

A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning

Theory and Practice

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Preface

A practical and theoretical approach

This handbook is concerned with two topics that have normally been seen as separate, with their own literatures and their own experts who were not necessarily experts in learning as a general topic. There have been experts in reflective learning, experiential learning and student learning, with relatively little meeting of minds or ideas about practical issues. With changes in educational practice and, in particular, the developing emphasis on reflective learning in higher education, these experts need to work together. Experiential learning is, for example, very often assessed through written work that is, in essence, reflective. The use of learning journals is an example. As there is more interest in the theoretical perspectives of reflective and experiential learning, we see the literatures beginning to overlap. Now it is timely to do the theoretical exploration work in order to sort out the nature of the overlap – how reflective and experiential learning are the same and how they differ. In order to do this, we have started with the basic questions about the process of learning itself. We have related both reflective and experiential learning to a basic model of learning, and then considered how they relate to each other.

Handbooks are both theoretical and practical. With the increase in the use of reflective and experiential learning in higher education and professional development, teachers might be asked to be involved with these kinds of learning and there is a need for supportive literature, which is both theoretical and practical. People who would not consider themselves to be reflective are being asked to encourage their students to reflect, when they know that some of their students may be more reflective than they themselves are. On the practical side, this handbook covers topics such as how to introduce reflective activities and then to improve the quality of the reflection. It covers assessment issues, considers work experience as a form of experiential learning

and provides many further activities that may be used in different contexts to facilitate different forms of learning.

The book is divided into a number of parts that move from a broad view of learning in general, to reflective and experiential learning, and how they relate to this general view of learning and to each other. It then goes on to more practical issues, ending with practical activities. There are several points in the book where material is summarized, so 'beginning to end' reading of this book is not essential. Some readers may be more interested in the general material on learning in the first four chapters; some might want to start with the summary of the generic view of learning in Chapter 5 and move through the theoretical material on reflective and experiential learning. Some may be interested in the chapters that concern the implementation of reflective learning, and some may want to pick from the practical activities only in Chapters 10, 12 and the Resources section.

Acknowledgements

The other reason for these initial words is to say some thanks for forbearance. The glimmerings of ideas for this book were first made explicit over three years ago in an excited telephone call to a friend in which I recall saying, 'You know I said I would write no more books – well . . . I have changed my mind. . . .' There are many thanks due to family and close friends whose contacts with me have been touched in various ways by that change of mind. I should thank also those who have unwittingly been the guinea pigs for the ideas and practical activities that are included in the book – many workshops have been based on the ideas discussed in the book. I would also like to thank the publishers for their support and their tolerance of the changing form of this book as it has been written (or do I say 'it has written itself?').

Introduction

A book often directs its writer. I should have known that when I started writing – even with a set of planned chapters in front of me. Now, as I come to this introductory chapter, late on in the process of writing, I notice how the book differs from the original plan. However, as an alternative introduction, I could also say that this book is a research project in itself and research is generally about discovery and not of knowing the answers before one starts. So this is what the book is – it is both a book that wrote its own way around and about material on reflective and experiential learning, and a research project that has been written according to the findings as they emerged.

Boundaries

I start by looking at some of the boundaries of this book. It is largely focused on sophisticated learning, though there are many ideas introduced that could be directed towards the earlier developmental stages of the process of learning. The text is mainly concerned with learning in relatively formal situations but there are also implications for non-formal and everyday learning. I have not been able to develop all these areas of reading as much as I would like in this book. In particular, I wanted to think further about everyday learning situations but space limitations create their own boundaries. When terms are applied in formal situations and caught up in theory that primarily relates to the formal situations, we tend to forget their relevance to the activities of everyday life and so it is with these words – ‘reflection’ and ‘experiential learning’. I take the position in the book that we all reflect and that all learning is based on experience. All learning is therefore ‘experiential learning’ in one

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sense. Learning from a lecture is still a matter of experiencing the lecturer's words, and many other things about being in the lecture theatre. Learning is learning from experience – but for the sake of clarity, we move towards more specific uses of the terms from the middle part of the book. The book is essentially about conscious learning. One form of learning that is largely excluded from consideration here is the learning of physical skills, though it is acknowledged that there is a link between reflective processes and actual skill.

The aim of the book is to develop greater understanding and more practical use of reflective and experiential learning as forms of more sophisticated learning. Both forms are well reviewed in relation to their own literature – they are reviewed in the context of reflective and experiential learning respectively but there is relatively little in the literature that links them with the new literature on what we term here 'generic' learning. They are somehow seen as being apart from other forms of learning and are treated in a different manner – there are whole programmes based on 'experiential learning', for example – as if it is learning that is different. From reading and previous writing, however, it is evident that these forms of learning are intimately related – and sometimes, but not always, they coincide.

There is also a practical aim to this book which becomes particularly important towards the end where there are chapters on practical ways of introducing and exploiting reflective and experiential learning in educational and other situations.

Routes into and roots of . . .

There have been many roots to this book and many routes into it. There are some obvious roots in other topics of my previous books which had their own roots described in their early pages. They also had their 'short-comings' – areas to which I wished to return in more detail. For example, in the first book, on reflection and learning (Moon, 1999a), the idea of learning journals intrigued me and led directly and quickly into the second book on learning journals (Moon, 1999b). Issues that arose briefly in both these books were assessment and the notion that there might be a 'depth dimension' to reflection. There were also issues relatively unexplored about how learners could be helped to develop reflection. This latter issue became evident as reflection was introduced more and more into curricula. The learning journal book left me with a sense of excitement and curiosity about learning in the everyday sense from experience – what role does reflection play? Although I did address how we learn from learning journals, I felt that there was more to do on this topic.

The next book about effectiveness in running short courses and workshops might seem to be a different track but it led to more thought about the relationship between learning and teaching or facilitation and again to the

role of reflection and learning from experience (Moon, 2001a). It also led me, in a large way, back to David Kolb's work (Kolb, 1984) and the manner in which it is exploited as a quick explanation of 'how we learn from experience' in so many texts. *The Module and Programme Development Handbook* (Moon, 2002a) did, perhaps, have less in common with the other three texts – but it is about precision in understanding what is going on in learning. It contrasts with much that has been written about reflection and experiential learning where assumptions are made so often without question and where imprecision may be a stimulus to curiosity.

A further academic route into the writing of this book has been my (latter) involvement with the very successful work experience modules developed in a partnership between Exeter and Plymouth Universities (Watton and Collings, 2002). Seeing the students going into work situations in order to learn about work and to learn about learning raised intriguing questions. What did the students learn; how did they learn from the experiences in work and what did they mean to them? Were they assessed on what they were learning? How were we able to guide them in their learning in this 'teacher-less' and 'curriculum-less' environment? There were interesting marketing issues with the module too – trying to 'sell' it to the schools in the universities so that they would support their students in pursuing the module. I thought about how the learning in the module could support the learning of students within their disciplines (Moon, 2002b) and that brought me back to reflective and experiential learning.

A major learning point for me, which arose from the learning journal book, was the value of maintaining a learning journal alongside any major life event, in particular those that involve ongoing thought. Three years ago when I began to consider the writing of this book, I started such a journal. It is a source of comments, observations, inspirations, questions, 'excitements' about sources of ideas (notes from literature are separate), and so on. It has allowed a range of questions to be kept alive over time. There are now over a hundred written (A5) sheets of it and it has been helpful in shaping this book at a deep level as well as in more superficial ways. In particular, the pages of the journal remind me of some of the high points of my own learning in the context of this book. Among them are the following:

- Early on in the writing project, I went on holiday with a new friend, camping together and kayaking on Cornish rivers. I had camped before and kayak locally – but the circumstances were new and there was much to learn! I recognized that there might be something in common here with the kind of learning in work experience where generally known skills are used in new circumstances. I decided to write about what I had learnt. This process is described in more detail in Chapter 12. It was a source of much learning both about the activities and also about learning from reflection and experience.

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- Not much later I decided to treat an emotionally disturbing incident as a source of learning from experience in a similar way. Again I learnt a great deal – and, in particular, I became acutely aware of the labile nature of emotion and how my accounts written in subsequent days varied – I could say ‘slid around’. This is an important issue in reflective writing and led to considerations about depth in reflective writing: the concept of the ‘slipperiness’ of reflection and knowing features in the text.
- Another important high point in the progress of my learning was when I was asked to run a session for potential members of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE). The day before the workshop I was still wondering how I could help the participants to understand the nature of reflective writing. I began to write a story about an incident in a park. I then wrote it again in a more reflective mode, and again in a mode of deeper reflection (as I understand reflection to be). I used the exercise the next day, and it seemed to be helpful and generated much discussion. I have since used it with many staff and students who have to use or understand reflective writing. ‘The Park’ is reproduced in Resource 5. I have since developed several such exercises (Resources 6 and 10) and a framework that accompanies them (Resource 9).
- ‘The Park’ was the first use of fiction in the exercises designed for staff and educational development purposes. Since then I have seen great potential for the use of fiction in the development of reflective and experiential learning. After all, on a constructivist view of learning (Chapter 1), experience is all fiction – of our own or others’ making. I have become very interested in the role of story telling in education as a means of enhancing learning in a wide variety of fields. Meeting and working with Maxine Alterio (McDrury and Alterio, 2002) was a great inspiration and there is more work to be done in this field. It seems to connect with the current considerations of how to bring more creativity and imagination into higher education learning.
- The ‘high points’ so far might suggest that this book is based entirely on personal experience and while, of course, it is in a sense, there has been a great deal of academic reading. Much of the reading is simply a matter of sitting down and reading, and writing notes. But then, every so often, there is real inspiration – the learning journal is out, the pen flies, not on notes for future reference, but on new ideas, questions, pro-activity that is engendered by the material. Margaret Donaldson’s (1992) book, *Human Minds* was one such high point of inspiration. It is an extremely interesting book and encouraged me to think a great deal about the link between emotion and learning and my own prior experiences in counselling and personal development.

