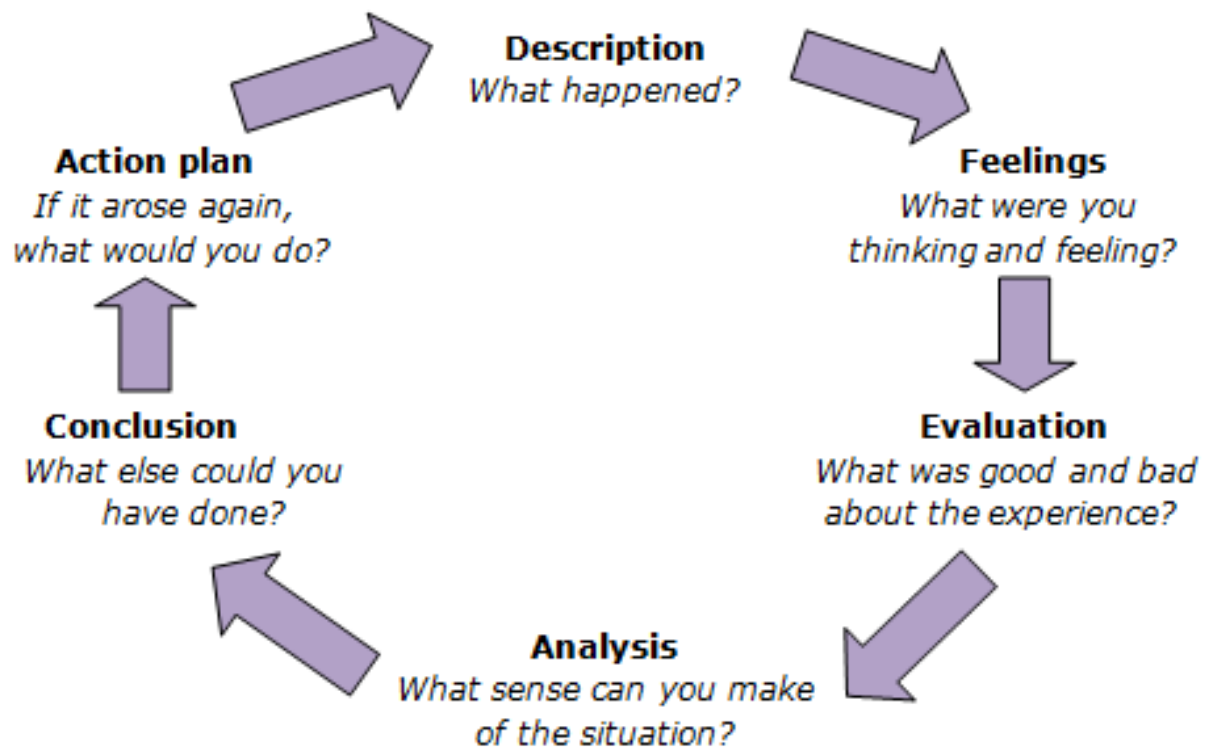


Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle

Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle is a popular model for reflection. The model includes 6 stages of reflection and is presented below.



Description

In this section, you need to explain what you are reflecting on to your reader. Perhaps include background information, such as what it is you're reflecting on and tell the reader who was involved. It's important to remember to keep the information provided relevant and to-the-point. Don't waffle on about details that aren't required – if you do this, you're just using up valuable words that you'll get minimal marks for.

Feelings

Discuss your feelings and thoughts about the experience. Consider questions such as: How did you feel at the time? What did you think at the time? What did you think about the incident afterwards? You can discuss your emotions honestly, but make sure to remember at all times that this is an academic piece of writing, so avoid 'chatty' text.

Evaluation

For your evaluation, discuss how well you think things went. Perhaps think about: How did you react to the situation, and how did other people react? What was good and what was bad about the experience? If you are writing about a difficult incident, did you feel that the situation was resolved afterwards? Why/why not? This section is a good place to include the theory and the work of other authors – remember it is important to include references in reflective writing.

Analysis

In your analysis, consider what might have helped or hindered the event. You also have the opportunity here to compare your experience with the literature you have read. This section is very important, particularly for higher level writing. Many students receive poor marks for reflective assignments for not bringing the theory and experience together.

Conclusion

In your conclusion, it is important to acknowledge: whether you could have done anything else; what you have learned from the experience; consider whether you could you have responded in a different way. If you are talking about a positive experience...discuss whether you would do the same again to ensure a positive outcome. Also consider if there is anything you could change to improve things even further. If the incident was negative...tell your reader how you could have avoided it happening and also how you could make sure it doesn't happen again.

