

Chapter 10

Multidisciplinary Approaches to Reflective Practices Supporting Student Transitions Into Employment

Samuel C. Bizley

University of Reading, UK

Amanda Branson

University of Reading, UK

Kate Fletcher

University of Reading, UK

Aileen K. Ho

University of Reading, UK

Amanda Millmore

University of Reading, UK

Sharon Sinclair-Graham

University of Reading, UK

ABSTRACT

This chapter considers the approach of three academic disciplines, Law, Psychology, and Pharmacy, in their use of reflective practices in undergraduate teaching. Each discipline uses portfolios or reflective journals to support their students' transition into employment, by introducing fledgling employability skills and attributes, encouraging self-awareness and an ability to articulate skills and competences, and by supporting students to becoming reflective professionals of the future, whether they pursue their degree as a pathway into their respective professions or as a stepping-stone to another career. By sharing different good practice models, this chapter offers a range of ways that the reader can adapt their own practice to support students to increase their self-awareness, modelling different approaches to reflective practice.

INTRODUCTION

The use of reflective practices both in academic and professional life is commonplace, providing opportunities to pause, reflect, evaluate and change behavior. This chapter will examine the approaches taken by different academic disciplines within the University of Reading to reflective practices as an aide to supporting students during their degree programs and beyond as they transition into employment.

The authors of this chapter are all members of the academic staff of the University of Reading, a research-led university in the south of England. The student body is composed of over 23,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students from over 160 countries. A wide range of programs are delivered from pure and applied sciences to languages, humanities, social sciences, business and the arts (University of Reading, n.d.-a).

This chapter will focus upon the disciplines of Law, Psychology and Pharmacy, all courses where academic study has an obvious professional career path, albeit not every student will inevitably pursue that route. In each instance, a portfolio or reflective journal is used to support transition through their program and into employment, whether by introducing fledgling employability skills and attributes to students, encouraging self-awareness and an ability to articulate skills and competences, or by supporting students along the way to becoming the reflective professionals of the future.

Students on these programs originate from across the globe; in the academic year 2021-22, 66-82% were from the United Kingdom (UK), 6-10% were from South East Asia, 8.8% from East Asia, 6-8% from Europe, with the remaining students representing all other regions. In the same year, the average University and College Admissions Service (UCAS) entry tariff for Law students was 125, for Pharmacy was 129, and for Psychology was 138.

Reflective practice has been defined as ‘learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and practice’ (Finlay, 2008, p. 1). Reflection has become increasingly important for registered professions as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has been introduced and remains a mandatory condition of registration with professional and regulatory bodies. For example, pharmacists registered in Great Britain currently must submit a reflective account once a year as part of their revalidation and registration renewal (General Pharmaceutical Council, 2023).

Becoming a critical reflector is demanding as it requires an individual to take a step back and visualize themselves in a previous context, requiring time, contemplation and exploration of different perspectives (Smith, 2011). In much the same way as students must learn and practice critical thinking, a skill that underpins academic success, the same is true of critical reflection. Students must be taught how to reflect, and given regular opportunities to practice, scaffolding them towards increased self-awareness.

The complex language and terminology used in the teaching of reflection adds a further challenge, which can make it difficult to assimilate into teaching. There are numerous models of reflection, including Jasper’s (2013) ERA cycle, Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle, and Gibbs’ (1998) Reflective Cycle. Whilst these models have differing levels of complexity, at a basic level they each follow a cyclical approach, starting with an outline of an experience, continuing with an examination of what happened, and culminating in an action, detailing what will be done next, as a result of the experience and reflection. Portfolios and journal activities are frequently used in higher education as a repository for reflective accounts of students’ learning experiences. This facilitates the review and assessment of reflection by academic staff, and e-portfolios are particularly accessible for both students and staff. They can be accessed via an internet connection and staff and students can exchange accounts and comments easily.

24 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/multidisciplinary-approaches-to-reflective-practices-supporting-student-transitions-into-employment/326323

Related Content

Overcoming the Onslaught: A Tale of Woe from One Adjunct Professor

Janelle Christine Simmons (2020). *Confronting Academic Mobbing in Higher Education: Personal Accounts and Administrative Action* (pp. 1-28).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/overcoming-the-onslaught/236282

Critical Review of Curriculum in Legal Financial Studies in Turkey: Perspectives and Prospects

Deboshree Banerjiand Rituparna Das (2014). *Handbook of Research on Higher Education in the MENA Region: Policy and Practice* (pp. 102-118).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/critical-review-of-curriculum-in-legal-financial-studies-in-turkey/114337

International Service-Learning: Study Abroad and Global Citizenship Development in a Post-Disaster Locale

Joellen E. Coryell, Trae Stewart, Zane C. Wubben, Tereza Cristina Valverde-Poenieand B. J. Spencer (2016). *Handbook of Research on Study Abroad Programs and Outbound Mobility* (pp. 420-445).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/international-service-learning/164129

On the Importance of Written Communication Skills and Student Awareness: In-Course, Career-Relevant Resources and Exercises

Jennifer Schneider (2021). *Enhancing Higher Education Accessibility Through Open Education and Prior Learning* (pp. 210-231).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/on-the-importance-of-written-communication-skills-and-student-awareness/270854

Incorporating Spirituality in the Classroom: Effects on Teaching Quality Perception

Matthew A. Hiatt, Jeffrey S. Reber, Alan L. Wilkinsand Jillian Ferrell (2021). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-16).

www.irma-international.org/article/incorporating-spirituality-in-the-classroom/273132