Another such book was Marton and Booth (1997). I read this several times and took detailed notes. It is a book that seems to bring together much of what has been written about the student learning experience and

provided a substantial foundation for Chapter 1 on generic views of learning. Writing a learning journal seems often to be particular experiences in their location. I read this book on a sun-drenched window seat in late afternoons in an old holiday cottage, thinking about what it was saying about reflective and experiential learning.

There is a third set of authors who have remained an inspiration for some years. They researched and wrote about the development of learners' conceptions of knowledge. I consider that this is important material and note how it is not often cited more than in passing. I have mentioned Perry (1970) and King and Kitchener (1994) in earlier writing. In some ways, their ideas are quite difficult to get across but more recently I came across Baxter Magolda (1992) whose findings are similar to those mentioned above, but whose work is much more accessible. She uses quotations extensively to illustrate the ways in which learners in college conceive of knowledge.

I have mentioned the work on academic literature that has gone into this book. It is a feature of the book that the literature comes from a range of disciplinary sources. The topic of learning, after all, belongs to everybody and it cannot avoid appearing in every sub-discipline in the fields of education and professional development. I have drawn on the following areas of literature: adult education; professional development; student learning; staff and educational development; developmental psychology; cognitive psychology; journal writings; personal development; work-related learning; experiential learning in training and development; everyday learning and the development of scientific thought.

Some notes on the style and use of words

As usual, I have considerations about gender. I am not masculine and nor is half the population, so I do not want to use 'he' all the time and I dislike the grammatically incorrect 'they'. I am female and to use 'she' is 100 per cent right 50 per cent of the time. I therefore use the female gender wherever I am referring to a person. I have also tended to avoid the word 'student' since not all learners are students and I refer mostly to 'learners'.

There are a number of technical words that emerge particularly in Chapter 1 and then appear again somewhat later in the book. I have had to look up the definitions sometimes for these words and I imagine that this might be an issue for the reader. I have therefore compiled a Glossary of the more difficult terms that appears before the Bibliography. One term that needs to be introduced immediately is 'generic views of learning'. I found the need to coin this term in order to distinguish between the generic views of learning largely described in Chapter 1 and the specific material on reflective and experiential

learning that appears later in order to consider the links and not to perpetuate division.

This book is about probably most of the learning that anyone does (with the exception of physical skills). It is called reflective and experiential learning because these are the terms that people are using widely and which, I consider, require further elucidation. In fact, reflection probably plays a part in most good quality learning and all learning is experiential in one sense. The book is written to fulfil the following aims and as an exploration of:

- how experiential and reflective learning relate to what I call generic views of learning;
- how they relate to each other;
- their role and value in formal education;
- practical issues in their implementation in formal education.

The book also provides practical methods of using experiential and reflective learning.

Overview of the book

A handbook is a general text that combines theory and practical information. The theory in this book is in the first half and the general aim of this is to consider reflective and experiential learning as forms of generic learning. This approach is, as far as I know, new. In the literature of reflective and experiential learning, both forms of learning are discussed in relation to their own literature rather than in relation to more generalized views of learning. Reflective learning is reviewed against other literature on reflection, reflective practice and so on – and the same is true of experiential learning. It is timely to relate them to the processes of learning in general and to question their somewhat ‘specialized’ status.

Having laid a basis for a generic view of learning in Chapter 1, the next three chapters elaborate on aspects of the generic view that have particular relevance to reflective and experiential learning. These three aspects are described as manners of framing learning. They cover the development of conceptions of knowledge (Chapter 2), the role of emotion in learning (Chapter 3) and the approach adopted to learning by a learner (Chapter 4).

Chapter 5 follows the development of the view of generic learning but taking stock, looking back over the generic view of learning and forward to deal with one defining issue for both reflective and experiential learning – that they do not rely on a formal taught curriculum. In this context, we explore the idea of mediation in learning, providing some critical views of the often simplistic manner in which the notion of mediation is interpreted. The following chapters are concerned with the elucidation of reflective and

experiential learning as forms of learning in themselves and then in relation to the generic view of learning (Chapter 6), then to each other. Reflective learning is often involved in experiential learning, but they do not coincide completely. The view of reflective learning in this book is a development of that in my earlier books and materials. Chapter 7 is a further stage of development of this material in relation to the 'depth' dimension of reflection. The view of experiential learning is developed in a brief literature review in Chapter 8 while Chapter 9 draws together the material on reflective and experiential learning.

Chapters 10, 11 and 12 present the more practical part of the book. The subject matter of these chapters has been developed in response to issues that have arisen in formal educational circumstances as tutors have instituted reflective and experiential learning within curricula. Chapter 10 deals with the difficulties that are often faced when reflective learning is introduced either on its own or as an element in experiential learning. It refers to a range of resources and exercises that can be used to facilitate reflective learning, some of which are in the Resources section at the end of the book. Chapter 11 also discusses an issue in reflective and experiential learning, it concerns assessment. The final chapter provides additional ideas, resources, techniques and exercises that are designed to exploit reflective and experiential learning, usually in formal educational situations (Chapter 12). Chapters 10 and 12 include some substantial exercises. Some of the materials are included in the Resources section that follows. Since the Resources section includes material that may need to be directly copied for use with students, copyright is waived in this section and the materials may be photocopied freely.

Finally, a Glossary of the terms that have emerged in the early chapters in this book is provided, followed by an extensive Bibliography.

Part I

A generic view of learning

Chapter I

The process of learning

The development of a generic view of learning

Introduction

In the Introduction, we indicated that Chapter 1 is the first of a set of four chapters that build a generic view of learning prior to considering how reflective and experiential learning relate to this. The first section looks at the issue of terminology that is used concerning the idea of learning and suggests that misuse and lack of vocabulary may skew our view of learning. New words and concepts are added to facilitate a clearer view of what learning might be. The second section of the chapter presents two ways of looking at learning – the ‘building bricks’ view and the ‘network’ view. The latter is pursued and developed throughout the remainder of the chapter particularly in relation to ‘meaning’ in learning, on which basis the two views particularly differ. The discussion also considers the social or individual connotations of ‘meaning’. The next section illustrates some of the points made about ‘meaning’ and we introduce and explore the idea that all learning is based on experience. In the course of this discussion the terms ‘external’ and ‘internal’ experience are introduced.

There is constant emphasis in the chapter on the manner in which learning is a process with many events influencing and modifying each other simultaneously. A process in constant flux is difficult to describe in a linear manner. That learning is a process of constant mutually occurring modifications is one general principle that underpins this book and another is the centrality of the process of identifying figure from ground. This is elucidated by Marton and Booth (1997) and it is the important description of learning in Marton

and Booth that this chapter generally follows in its middle and later sections, though other ideas are introduced.

In this chapter, new words are used in specific ways. Such vocabulary is listed in the Glossary at the back of the book.

Some basic ideas about learning

To deal properly with a topic requires focus and boundaries or the discussion will be woolly. We look again at some boundaries of the topic of learning as well as boundaries that are imposed for the purposes of this book. Boundaries are sometimes about words to be used. There are many confusions in the terminology of learning and there is a lack of vocabulary that probably confuses us even more. It is not always easy to see ideas are missing if the words are not present. We rely on words and ideas as tools of investigation and if we do not have them, the investigation process is distorted.

The confusion between learning and teaching or instruction words

The action of helping another to learn (as in teaching or instructing) is different from the action taken by the learner in learning. This may seem very obvious but words for instruction and words for learning are frequently confused in the manner in which they are used. Often the meanings elide and this occurs particularly with the words 'learn' and 'teach'. Young children tend to confuse the processes of teaching and learning. A child might say 'I'll learn you to climb that tree' meaning 'I'll teach you'. Some languages do not distinguish between teaching and learning, having the same word for both (e.g., Russian). Adults, even those involved in teaching or instruction, are apt to use the words in a manner in which they overlap. In a recent document concerning quality assurance issues in education, a statement suggested that teachers should have particular 'learning intentions' for their students. A teacher can only hope that a student learns – she cannot do the learning for her. Learning and teaching are separate operations and while learning can be carried out in a separate place from teaching (distance learning), and learning can occur without teaching, teaching or instructing without a learner as object of the activity does not make sense. In this book, a variety of words will be used to describe the process of aiding or mediating learning in order to help the learner to learn more effectively. Words and phrases such as 'teach', 'instruct', 'facilitate learning' will be used according to the context.

The confusion between teaching and learning is illustrated in another way when words are applied to learning when they are more to do with the instruction process. For example, Harrison (1991) talks of 'learning events'

which encompass ‘structured training . . . [and] . . . other approaches through which people can acquire knowledge’. Similarly, it is not unusual for activities on courses such as brainstorming, syndicate work, or games and simulations to be described as learning methods when they are really methods of facilitating learning. In academic education, a lecture or tutorial might often be called a method of learning when it is primarily a method by which a teacher instructs or manages the learning of others. The instructor does not know the effect of her instruction on the learner’s learning other than by direct questioning or observation. It is not possible to assume that, when confronted with any particular method of instruction, all learners react by learning in the same manner.