Action plan

Action plans sum up anything you need to know and do to improve for next time. Perhaps you feel that you need to learn about something or attend some training. Could you ask your tutor or placement supervisor for some advice? What can you do which means you will be better equipped to cope with a similar event?

Adapted from: Gibbs, G. (1988) Learning by doing: a guide to teaching and learning methods. Oxford: Further Education Unit.

Using Gibbs' (1988) reflective model in reflective writing

The following text is an example of a piece of reflective writing, following Gibbs' (1988) model. The task was to write a reflection about an incident which occurred during the first few weeks of a teaching placement (1000 words). Please note that the references used are fictional.

Description

I am currently on a teaching practice placement in an adult education college in the south-west of England, learning how to teach GCSE maths to various groups of adults. As my placement is in the early stages, I am mainly assisting the class tutors and have just started planning and delivering a small part of each lesson. The incident occurred in an evening class during which I was due to deliver my very first session. The class tutor had been teaching the learners about fractions, and my task was to continue with this instruction, looking specifically at how to multiply two fractions. However, when I was due to teach the session, I got to the whiteboard and became so nervous that I struggled to speak to the group. I felt myself visibly shaking and was unable to articulate my first sentence coherently. The students were quite understanding, as they are all mature students who are aware that I am new to teaching and am nervous, but the class teacher was unsympathetic and responded by taking over the lesson whilst I sat at the back of the room trying not to cry. I left the session as soon as the class was over, and did not speak to anyone.

Feelings

I felt extremely miserable at the time and even considered leaving my teacher training course. I was also embarrassed and upset by my own inability to speak in front of the group, but I was also extremely angry with the class teacher for her response in the presence of the learners. I felt afterwards that she had not given me sufficient time to compose myself, and that she should have allowed me to address my nerves. The situation left me very distressed and I rang in sick the following week; it was only when I reflected on the experience that I decided I needed to speak to the placement supervisor. I also realised later that feeling nervous is a natural reaction to speaking in public (Jones, 2000) which made me feel less embarrassed.

Evaluation

At the time, I did not feel that the situation had been resolved at all. I very deliberately left at the end of the class without speaking to the class teacher or the learners. However, after speaking to a fellow trainee about his own experience, I felt much more positive. I realised that everyone feels nervous before their first few classes. This is clear in the relevant literature, as Greene (2006, p. 43) points out, saying that nine out of ten new trainee teachers found their first session "incredibly daunting". It appears that most trainee teachers have moments of being "tongue-tied" and "losing their way with the lesson" (Parbold, 1998, p. 223).

Analysis

The situation was made worse by both my own actions and those of the class teacher. I feel that I should have stood up to her, rather than letting

her take control of the lesson, and that I should have spoken to her immediately after the lesson about how I was feeling. Dealing with situations like this immediately is preferable, as Cooper (2001) points out. Instead, I spoke to my placement supervisor several days later, and did not see the class teacher again until a formal meeting consisting of myself, the teacher and the supervisor. Daynes and Farris (2003) say that, by not dealing with situations immediately and personally, and instead taking it to an authority figure, the situation can be made worse. The class teacher could have felt that she was being "ganged up on" (Thomas, 2003, p. 22), which could lead to future problems. The teacher's actions also made the situation worse, because she did not give me time to overcome my fears and she deliberately embarrassed me in front of the class. She claimed that she had thought she was helping me to overcome my anxieties, but I do not believe that to be the case. However, as we only spoke about the incident over a week later in the meeting with the supervisor, she rightly argued that I should have said something to her at the time.

Conclusion

In retrospect, I would do several things differently. I should have spoken to the class teacher immediately after the session and voiced my opinions. I should also have been more assertive by advising the tutor that I could continue with the lesson. However, the incident made me realise the importance of building up a relationship with the teacher, a skills that Jackson (1999) stresses as fundamental to a successful placement. I feel that, had I developed a professional relationship with the teacher in the preceding weeks, I would have been able to explain how nervous I was beforehand. This would have provided the opportunity to discuss strategies for dealing with nerves and perhaps the incident could have been avoided entirely.

Action Plan

In future, I will ensure that I build up a relationship with colleagues. I am working alongside several different teachers during my placement, and I intend to speak to each of them about my nerves. I have already had a beneficial conversation with one teacher and together we have developed a programme of team-teaching for the next few weeks so that I do not feel so pressurised. I plan to do this with the other class teachers, as it will help them to understand how I feel. I also need to speak to my fellow trainees more often about how they feel, as I think I will be able to learn from them. In terms of training, I have booked onto a presentation skills workshop at University, and intend to follow it up by attending the practise sessions afterwards. This experience has made me realise that I need to gain more confidence with presenting and I feel addressing my presentation skills will help me to do this.

Extract adapted from: www.salford.ac.uk