Learning outcome

Be able to reflect on aspects of practice where development is required to improve services for individuals.

3.2. Using **a recognised model** reflect upon a specific issue in practice, making recommendations for improved services.

Models of reflective practice: transcript

In our previous video, we talked about the importance of, and the benefits of, reflective practice in health and social care, and we suggested some typical situations that might prompt you to reflect. But HOW do we go about this process of reflection? There are a number of well-known models of reflection and we'll have a look at a few of them here. Many of them follow a broadly similar pattern, which is:

- Identify a situation and your role in it
- Think about how it made you feel
- Ask yourself if you can identify the causes of the situations, and of your feelings that result
- Ask if it could have been done differently
- Think about what you will do next time this happens

First, let's look at the Gibbs model from 1988. This shows us a cycle of reflection, with 6 named stages: Description; feeling; evaluation; analysis; conclusion and action plan. By breaking down reflection into these 6 stages, we have a clear path to follow, and it becomes easy to think of the kind of questions we need to ask ourselves at each stage. The **description** stage asks us what happened. What was the event that prompted this reflection? Then we consider our own **feelings**, before, after and during this event, as well as how other people might have felt at the time. This is closely linked to the next stage: **evaluation**. Here, you have to assess what was good and bad about the experience, drawing on the feelings considered in the previous stage, as well as any real-world outcomes. Following this, we have the **analysis** stage. This means taking what we learnt in the evaluation stage and asking WHY? Can we understand the causes of everything? Then, the next stage is **conclusion**. This is where we ask what we have learnt from the situation, and what could have been better. We also ask what we skills we need in order to do it differently next time. This leads us into the final stage, which is called **action plan**. How will we develop the skills we need in order to improve next time? Are there any other measures we must put in place in order to ensure an improved outcome next time?

(*example questions annotated on screen as we navigate the diagram during narration*)

Next, let's have a look at the **Driscoll model from 1994**. This evolved from a model first devised by Terry Borton in 1970. It can also be considered as similar to the Gibbs model, but slightly simplified.

One of the appeals of this is that it can be easily remembered by reducing it to just three questions: What? So what? And now what?

The "what?" stage simply asks us what happened, including the consequences for you, and how we felt about it. It asks us to think subjectively and holistically about as many aspects of the situation as possible. The "so what?" stage asks a lot of questions, all of which aim to lead us to a learning point from the situation. This can be considered as the equivalent of the evaluation and analysis stages from the Gibbs model combined. Finally, the "now what" stage resembles a combination of the conclusion and action plan stages from Gibbs. Here we ask what we need to do in the future, and what steps and measures we can take to ensure that happens.

Both the Driscoll and Gibbs model benefit from a series of relatively straightforward questions for us to follow, and from being quite easy to remember. They can also be simply applied to any number of situations. There are some drawbacks, however, and both models have been criticised for being slightly too superficial and lacking in elements of critical thinking. For example, Gibbs' model does not ask us to consider theories or developments within the professional field that may influence the outcome, or change over time. Driscoll's model, meanwhile, may be too simple if a person just engages with the three questions on a surface-level, and does not truly reflect on themselves.

The third and final model that we're going to look at today is called the CARL model. It also asks you to break down a recent experience to help you to better understand it, and to reflect on the outcome. Here, CARL stands for context, actions, results and learning. So, you should consider the **context** and background of an event. For example, was this an experience you had ever experienced before? Were you prepared for it in any way? Next, look at the **action**. Quite simply, what did you do? What else happened? However, don't forget to also think about WHY you acted in the way that you did. Then, look at the **results**. Were you successful in this situation? Did the results match your expectation? Why, or why not? How could the results be better next time? And finally, look at the **learning**. What did you learn from the situation? What could you do differently next time? Do you need to change anything about yourself and your practices?

As with the previous two examples, some of the advantages of the CARL model are that it is simple to remember, and it highlights different elements of a situation on which you are reflecting. However, some people argue that it is TOO simple and superficial, and if you are not careful, you could end up simply *describing* the context, action, results and learning, without really analysing them or engaging with them critically, so it is important to include as many WHY questions as possible, at every stage of the reflection process.

These are just three quick examples of well-known models of reflection, but there are many more. Have a look at some of these other established models too. (*further examples shown on screen, including 5 Rs model, Kolb reflective cycle, Schön model, Rolfe et al's Framework for Reflexive Learning, Johns' Model for Structured Reflection, Atkins & Murphy model, Brookfield model…*)

The important thing for you to remember is that different models of reflection will work for different people, as we all learn in different ways. Likewise, different situations might benefit from different kinds of reflection models. The best thing you can do is try this out for yourself and see what works for you. And remember, reflective practice doesn't just mean that you look back on things that have not gone well for you. It's important to reflect on your success too.

References

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