The literature is full of other examples in which there are assumptions that what is taught is learnt or that the subject matter of training is learnt without modification by the learner other than as erosion or distortion of memory. The teacher can only have intentions based on experience and laced (usually) with hope and faith, and a set of skills of presentation of ideas, of influence and means of facilitation of that learning. The significance of the confusion of teaching and learning is that it leads us to make unwarranted assumptions about the processes and intentions of the learner and therefore it misguides the teacher in her activities. This is an important issue that extends to all learning situations where another is involved in the influencing or management of the learning.

Even models of learning may also confuse learning and teaching. The Kolb cycle of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) is widely used as a means of describing learning, particularly in training situations. In fact, it is more often used as a model of the management and facilitation of learning – a teaching rather than a learning model (Moon, 1999a). The model is based on the notion that the best learning is achieved through involvement of reflection and action and it puts action into a management of learning model. The implications of this are discussed later (Chapters 8, 9).

Setting up a vocabulary for learning and teaching

In a previous book, it was noted that that some of the difficulties with understanding the processes of learning and teaching may be due to missing words in the language. Lack of vocabulary may explain some of the confusion as well. There is, for example, no word that describes the material that a learner is learning – what she might seem to be ‘taking in’ (in colloquial terms). Correspondingly, since there is also no word for what it is that a teacher conveys, we are not easily able to articulate that the material that is learned by the learner is not the same as the material that is produced by the teacher. This lack of vocabulary sometimes leads to the elision of words for teaching and learning as described above. For this book we use the words ‘material of learning’ for what is learnt by the learner and correspondingly ‘material of teaching’ for the subject matter of teaching (what the teacher teaches).

Some more terms that are useful in the description of learning and teaching processes are 'learning challenge' and 'teaching challenge'. By these are meant the challenge that a learning task effects for the learner and correspondingly, the challenge for the teacher in conveying the material clearly and appropriately to a learner (Biggs, 1999, uses the latter term). The same material of teaching may pose more or less of a learning challenge to different learners, depending on a variety of factors such as prior knowledge and conceptions of the task, as well as how the learner is feeling that day.

Another gap in vocabulary is in the distinction between the act of learning something and the act of expressing that learning. For the moment, we continue with the simplistic view of learning being the 'taking in' of ideas – then the expression or *representation* of that learning is the manner in which the quality or quantity of the learning is evidenced (Moon, 1999a). Most assessment procedures assess both the ability to learn the material and the ability to express that learning in a written response, in action, in an examination, or in fulfilling whatever the task that is set. In many cases, the inclusion of both processes does not matter. However, it should be noted that unless learners can express their learning effectively, what they know will not be recognized. This is a particularly important matter for a dyslexic person who may have successfully learnt the material of learning, but is unable to represent it effectively in some modes.

Not only is it important to note the distinction between learning and the representation of learning but, for the process of reflection, it is important to recognize that the representation of learning is a further source of learning (Eisner, 1982, 1991). As a learner puts ideas down on paper, she is sorting out her understanding of those ideas and is learning more since the organization and clarification of ideas are a process of learning. Some forms of representation of learning are more orientated towards further learning than others. For example, a learner who is explaining to another some material that has been covered in a lecture, is likely to be learning considerably. The same learner writing a response on the same material in an examination may well be learning less. Another who draws a diagrammatic representation of the material may be learning as much or less than the first – but the learning will be of a different type. Different forms of the representation of learning give rise to more or less learning opportunity and to learning of differing qualities – depending on the type of representation. This may not matter in formal education since it is assumed that we have to assess learners anyway, though it calls for greater thought to be given to the purposes of setting tasks such as essays. It has been argued that, since that much of the representation of learning in higher education is in the form of assessment tasks, a broader range of tasks would have a secondary effect of enhancing learning in a broader manner (Eisner, 1982).

Setting another boundary: skills and pre-conscious thought

To learn something can mean to come to know or to have knowledge or it can mean that a person is able to do something. Sometimes this is clarified as 'knowing that' and 'knowing how'. Going back to the content of the previous sections, skill is a form of the representation of learning and it is the ability to do something that has been learnt. Few writers seem to address the apparent difference between skills and knowledge even when they have noted the distinction and the confusion continues (e.g., Carter, 1985). One reason for this is the broad use of the term 'skill'. For example, all the following may be called 'skills':

- the ability to analyse a piece of literature ('cognitive' skill);
- the ability to give a good presentation in terms of content and delivery ('presentation' skill);
- the ability to handle a saw and make a clean straight cut in a piece of wood (physical/practical skill);
- the ability to write an essay ('study' skills);
- the ability to use a computer keyboard to type (physical/practical skill);
- the ability to score a bull on a dartboard (physical/practical skill).

In those tasks listed above is a range from fairly pure physical activities to those that involve deep interaction with the meaning of the task, in other words, they involve some 'knowing how' and some 'knowing that'. Most of the tasks involve several apparently quite different activities. It is likely that the blanket application of a theory of learning to this breadth of activity is not appropriate. It is difficult, for example, to equate the activity involved in learning to hit a target with a dart with the ability to learn how to work with meaning in order to analyse a piece of literature. The evident range of meaning of 'skill' does not facilitate clear thinking in the current 'skills agenda' in education. A new more focused vocabulary might help.

In terms of the boundaries of learning as it is described in this book, like Jarvis (1992), we would make it clear that we are not including the learning of pure physical skills such as typing or sawing wood or the physical acts of movement. Sometimes such physical skills are deployed in the process of learning knowledge – such as in the process of writing or in moving the eyes across a page in the process of reading. The book does not directly concern what has been called 'incidental' learning (Marsick and Watkins, 1990; Coffield, 1998; Eraut 1999) or everyday learning (Heller, 1984; Henze, 1992; Steiner, 1998), with pre- or unconscious thought such as in intuition (Claxton, 2000; Atkinson and Claxton, 2002). However, much that is written is relevant to these concepts.

The adoption of a general stance on learning: two views

In this section we begin to map the learning process. The introduction of the two views here serves to clarify the features of the model we adopt. In general terms, there is no obvious manner to consider the material that contributes to making sense of learning. It is complex and it seems that every concept relates to and modifies every other concept. This interactivity of the system is one of the several themes that will appear again and again.

We start with a situation in mind that involves instruction. It can be convenient to talk about learning being 'taken in', though we said that this use of terminology would be reviewed. In the first model of learning, the assumption is maintained that material of teaching is somehow 'taken in' or 'absorbed' by the learner, and retained in the same form as it is encountered (bar some modification because of memory). It is assumed that appropriate or effective learning would have happened if the learner has reasonably efficiently absorbed the material of teaching. The learner would then, at a later stage, be able to represent it reasonably closely to the form in which it was presented by the teacher. This accords with the 'building a brick wall' view of learning in which the teacher provides for the learner the 'bricks of knowledge'. It is assumed that teacher knows how these will fit the pattern of the wall. The wall – knowledge – is thus built up. Incorrect 'bricks' of knowledge are noticed in the representations of that learning, for example, in the way a learner speaks, in an essay or assessment task, or in the learner recognizing the incompatibility of some ideas. These incorrect ideas are then replaced by correct ones.

We have rejected the 'brick wall' view of learning elsewhere (Moon, 1999a). This model of learning makes it difficult to see learning apart from instruction, and does not deal helpfully with the vast majority of human learning situations – which is everyday learning with no act of active teaching involved. The constructivist view of learning, which we apply below, focuses on the activities of the learner in making sense of her world.

On a constructivist view of learning, a more useful metaphor for the development of learning than the brick wall is a vast but flexible network of ideas and feelings with groups of more tightly associated linked ideas/feelings. In the network some groups are far apart and some are near to each other and there are some relatively isolated ideas that have very few links to the network while others are well interconnected. Entwistle and Walker (2002) draw evidence from phenomenography (citing the work of Marton, e.g., 1994), neural science (citing Edelman, 1992), computer science and biology (citing Wilson, 1998) for this view of meaning where it is represented by a 'linkage among neural networks' (Wilson, 1998). Entwistle and Walker see understanding as being 'actively constituted' by the 'assembling and ordering . . . of . . . recollected sense impressions and knowledge' (2002,

p. 20). They emphasize the involvement of emotion (see Chapter 3 of this book) but do not expand on the nature of its role. The term 'cognitive structure' has been used as a convenience to describe the network of knowledge and understanding and associated feeling or emotion – 'what is known' by the learner at a particular time (Ausubel and Robinson, 1969; West and Pines, 1985; McAlpine and Weston, 2002).

In this view of learning, new ideas are linked into the network, but in being linked, they may be modified in the process. This is described as assimilation in learning (Piaget, 1971). The distinctive feature of this view of learning is the further process of accommodation (*ibid.*). Unlike the situation in the 'brick wall' metaphor, the material of learning does not just accumulate as knowledge, but the new material of learning itself can influence change in what is already known or understood – or it can change itself under the influence of what is already known. This is the more complex process of accommodation (Carey, 1988; Wilkes, 1997).

