



INTER-CULTURAL SKILLS

The Reflective Journal

References and Acknowledgements

We have used information from the CASS School of Education PCET Reflective Journal and from the Newham College Intercultural Working qualification (accredited by OCN Eastern Region) to help us develop this journal. Other references, including Moon, are detailed in the Indicative Reading list.

What is a reflective journal?

Effective teaching is achieved by a combination of theory and practice. Teaching is improved by being able to connect what you do with what research and theory tell you and thinking about how you evaluate and develop your practice in the light of this. The term 'reflective practitioner', coined by Schon (1983) captures this process and sits at the centre of good, professional practice.

Practising teachers will already be reflective practitioners and the development of inter-cultural skills will be achieved best by using these reflective skills. Talking to others, including peers and mentors, about your experiences can help crystallise thinking and adapt practice, as well as provide different perspectives and ideas. According to Jarvis (1992), we only learn things in relation to our experience. We relate new information and events to what we already know and assimilate or adapt it. This helps us the next time we meet with a similar occurrence.

What is the purpose of the reflective journal?

By keeping a reflective journal, you will be able to consider theory and practice in tandem and develop your skills based on reflection either alone or with your peers or mentor. You will be able to spot any recurring issues and plot your own progress or changes in your teaching. It will also be a useful tool to look back on in the future to help you build up a base of knowledge about theory and about your own practice.

Maintaining the journal will enable you to provide evidence of your understanding of the concepts, values and principles underlying intercultural competence and your ability to act in an inter-cultural skills context.

How will it be used and who will read it?

The reflective journal will be used in two ways. Firstly, it will be a tool for you to record your own experiences, put them in the context of theory, discuss them with other teachers, reflect and adapt practice. Secondly, it will be used to demonstrate progress between Workshop 1 and Workshop 2. It will be read by your mentor and assessor who will keep the content confidential. It may well form the basis of your discussions with them. It may also be read by external assessors when they moderate and verify our assessments. You will be encouraged to share some of the content, at least, with other course participants in the second workshop and through online discussions - although how much you wish to share will be up to you.

The final part of the reflective journal, the action plan, will be used to help complete your Personal Learning Plan at the end of the course.

What sorts of entries will it include?

The section below describes how you should construct entries. The entries themselves may come in many different forms. There will certainly be elements of your practice that you want to explore. You might choose to describe something you did in class that you feel you could do better. You will then research how you could do it better and repeat the activity in class using the knowledge you have found. You would then write a second entry describing and discussing how it went. You might also choose to write entries about things you have experienced or witnessed and how you could have used your skills to intervene and create a different outcome. You might wish to reflect on the practice of one or more of your peers (anonymously) and what you have learnt from it. You might also choose to reflect on your lesson preparation, content or the curriculum/syllabus itself, on team meetings, encounters outside the classroom, a critical incident, or anything else that has caused you to reflect on your inter-cultural skills.

If you are in doubt about whether an entry is relevant, please look at the learning outcomes and underpinning personal qualities at the front of the handbook for guidance. However, you will be the final judge of what is relevant to you.

How should entries be constructed?

Reflective writing should include descriptive accounts of your experience, how you later make sense of that experience, evaluative accounts of your practice (what worked and what didn't and why) and the use of research, theory and discussion with others to inform the way you act on all of this.

Firstly, there are some general rules:

- You should not disclose personal information or any thoughts or feelings that you would rather not share
- Names of students and colleagues should never be disclosed, nor information that could indicate who they are
- Use professional and inclusive language and try to avoid direct criticism or negative portrayals of others
- Try to use all the resources you have - your own thoughts and feelings, discussion with others, examples from others, etc. and relate them to theory and your research
- Keep a record on the Bibliography page of all the research references you have used including books, journals, web pages or media programmes.
- Please use the Harvard system of referencing

Once you have decided on something you wish to include, try to construct your entries in a way that makes it easy to reflect on them. If it is an experience or event, we suggest:

- Describe what happened as clearly as you can, including all relevant details but not writing at greater length than you need to
- Describe how you felt and what you thought at the time and how you feel/what you think when you write it up
- Explain why this is significant
- Detail what is/was good or bad about it
- Try to analyse it. Reflect on why it happened, what could have been the consequences, why did it prompt a reaction. Explain how you think the outcome or practice could be improved
- Explain what you think should have happened. What else could you or others have done? How could outcomes have been improved?
- What have you learnt from the experience? How will it help you to act or respond in the future? What did it tell you about yourself and others?

If you are reflecting on your own practice or that of others, or on content or preparation, for example, we suggest:

- Describe in detail the thing you are reflecting on
- Explain why you are thinking about this in particular
- Describe how you feel about it and what you think
- Analyse it and reflect on why you think it is good or bad or why you think it should be changed or done differently
- Detail what is good or bad about it and what that makes you feel
- Explain how it could be done differently and why
- How will this improve outcomes or practice?
- Reflect on what you have learnt from this process
- Will it change your future practice?

The Reflective Journal of the CASS School of Education at the University of East London contains some useful tips from Moon (2006) which we feel are very helpful:

"...it is absolutely important for the learner to make the reflective writing their own and to engage with it in a regular routine that suits themselves. It shouldn't be forced, and yet it should become a regular, normal habit....."

- make the journal your own
- be honest
- let words flow
- use your own words
- dig deeper
- be flexible
- write things up as soon as you can
- seek help if necessary
- be selective"

How many entries should there be?

We would expect you to make at least one substantial entry every week between Workshop 1 and Workshop 2 but the more entries you make, the easier it will be for you to reflect on your practice in a rounded way.

Should I complete entries on paper or electronically?

You will need to keep your journal electronically but we suggest that you carry a paper copy with you to enable you to jot things down when they happen so you can be clear about your thoughts and feelings at the time and perhaps reflect on whether they change later.

Entry Number:
Date of entry:
Dates of supplementary entries:

Entry Number:
Date of entry:
Dates of supplementary entries:

Entry Number:
Date of entry:
Dates of supplementary entries:

Entry Number:
Date of entry:
Dates of supplementary entries:

Entry Number:
Date of entry:
Dates of supplementary entries:

PLEASE ADD FURTHER PAGES FOR MORE ENTRIES