In the constructivist view of learning, there are two important developments beyond the notion of an 'accumulation'. First, there is the notion that the cognitive structure is flexible with the potential always to change, sometimes without the addition of new material of learning from outside the person. Second, the state of the cognitive structure at a given time facilitates the selection and assimilation of new material of learning. In other words, it guides what we choose to pay attention to, what we choose to learn and how we make meanings of the material of learning or how we modify what we know or feel already. The process of learning is not, therefore, about the accumulation of material of learning, but about the process of changing conceptions (Bowden and Marton, 1998). Given that learning usually implies that a person becomes progressively wiser and better at learning and understanding, a better phrase might be 'transforming conceptions'. This term seems to accord with the material on the development of the conceptions of knowledge (see Chapter 2).

Following on from the line of thinking above, there are implications for the idea of making meaning of something. If the cognitive structure is conceived in the manner suggested, then that something that is meaningful is a judgement made by the learner by relating the new material of learning to her current cognitive structure (Pardoe, 2000). This implies that a judgement of 'meaningfulness' cannot technically be made in the abstract or by another person. It brings the discussion to the stance taken by Kelly (1955) who suggested that man continuously constructs and reconstructs a view of the world on the basis of making sense of perceptions. Zuber-Skerritt puts it thus:

people understand themselves and their environment and anticipate future events, by constructing tentative models or personal theories of themselves and their environment, and by evaluating these theories against personal

criteria as to whether the prediction and control of events (based on the models) have been successful or not. All theories are hypotheses created by people.
(1992, p. 57)

Kelly considered humankind to act as scientists perpetually developing ways of understanding events, testing those theories and rejecting, modifying or accepting them for the time being. He recognized that groups of people could share common views of the world (constructions of their experience) so they might have the same theories. In other words, they might share the same meaning of an object. He also believed that there is considerable variation in people's willingness to modify their theories in response to change (Bannister and Fransella, 1974).

The development of a concept of 'meaningfulness'

We have suggested that meaningfulness is a judgement to be made by the learner in the context of the sense of her cognitive structure (at that time). This is unintentionally illustrated by Ausubel and Robinson (1969) in making their alternative case that meaningfulness is a quality of the material of learning itself. These (American) writers try to argue that the three letters 'lud' will not be perceived by a learner as meaningful because the learner will not have associations for the term in her cognitive structure. They conclude, therefore, that meaningfulness is a quality of the material of learning and that the cognitive structure is simply an accumulation of knowledge. In fact, anyone aware of British culture is likely to have meaningful associations for 'lud' in the colloquial response to a judge ('me lud').

For the moment, we retain the idea that 'meaningfulness' is an individual judgement. The nature of meaningfulness in the constructivist approach is crucial for the relationships between the processes of learning and instruction and for the attempt to tease out the nature of experiential learning. If meaningfulness were a judgement that could be made objectively of the material of learning, a much closer relationship between the material of teaching and the material of learning would be implied. The teacher would know exactly what is going to be meaningful to the learner. However, if, as we are suggesting, meaningfulness is a judgement to be made by the learner, then the automatic relationship between teaching and learning is confirmed. If 'learners can create any number of meanings, intended or otherwise, out of the same learning experience' (Winitzky and Kauchak, 1997), judging what is meaningful to a learner becomes basically a matter of informed guesswork because the teacher does not have access to the brain of the learner. However, the accuracy of the guesswork can be enormously increased through experience and careful consideration of the cues provided by the learner as to her state of understanding of the material of learning. In accordance with these ideas, Angelo and Cross (1990) suggest the use of frequent and simple tests that provide feedback about the state of the learner's understanding for the teacher. Such ideas

also lie behind notions of 'constructive alignment' in the curriculum (Biggs, 1999; Moon, 2002) in which there is deliberate alignment between the curriculum intentions, the learner's understandings and the forms of assessment that indicate the state of the learner's understanding.

The degree to which accommodation of the learner's existing cognitive structure occurs in the process of learning something new will vary. The process will be controlled by the learner's effort to balance the relationship between the new material of learning and the existing cognitive structure, however, external factors, including the influence of any teacher, can influence this process. A highly motivated learner on a short course that is interesting to her, where she trusts the teacher and knows that the new material of learning can improve the way she operates in the workplace, is likely to allow considerable accommodation in her cognitive structure. Another learner, who may not really want to be on the course or may have little confidence in the instructor, at the same time may not allow her cognitive structure to accommodate. She may not pay attention, or she may use other areas of cognitive structure to justify the rejection of the course material by developing arguments against its content.

The content of most material of learning that we encounter as learners is relatively as we expect it to be (Dart, 1997). In this context, 'expecting' something means that it is relatively in accordance with our cognitive structure as it is at that time and with changes that can be anticipated. The processes of assimilation and accommodation probably do not, therefore, involve great change. Sometimes, because of the state of the learner at the time (e.g., emotional state), or because of the dramatic nature of the material of learning itself or because of the difference between the learner's state and the material of learning, new material of learning provides a considerable challenge. An example is where new material of learning powerfully challenges personal beliefs or self-concepts that have become embedded in a personal orientation to the world. Accommodation, then, may lead to considerable change in attitude and behaviour. Initially the demands may be too great and the learner might amass arguments against the new material and justifications for the status quo. Even if extensive accommodation eventually occurs with regard to the subject matter, it may take some time for other areas of cognitive structure to become consistent. For example, a fundamental change in political belief may imply the development of different understandings of why people are poor and thence the adoption of different attitudes to poverty. This, in turn, may suggest that various areas of personal behaviour should change in order to maintain consistency of attitude and behaviour. For the individual, this might imply involvement with a different social group, and so on. With each change may come new learning that, in turn, will have an impact on the state of the cognitive structure, perhaps challenging again the initial major change. The term 'cognitive dissonance' has been used to describe the – often uncomfortable situations – in which new material of learning is in conflict with the learner's cognitive structure (Festinger,

1957). There may be a period during which a learner partly recognizes the conflict and variously tests the credibility of the new material of learning and the reliability of her current cognitive structure. Learners with a more sophisticated conception of the structure of knowledge become more able to recognize and find ways of working with inconsistencies (see Chapter 2).

Meaning in the social context

To maintain reasonable simplicity in the discussion of learning, cognitive structure and meaning above, we took an individual line, suggesting that meaning in learning is a matter for the individual. This idea does not need to be changed, but expanded. That a learner interprets (learns) new material of learning in her own manner and does or does not make sense of it for herself, not only implies adoption of an individual psychology of learning. The process of actually accommodating to new information must be individual, but the practices and the tools that a learner uses for this process have usually been developed as a social process. Humans do not learn everything from scratch. Knowledge is accumulated in ways that have been largely agreed through social means (Wilkes, 1997). Even the means of agreement are learned and socially agreed. On this basis, the notion of meaning resides between the locus of social agreement and the individual's efforts to understand, for herself, on a personal level. Having understood something, the individual then contributes to the pool of social meanings by adding her perspective when she represents her learning in some form (e.g., orally). There have been attempts to reconcile the views of learning that emphasize either the social or the individual orientation to learning and a useful line seems to be that taken by Marton and Booth (1997). Marton and Booth suggest that both have their place and that the most promising view of learning is that of an interaction between the social and the individual. The person and the world cannot be seen as separate but as existing in a dynamic relationship.

The use of language is a particularly important way in which our development of personal meaning is influenced socially. Language is a fundamental tool of learning, and ideas presented in the earlier pages of this chapter show how meaning is shaped through agreed language. In the first part of the chapter, it was observed that the manner in which we have been socialized to think about learning is affected by the socially agreed vocabulary of learning – some people do not distinguish between teaching and learning partly because their language does not have separate words for teaching and learning. In addition, it was suggested that exploration of the idea of learning may be constrained by the absence of vocabulary. The very tools that we have available for making meaning are socially constructed.

We do not, therefore, build meanings alone, but in conjunction with the collected experiences of others who may be teachers or scholars, or peers, past or present and all embedded in a culture of learning that is also socially

agreed (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The following list summarizes some of the ways in which learning is affected by its social context:

- the manner in which understandings have been constructed in past social situations;
- the tools used in order to develop those understandings (e.g., language);
- the conventions associated with the knowledge (e.g., the notions of the disciplines and their methods of working with knowledge);
- the manner in which learning is expressed (e.g., in speech/written conventions/in action etc. – there are social conventions governing these);
- therefore the manner in which there is learning from the representation of learning (see earlier in this chapter).

We can make a major generalization that as humans, the more there is similarity in our life experiences, the more likely it is that we will share or at least comprehend each other's constructs. There are other factors in learning (covered in the following three chapters) to which the social paradigm is relevant. One is developmental and concerns the individual's conception of knowledge (Chapter 2). If an individual believes that some or all of her knowledge or ideas are fundamentally right or wrong, then logically she can only accept one version. If her social milieu contains alternative views about certain issues (e.g., different moralities about sexual behaviour), then she will not be able to comprehend views outside of her own. One mechanism for dealing with this is to decide that the holder of an alternative view 'is not like me', i.e., to create a social division to explain the difference in views, rather than accepting that views can differ. Other factors in an individual that influence learning are emotion or feelings (Chapter 3) and the approach that learners take to a learning task (Chapter 4). While these various factors modify learning or the approach that an individual takes to learning, a generalization can be made that encompasses all of these influences. A learner learns from experience. In other words, the material of learning is an element of experience that may be relatively discrete (we learn that apples and strawberries are in the rosaceae family of plants) or more diffuse (we learn how it is to be in a new work environment). In addition, experience is likely to be thoroughly mediated by social influences and modified by other factors within the individual.

Learning, experience and meaning: an illustration

We build meanings by working with experience. We learn (something) *in relationship* to our present and prior experience since the prior experience (i.e., the state of the cognitive structure) guides how we respond to a present

experience (Jarvis, 1992). The nature of experience is individual in the sense that it is an individual who experiences it, but it is also social, in that all experience is mediated by the social surroundings. An example from geology illustrates some of the issues in the consideration of experience as the basis for learning and emphasizes both the constructed nature of knowledge and the relationship between individual and social influences on learning.

There is a type of limestone quarried at Beer in Devon, that has long been valued because it is easy to quarry and to saw to shape, and then in the atmosphere it hardens to form an excellent building stone. It has been used for construction of many major buildings. A learner, Alice, in an adult and continuing education programme, sees on curricular details, that she will be going on a field trip to Beer to visit the underground quarries and to learn about the geology of the site. She has not heard of Beer or of Beer stone at first. Beer is a word and a place. The word might initially trigger associations with the drink, but this link will probably fade away as the meaningfulness of Beer, as a place, gains ascendancy. The notion of Beer stone might be meaningless at present – but is likely, having been listed in the curriculum, to be potentially meaningful to the learner when she relates it to other types of stone. A male colleague, Georgio, another learner, made a trip to Beer while on holiday and saw the quarries. As a result he has a cognitive structure that enables the concept (of stone) to be meaningful. The meaning might be associated with seeing the material but also with the stories told of the history of the quarrymen on a guided trip round the quarries. His meaning for 'Beer' will, in some measure, be directly shaped by social means in the form of the story-telling by the guide.

Before the trip the Alice asks Georgio about Beer and Georgio expresses his learning in the form of a story about the stone – its appearance and texture but also the memories that he has of the signatures of the seventeenth-century quarrymen that he saw on the walls of the quarries, etc. The story is socially constructed and triggers prior experiences in the mind of Alice (e.g., of once trying to inscribe her name on a slab of limestone). Eventually there is a lecture on the course that includes reference to the chemistry and geological origins of this limestone that gives rise to its qualities. The study of limestone could be part of biology – in that it is developed from biological material (shells), or maritime studies (since it was formed under the sea) – and so on. The fact that the ideas are being covered in geology means that any investigation in a practical sense will be geological, and any reports written will have used geological terminology. Geology, like other disciplines, is a human construction in itself.

Eventually Alice and Georgio and the other learners go on the field trip and see, touch and in other ways experience Beer stone. Alice can accommodate her prior knowledge gained from her conversations with Georgio to the new and personal experiences of the stone. The concept of Beer stone might then said to be more meaningful to her.

The paragraph above illustrates the social nature of learning and knowledge and how the learning process itself is socially mediated. Before the lecture on Beer stone from her conversation with Georgio, Alice had a number of experiences that created a 'slot' for the meaning of Beer stone in her cognitive structure which was represented by a set of expectations (Entwistle *et al.*, 2002). These prior experiences are likely to have influenced the manner in which she received the new information. For example, if she was told in the lecture that a feature of the stone is that it is so hard that it cannot be scratched, she would have material to re-evaluate (e.g., was Georgio credible when he told her about the quarrymen's signatures? Was he talking about some other stone? Is the lecturer credible? – etc.). There might be cognitive dissonance which would be disturbing.

External and internal experience

The paragraphs above begin to indicate the role of experience in learning. We have moved far now from the notion that learning is 'built up' or accumulated. We talk about the material of learning being an element of external prior experience but what we have inside our heads is also the representation of relevant experience. Before her visit to Beer and sight of the stone, Alice built up an internal mental experience which was to do with scratchability, chemical and geological qualities as well as the story of quarrying processes and so on. When she saw the rock, the learning process involved the interaction or flux between these forms of experience. It is useful to introduce the terminology 'external' and 'internal' experience to make a distinction here (Marton and Booth, 1997). External experience is the material of learning when we are learning about something outside of ourselves. It is the object, idea, the concept, the image – whatever it is that the learner wants to assimilate. In contrast, the internal experience is the experience that the learner brings to the learning situation from her current cognitive structure. It is the sum of prior experiences of the object. It is what she sees as related ideas with the effects of her understanding of the nature of knowledge (Chapter 2), relevant emotional influence (Chapter 3) and the influence of how she sees the learning task (Chapter 4). For example, if she feels that she only needs to memorize a few facts, she will have no need to draw on deep internal experience (Zsombok and Klein, 1997).

An important phenomenon that relates the external and internal forms of experience is appresentation (Marton and Booth, 1997). Appresentation is the manner in which a part of something that is perceived as an external experience can stimulate a much more complete or richer internal experience of the 'whole' of that thing to be conjured up. For example, seeing a familiar face triggers an internal experience of the whole person. The face depicted on a video-conference screen triggers an internal experience of a whole person and

it is the whole person, with associated other perceptions, with whom communication is made. We do not relate our behaviour only to the part that we see. Internal experience can therefore be much richer than external experience and when we have information about an object, we will tend to respond to it on the basis of the appresentation of the object in internal experience instead of the thinner information 'of that moment' from the external experience of it. Of course, it is possible that the internal experience triggered is not appropriate, for example, the face on the video screen could stimulate an internal experience of a different person that does not match the face.

We briefly return to the idea of 'meaning'. On the basis of the paragraphs above what is the 'meaning' of something? Meaning changes with experience of a particular object, but it may change with alterations in the experience of other objects that are related to the first object. Going back to the example of Alice above, later in her programme, after her visit to Beer, Alice might learn more about the chemistry involved in the fossilization process. Beer stone, itself, might not have been mentioned in the lecture on fossilization, but her broader knowledge about stone and fossilization will invest more and possibly different meanings in the concept of Beer stone. We mentioned how thinking about Beer stone in buildings led to an enriched concept too. There might be, however, different qualities of meaning: on the field trip, someone jokes that Beer stone is, of course, hardened by painting beer on it. This too can become part of the 'meaning' of Beer stone – a meaning that might be exploited again in humour, or myth or in writing a story. Meaning is not present or absent but something that is invested in the internal experience of an object. When interpreting or representing meaning, the learner will pull out the meaning relevant to the context. A poem relating to the East Devon coast might pull out very different meanings of Beer stone to those meanings with which the learner works in an examination question about the geology of limestone – but they are all meanings of Beer stone.

Figure and ground in learning

In order to clarify the nature of reflective and experiential learning, we need to clarify the nature of learning itself. The distinction of the figure from the ground in a situation is a fundamental concept in learning that relates to many different aspects of the learning process (Marton and Booth, 1997). To illustrate the idea of figure and ground in learning, we return to the example of the learners on a field trip. It is the next year and another group is going to Beer. The field trip is arranged and the students go to Beer presumably, from the context of the programme, to see the stone, touch it, learn about its commercial properties, see it in its geological context, and maybe to consider its significance in architecture. This year, however, nobody has actually briefed them on how they should focus their attention.

They are level 1 (i.e. first stage of a higher education programme) learners without much background in geology. They just have a general knowledge that the trip is something to do with the course. At Beer, one learner is fascinated by the social history of quarrying and listens attentively to stories about the lives of those involved, imagining them walking along the miles of funnels with their candles in an environment of fantastic noise and dust. Another is intrigued by the structure of the caves, and how they reflect the different periods of their development in the form of the quarrying. Another learner is conscious that there is likely to be an examination question related to Beer stone, and focuses her attention on what she can learn of the physical and commercial qualities of the stone. Another learner enrolled on this programme because she likes the social circumstances of field trips and the visit to see Beer stone is a means to a social end. The students have different intentions for the trip and, without a briefing, may feel uncertain how to focus their awareness. They will have 'pulled' different figures forward for their learning, from broadly what is the same ground. As a result, they will have developed different constructs. This may or may not matter. If they are to be assessed on their knowledge of Beer stone, then it will be unfortunate if their knowledge is largely of the social history of the quarrymen. If the trip is to give them a general feeling for the history of the quarrying industry, then their learning may be 'good enough'.

Frames of reference

On the same trip, there can be many different forms of learning. Learners may have different focuses of concern and they focus their awareness on different things accordingly. In other words, they have different frames of reference in any situation. Briefing or initial guidance for the trip would have suggested a frame of reference that they could use in order to guide their learning on the programme. Within the chosen frame of reference, the distinction of figure from ground is made. So far, in this example, the difference between the frame of reference and the figure/ground system may seem straightforward but in reality, there will be a fluid situation in which the frame of reference is constantly influenced and re-influenced by the distinction of figure from ground. To complicate matters further, there are many frames of reference operational at the same time in any learning situation (see below).

Going back to the example of the field trip, we suggested that the learners' frames of reference could be influenced by knowledge of curriculum requirements, a briefing from a teacher, interest or social matters. The teacher could not be seen as *providing* the frame of reference, because the frame of reference is constructed by the learner. Factors that influence the learner's frame of reference might be her perception of the briefing in relation to her motivation on the programme, her own intentions related to anticipations of the learning situation and prior knowledge. Two other important influences on how learning tasks are framed are the learner's understanding of what it is to learn, how

learning relates to the structure of knowledge, and any relevant emotional influences. These other important influences on the framing or learning are considered in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

We have suggested above that a learner's prior experience influences the frames of reference used and that prior experience is part of the internal experience. The constructed frame of reference could be said not only to direct the attention outwards towards aspects of the material of learning, but also to influence the manner in which the internal experience is 'assembled'. So if a learner's frame of reference concerns the physical nature of the Beer stone, the ideas relevant to this are brought to the fore in internal experience to facilitate appropriate learning. The frame of reference could be said to be a guide and to act as a driver of the system of internal and external experiences in learning so that we learn what it is that we want to learn in an appropriate manner. It enables the learner to focus on *relevant* aspects of the external experience (Marton and Booth, 1997).

The paragraph above, of course, simplifies the situation. Learning in a field situation is immensely complex with many influences occurring all the time. There may be constant framing and reframing of reference and constant distinctions being made between figure and ground, all functioning at different levels simultaneously. This is an important issue when it comes to the development of situations in which students are expected to learn the complexities of real life from experience (Chapter 12).

We focus largely on learning in formal situations because some of the points to be made in this chapter are clearer in this kind of 'laboratory' situation. In such a situation, for example, a learner's frames of reference for learning are deliberately influenced. Cues are given to help learners to develop appropriate frames of reference and within that to focus on the relevant factors. While the curriculum may be important as one cue to learning, in many situations now, learners are provided with a list of learning outcomes that indicate to them what they should achieve at the end of a period of learning (such as a module) (Moon, 2002a). These indicate to the learner the quality of knowledge and/or skill that will need to be demonstrated in order to 'pass', with detail provided in assessment criteria. More guidance to enable learners to frame their learning effectively will come directly from the teaching process and from material such as handouts, and reading lists.

Variation

We return to the mechanics of learning to introduce another concept that almost inevitably follows from the notion of figure and ground. In a given situation there may or may not be features to be perceived as figures against the ground that enable the learner to learn. Either the figures do not match the learner's intentions, or they may not differ from those already learnt, in other words, there is no variation in the external experience from the relevant internal experience within the cognitive structure of the learner.

Going back to the example of the Beer stone, the actual experience of seeing and touching the rock and other experiences of the field day are likely to lead to learning. However, if the learner was to pay a second visit to Beer very soon after the first, then, oversimplifying the example, there may be no more learning to do about the rock. A manner of interpreting this is that there are no differences between internal and external experience and therefore no need for new learning activity. In order that there is to be new learning, there needs to be variation in the experience. Learning, on this basis, is a process of experiencing variation and choosing to accommodate to that variation – which will, in effect, change the experience (Marton and Booth, 1997). It is easiest to see that the variation in the external experience is that which leads to learning, in other words, there is new material of learning. However, on the model we are using of internal and external experience, learning can also result when there are changes in the internal experience, while the external experience remains the same. Let us take a new example.

The example is of a learner, who is learning how to change a wheel by watching a video of the procedure. On the basis that variation is essential for learning, we could say that a learner wanting to learn how to change a car wheel by watching the same video of the procedure twenty times, will probably have ceased to learn after the first few viewings. But the chances are that the learning is continually enhanced for further viewings because the learner creates her own variation by changing the aspects of figure and ground to which she attends. In other words subtly she changes her frame of reference, seeing new aspects of the process. She is working with variation in her external experience through the guidance of her internal experience. She could actively interact with the process by identifying questions to herself while she is viewing. The questions create variation by changing the frame of reference. So variation may not only be in a change of a learning object, but through the learner changing the frames of reference adopted, which is an active form of learning.

We have suggested that learning occurs in response to variation in the external experience as well as through changes in frame of reference that enable the learner to see something differently in the same situation. There seem to be at least two other ways in a learning situation in which variation can occur and thus lead to more learning. Both of these involve active change of the internal experience by the learner in a process of reflection. The learner may only watch the video once or twice, but then reflect on the content of the video, relating it to other knowledge and understandings and bringing that knowledge to bear on this situation and thereby varying aspects of her internal experience. There is no contact with the actual material of learning in external experience, but the learner is using the ideas that she can summon from her cognitive structure to enhance the learning process. Moon (1999a) introduces the term ‘cognitive housekeeping’ for this operation of the process of reflection (Chapter 6).

The other important manner of creating variation without change in the learning situation is through the representation of the learning. The learner may have seen the video once, and she may now be asked to put the learning into practice by changing a wheel in the manner demonstrated. For the moment, we will assume that she has not changed a wheel before. As stated earlier, learners can learn through the representation of their learning. As the learner goes through the process of changing a wheel, she will be working with the learning from the video and with the practical considerations that feed back to her from the practice of wheel changing. There will be variation between her 'educated' internal experience and the new learning from the representation of the learning. Her learning about changing a wheel will have come from the video and from practice and will be enriched as a result. This works on the assumption that there are no negative factors that come to bear on the process, for example, it is possible that difficulties or failure in the practice of changing the wheel might block her learning by bringing emotional influence to bear on the process of learning. In contrast, emotional encouragement can make learning easier (Chapter 3). Both of these two forms of learning to change a wheel can be seen as forms of reflective learning.

We can summarize the concept of variation: learners learn from variation in learning situations. There are at least four forms of variation. They are when the following happens:

- there is change in the external experience in the material of learning;
- with the same material of learning, the learner changes her frame of reference and perceives different details, thereby changing her external experience;
- the learner works with her internal experience and relates it to other prior experience and learns more as a result (cognitive housekeeping);
- the learner represents her learning and learns from comparison of the variation of the external experience between practices.

We shall expand on these ideas in later chapters, in particular, Chapter 6.

Fazey and Marton (2002) describe the result of work in which there was application of the concept of variation to a number of teaching and learning situations. These included learning in music, motor skills and familiar academic work and unfamiliar topics. Situations were presented that encouraged learners to vary their approach to learning to a particular task or topic and sometimes there was a control group (experiencing little deliberate variation). A simple example working with motor co-ordination was throwing up a shuttlecock in different ways (with variation) and the same way, with little or no variation. Those experiencing variation learned better. In some of the situations, learners who practised with non-varying material of learning had learnt better than those experiencing variation immediately after the

learning session, but those experiencing variation retained the material better. Fazy and Marton not only illustrate the significance of variation in learning, but also they demonstrate its importance as a principle for pedagogy.

Variation is therefore central to learning. We have said that learning is different from teaching. But because pedagogical situations are characterized by the management of variation for learners, we briefly focus on teaching. In effect, we have said above that the efficient learner is one who manages her own relationship to the variations in order to learn according to her intentions. Both for learners whose learning is facilitated by a teacher and for learners working alone, central to the process of management of variation is an awareness of the state of flux between internal and external experience. Marton and Booth (1997) use the term 'architecture of variation' for situations of instruction to suggest that the teacher of a group of individuals needs to take into account the range of ways in which her material of teaching might be perceived by the individuals. The examples that are given to illustrate this point are mainly situations where the learners are being instructed to learn a specific concept, which needs to be grasped 'correctly'. In this case, management of the architecture of variation is a matter first of all of the teacher managing what she perceives to be the external experience of learners. It is also a matter of anticipation of potential variations to be perceived by the learners and influencing them towards the comprehension of the concept. The idea of 'advance organizers', advocated in the 1970s ties in with these ideas (Ausubel, 1960). Advance organizers are intended to help the learner to orientate and organize her internal experience of an object of learning so that the learning process can be guided by internal experience as effectively as possible.

In effect, there are many less formal ways of influencing the internal experience at the beginning of a learning situation than the advance organizer. The kind of management of potential variation will differ according to the level of learning and the discipline. For example, in the humanities or with more mature students, it may not be the intention of the teacher that all the learners learn exactly the same but that they can pursue their own perceptions of the material of teaching and interpret it for themselves. In this case the 'architecture of variation' will require a different kind of management by the teacher – a form of teaching that is more 'inspirational' rather than specific. Herein we meet some of the apparent differences between adult and child learning – pedagogy and andragogy (Knowles, 1980). An adult's needs are likely to be to make sense of previous understandings – that may form potential variations for a new learning situation. In a child's learning, variation is likely to be characterized by 'gaps' in understanding or misconception, due to lack of prior knowledge.

Learning knowledge and learning to learn

We can summarize the process of learning as described in this chapter. We learn through the assimilation of the material of learning. When there is information external to the person, the material of learning is conceived as an external experience. We learn through the comparison of external experience with the current internal experiences that we bring to bear on the material of learning. Internal experience is the relevant prior knowledge and experience. This guides the means of assimilation by guiding our frames of reference in relation to external experience, enabling us to focus on the relevant variations in the current external experience and taking account of the variations between current internal and external experience. In the process of assimilating new material of learning, the cognitive structure accommodates. We talk of conceptions being changed or transformed in the process of learning. In learning, these processes operate in at least two ways. Our examples, in this chapter, have largely related to the content of learning, learning about something, but we can apply the same processes to learning how to learn. As a learner progresses, in other words, becomes a more efficient learner, she learns more content, but also learns more about learning. The subject matter of the next three chapters concerns the process of learning to learn and as such, they are particularly relevant to reflective and experiential learning.

Introduction to Chapters 2, 3, 4 on the framing of learning

Particular types of frames of reference are the topics of the next three chapters. These chapters explore frames of reference which seem to have a particular bearing on the manner in which reflective and experiential learning become more sophisticated processes variously following maturation, personal development and education. A basic assumption with the frames of reference that are the subject of these chapters is that framing material of learning in one way is more effective for learning than framing it in another way. The chapters cover:

- conceptions of the structure of knowledge (Chapter 2);
- emotion and learning (Chapter 3);
- approaches to learning (Chapter 4).

Mostly it would seem that the process of learning to learn is not conscious and intentional, but is led by the challenges that are inherent in the material to ensure that this progression occurs. For example, learners who have been

given clear and easy-to-follow lecture notes on handouts may have to learn to learn from their own notes as they progress in a programme or move from one teacher to another. Learning to learn can be characterized as the improving ability of the learner to manage the framing of her learning in order to fulfil more sophisticated purposes or to cope effectively with more complex material of learning. In different ways, the topics of these next three chapters all address different aspects and there are also many ways in which they are also interdependent. We bring the three types of framing together at the end of Chapter 4.

Chapter 2

The framing of learning

The conception of the structure of knowledge

Introduction

This chapter concerns the developing conceptions of the structure of knowledge (often shortened to development of conceptions of knowledge). This is a frame of reference that has much to do with the process of learning to learn (see Chapter 1). Most humans in a reasonably stimulating environment seem to progress to a certain point in their understanding of the nature of knowledge. This is evident in the manner in which they represent their learning. An example is in the way in which they might use knowledge to justify judgements that they make and it is particularly evident in the judgement of moral issues (King and Kitchener, 1994). A growing sophistication in understanding of knowledge seems to be assumed in most processes of formal education, but it is not a quality that has often been made explicit. If knowledge grows and changes, then it should not be viewed as a 'commodity' (as in the current jargon), but as a process (Polyani, 1969).

This chapter is concerned mainly with the outcomes of four projects in which the development of the conceptions of the structure of knowledge has been studied. These have been, mainly, but not only, in student populations. These studies are broadly summarized and the inter-relationship with other observations of student learning is described (for example, level descriptors and student assessment).

Development of conceptions of the structure of knowledge

Studies of conceptions of knowledge

We have looked at the body of research and thinking on the development of conceptions of knowledge in previous writing in different contexts of learning and reflection and the previous writing is brought together in this book with no contradictions. For example, in Moon (1999a), the work was used to support the notion that there is a developmental progression in the capacity for reflection. In Moon (1999b and 2002a), it was used in a pedagogical sense to support the idea that materials designed for learners should not be too 'tidied up' and simplified. Learners need to be challenged with their material of learning in order to make progress in their ability to manage increasingly complex situations of learning. Since the first book was written, the conviction has increased that the learner's conception of the role of the structure of knowledge is highly significant in the effectiveness of learning and its interaction with the teaching process, particularly at higher levels. Reference to these ideas, however, is not widespread, though there are exceptions in some recent publications on learning (e.g., Morgan, 1995; Beaty *et al.*, 1997; Savin-Baden, 2000; Entwistle and Walker, 2002). William Perry's work was once well known and featured as a topic in most programmes of educational psychology (Perry, 1970; O'Reilly, 1989).

We cover this material on the learner's understanding of the structure of knowledge through reference to four studies that could be said to have built on and complemented each other's work (Perry, 1970; King and Kitchener, 1994; Belenky *et al.*, 1986; Baxter Magolda, 1992). A useful area of literature that seems closely related to the discussions in this chapter is the development of the understanding of science (e.g., Songer and Linn, 1991; Reif and Larkin, 1991). Since it is likely that there are cultural influences on the conception of knowledge, it is important to be aware that the research in the four studies is based on work with western subjects largely with personal histories of white western education systems.

Perry's work on learners' conceptions of knowledge

Perry worked in the 1960s and the 1970s. He considered that he was exploring the students' intellectual and ethical development and his work was based on extensive and relatively unstructured interviews with students at Harvard and later Radcliffe in the USA. He describes how the students' conceptions of knowledge and the way they saw themselves as 'knowers' changed over their years at college. He worked mostly with male students though in the early stages he included a few female students, who seemed to perform in a similar manner to the males. Perry describes the students' progression through a sequence of what he termed 'positions' in relation to their epistemological

understandings. He suggested that a student's epistemological position provides a frame of reference for the manner in which the student interprets meaning – in this case, in his college experience. In the initial position, which Perry described as 'basic dualism', students view knowledge in terms of polarities – 'right and wrong', 'black and white', 'them and us', and so on. He saw the learners in this position as passive, accepting the knowledge of 'truth' from authorities (e.g., their teachers) without question. As the students progressed, in the interviews he observed them moving towards the recognition that it is possible for experts to hold opposing opinions, and that there can be multiple perspectives on an issue. He described this as the position of multiplicity. It is a time when the students come to recognize an initial difference between opinion and 'fact'. At this stage they were gaining confidence in holding opinions with the sense that they 'had a right to their opinion' (Belenky *et al.*, 1986). In the final position of 'relativism', he saw students coming to understand the need to base their opinion on evidence. They saw knowledge as relative to the context in which it was situated, recognizing that that is constructed. In other words, they understood and could work with the idea that the nature of knowledge is relative to the frame of reference that is applied to it by the learner in the prevailing circumstances.

A significant feature of Perry's approach to the development of understanding is what he called 'commitment'. He suggested that students who had reached the position of relativism in their conception of knowledge, made difficult decisions (e.g., about personal issues) by reliance on 'personal commitment'. They decided to commit themselves to one side or the other of the dilemma. 'Commitment' could either be interpreted as a special element of this stage, or a strong statement of the recognition of ultimate personal responsibility for decision. However, King and Kitchener (1994) did not see 'commitment' as the final stage of development and suggested that there is development beyond this that Perry either did not see in his samples, or did not recognize.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986)

In contrast to that of Perry, the work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) was exclusively with women. These researchers considered that although female students appeared to function similarly to males in the Perry study, the interviews may have been biased. Belenky *et al.*'s study was also conducted by long semi-structured interviews, but they included a series of embedded questions that were designed to match the women to a position on Perry's scheme. There were ninety college students or alumni and forty-five women from family agencies. The transcripts of the interviews were coded blind and the writers felt that that five 'epistemological perspectives' were evident in the transcripts. The first perspective was described as 'silence'. These 'silent' women saw themselves as incapable of having a voice

of their own, and they felt themselves to be at the whim of authority. The second perspective was 'received knowledge'. The group of women with this perspective felt that they could receive and reproduce ideas, but they were not able to create their own knowledge. The third perspective of 'subjective knowledge' was characterized by women feeling that truth and knowledge are 'personal and private, subjectively known or intuited' (ibid., p. 15). The next perspective was 'procedural knowledge'. Women in this group sensed that they had knowledge, and could 'apply objective procedures for obtaining and communicating' it (ibid.). Those with the perspective of 'constructed knowledge' viewed knowledge as related to its context. They saw themselves as 'creators of knowledge' and valued 'both subjective and objective strategies for knowing' (ibid.).

The epistemological categories identified by Belenky *et al.* were recognized to be abstracted from reality and not necessarily universal (Ryan, 2001). The writers did not feel that their subjects were totally consistent in their viewing of knowledge and nor did they feel that they had evidence to suggest a developmental progression. Their identification of perspectives clearly had a strong resemblance to Perry's positions and the writers indicated from this that it is likely that men would have similar categories to their thinking.

King and Kitchener (1994)

King and Kitchener (1994) worked on what they called 'reflective judgement'. They adopted a broader remit than that of the other two projects described above, studying both genders and a range of ages in empirical studies that lasted over fifteen years. They used subjects' capacity to work on what the project team called 'ill-structured' problems as an indicator of how they considered knowledge and how they used it in solving problems for which there was no definite answer. Ill-structured problems have no 'right or wrong' answer, but require reasoning and personal judgement. Ethical issues provide a good example. The term is adopted in this book with the same definition. Significantly, the writers noted that many of the tools used to judge 'critical thinking' and other forms of intellectual development rely on 'structured' problems where there is an actual solution to be sought, usually in a standard manner. They saw the intellectual requirements for such functioning as at a lower stage of intellectual development. Subjects were given a series of these specially designed problems. Probe questions attempt to investigate the kind of thinking that underlaid the response that was given. In other words, rather than observing the ways in which subjects indicated their view of knowledge in discussion in an interview, they were required to represent their view of knowledge in set tasks. The tasks tested subjects' conception of knowledge and their processes of justification for responses that they produced in problem-solving situations. Such issues in reasoning are particularly tested in the cognitive skills of the manipulation of knowledge in the higher levels of formal education, such as analysis, evaluation

and argument. It is at this level in higher education that learners would be expected to be able to deal with issues where there is uncertainty and unpredictability.

King and Kitchener identified seven stages of development towards reflective judgement and saw reflective judgement as existing only at the most advanced two stages. The writers describe the stages as 'qualitatively different networks of concepts that affect ill-structured problem solving' (1994, p. 47). The characteristics are summarized below:

In the Pre-Reflective Stages (1, 2 and 3), people do not acknowledge that there is the possibility that knowledge can be uncertain and because of this, they cannot understand that there can exist problems that do not have a correct solution. This means that they do not need to seek reasons or evidence for the solution to a problem. There is an assumption that authorities carry 'the truth', and all they have to do is to learn this truth. These stages would be characteristic mainly of young children who start to move beyond when the complexity of such issues as religion confront them – or when they recognize that those that they consider as authorities pose differing views.

In the Quasi Reflective Thinking Stages (4 and 5), there is an acknowledgement that some problems are ill-structured and that there may be situations of uncertain knowledge. While those do provide evidence for their reasoning, they do not know how to use it appropriately. In the earlier stage, while everyone is seen as having a right to her own opinion, the reasoning of others who disagree with them must be wrong. Later there is recognition that different frames of reference rely on different forms of evidence. However, there is lack of understanding that evidence and consequently chosen frames of reference need to be compared and contrasted.

There are two Stages of Reflective Judgement (6 and 7). In these stages people understand that knowledge is not given but constructed and that claims of knowledge are related to the context in which they are generated. This implies further that a response to an ill-structured problem in one time might be different at another time. In the earlier stage of reflective judgement, there is a tendency to develop judgements on the basis of internal considerations. In the most sophisticated stage, intelligence is reflected as a skilled and sensitive ability to work with the complexities of a situation, with imagination that is used in the proposition of new possibilities and hypotheses. There is a willingness to learn from experience. Particularly characteristic of these highest stages of functioning, is the recognition by the subject that her processes of reasoning influence the response that she makes. Such meta-cognitive processes are particularly important for later discussions of reflective activities.

There is obviously a similarity between these stages identified by King and Kitchener, the epistemological perspectives of Belenky *et al.*, and the positions of Perry, though King and Kitchener did not agree with the notion of 'commitment' in Perry's work. 'Commitment' seemed to contradict the concept that all knowledge is provisional and may be re-evaluated at any time and they considered that the most advanced stages of reflective judge-

ment may represent stages of greater development than was evidenced in Perry's work. Again in disagreement with Perry, they considered that the earliest stages of development are more characteristic of children than of college students. Like Belenky *et al.*, King and Kitchener felt that their subjects tended to progress in their levels of intellectual functioning when they were in educational situations.

Another interesting issue with regard to the development of conceptions of knowledge in formal education is whether different disciplines enable learners to progress more or less quickly through stages such as those described by King and Kitchener. Perry's students were from a liberal arts background and, if discipline is relevant to the development of particular conceptions of knowledge, then this sample demonstrates bias in this direction. Different disciplines provide different qualities of 'learning to learn experiences' for learners. For example, those who study the humanities are likely to confront the use of a variety of frames of reference (e.g., critical studies of art and literature) much earlier than students studying maths and sciences. There is anecdotal evidence that students who learn about the theory of knowledge, as a subject, find the ideas helpful as a support for their future studies (Moon, 2002a). Earlier they will have a broader understanding that knowledge is not simply a commodity to be acquired, but is constructed, and structured differently in different contexts.

Baxter Magolda (1992, 1994, 1996)

Baxter Magolda's main work on 'knowing and reasoning in college' (Baxter Magolda, 1992) was published a little before that of King and Kitchener. It is positioned at the end of the description of the studies of conceptions of knowledge because it provides quotations that usefully illustrate all four studies. Baxter Magolda studied just over a hundred college students over a five-year period, still retaining seventy of the students in the fifth year. Her interest was on conceptions of knowledge in terms of hypothesized gender differences. She did not strongly substantiate her gender difference hypothesis, but did provide useful confirmation of the stages of conceptions of knowledge that had first been identified in Perry's 'positions'. She used semi-structured interviewing as her research method and identified four 'domains' of knowing and reasoning which broadly match the sequences of the other workers described above. She was particularly interested in the emergence of the student's own 'voice' – an idea that emerged in Belenky *et al.*'s work and that has importance in the study of reflective learning later in this book.

'Absolute knowing' is the least developed stage in Baxter Magolda's scheme, wherein knowledge is seen as certain or absolute and formal learning is a matter of absorption of the knowledge of the experts (e.g., teachers). She describes a second stage as 'transitional knowing', in which there are doubts about the certainty of knowledge – a sense that there is both partial

certainty and partial uncertainty. The third domain is represented by 'independent knowing' – when learners recognize the uncertainty of knowledge, and feel that everyone has her own opinion or beliefs. This seems to be an embryonic form of the most sophisticated domain, that of 'contextual knowing' in which knowledge is seen as constructed, and is understood in relation to the deployment of evidence that best fits a given context.

Baxter Magolda's system of four domains seem usefully to summarize the findings of the various investigations of the development of conceptions of knowledge which have more stages described while using apparently the same general ideas in the progression. The multiple stages of the other studies could be seen as providing the detail of the transitions between the stages. It is interesting to note Baxter Magolda's observation that students shifted between domains and might work on different conceptions for different topics at the same time. This supports the adoption of the simpler four-stage system that she used.

We can summarize this section, in which studies have been reviewed, with quotations from Baxter Magolda's book. These are quotations from students within different domains of their conception of knowledge, talking about their understandings of learning:

Absolutist – knowledge is certain or absolute.

For example, Eileen – I have to see what I'm learning, and I have to know why. I have a good memory and it's very easy for me to memorise facts. The advantage is that it's kind of cut and dried. The information is there – all you have to do is to soak it up in your brain.

(Baxter Magolda, 1992, p. 77)

Transitional stage – there is partial certainty and partial uncertainty.

For example, Bob – I took a different teacher in the sophomore level of the subject, and I learned to interpret things differently. When you have someone else give you a different interpretation of the same subject, you're forced to go back and do comparisons. And I thought, well, why would this person teach this subject this way and be successful and at the same time there's a person teaching it in a different way but still being successful? It begins to change you a bit.

(ibid., p. 103)

Independent knowing – learning is uncertain – everyone has her own beliefs.

For example, Sandra – I guess I take everything in and then I go home at night and kind of sort out what I want and what I don't want. Some things, I guess – maybe because of my morals and values – will sit better with me and will seem like fact for me. And other things, I'm just like 'I don't really think so'. And I throw them out.

(ibid., p. 141)

Contextual knowing – knowledge is constructed and any judgement must be made on the basis of the evidence in that context.

For example, Gwen – As you hear other people's opinions, you piece together what you really think. Who has the valid point? Whose point is not valid in your opinion? And [you] come to some other new understanding. Even if it's the same basic belief, maybe [you will be] able to look at it from a more (multi)dimensional perspective.

(*ibid.*, p. 173)

Subsequently Baxter Magolda worked with many of the students in their various destinations after they left college (Baxter Magolda, 1994, 1996). She found that her subjects often progressed quickly to the stage of contextual knowing especially if they were required to make significant independent decisions.

Conceptions of knowledge for learning: some other studies

We have described the studies on the conceptions of knowledge at some length because they are not widely discussed elsewhere and are very relevant to this book. In this section first we review three ways in which the models of different conceptions of knowledge have been recognized implicitly in other work on learning. This provides useful supporting evidence for the studies above. Then we take a more general view of how differences in the conception of knowledge might affect the manner in which a learner learns from her experiences.

The first case comes from a study of an agreed and well-used set of level descriptors in UK higher education e.g., SEEC (2003), (Moon, 2002a). Level descriptors are descriptions of the kind of learning that is expected from learners at given stages (levels) in education. These descriptors had been developed and agreed by representatives from many disciplines. There was no deliberate involvement of educational theory at their inception, but in the words used to describe student learning there is considerable evidence of the changing views of the conception of learning discussed above. There were references, for example, to learners being increasingly able to handle unpredictable or ill-structured material, to their ability to make judgements on the basis of analysis of evidence, to their understanding of the constructed nature of knowledge and of their increasing independence from 'authority'. As a learner develops her understanding of the structure of knowledge, she can frame her learning more effectively and with greater flexibility because she will have an appreciation of how her areas of knowledge inter-relate.

While the idea of level implies that all learners at a particular level in education might be functioning in the same way, the reality is probably different. Perry noticed that subjects who differed in the manner in which they viewed the structure of knowledge often co-existed at the same educational stage and

this might be evident in their ability to use evidence to support an argument. One of Perry's articles captured the significance of this in a title: 'Different Worlds in the Same Classroom' (Perry, 1970). He gives the example of a (male) lecturer lecturing on three possible theoretical explanations for a phenomenon. One student, assuming that there are correct and non-correct answers to everything, waits for the lecturer to tell him which is the correct theory so that he can then learn it. Another has a fairly similar orientation, though recognizes that the matter is not quite so straightforward. He understands that the lecturer may be presenting the material in a way that will force students to work on their thinking but still expects there to be a correct outcome. The third student recognizes that the appropriate theory is appropriate because, after an examination of the underlying assumptions, it is best supported in that context. The assumptions that the lecturer makes about the way in which the students are thinking will determine how he structures the material of teaching and, correspondingly, how well the students will learn from the session.

In terms of education in the UK, a time when the point made above may seem particularly pertinent is in Master's degree programmes. Learners who have not been in formal education for a long time often work alongside new graduates and overseas students who may have different views of teaching and learning. In a short time, they are all expected to be using the sophisticated concepts of knowledge in essays and research processes that are characteristic of the descriptions of Master's level.

The second case in this section is a study of assessment by Miller and Parlett (1974). Miller and Parlett studied the assessment process of thirty students who were being assessed in their final examinations. They found that students fell into three categories that were reliably recognized by independent judges. There were 'cue-seekers', who actively sort information about their examinations, the interests of the examiner, and asked for hints. The second group was labelled the 'cue-conscious'. They talked about the need to be aware of the information and hints, and the value of making a good impression on the examiner, but were not active in these pursuits. The third group was labelled the 'cue-deaf' and seemed to think that working as hard as possible would bring success.

In the study, there were statistically significant differences in the performances of the students in their examinations. The 'cue-seekers' were most likely to get firsts, the 'cue-conscious' were more likely to get upper seconds and the 'cue-deaf' were most likely to get lower seconds. In considering what might lie behind these different approaches to assessment, Miller and Parlett looked at the positions of Perry. They felt that the 'cue-seekers' seemed to characterize relativistic attitudes to knowledge and assessment. They understood the role of assessment in the system, and what they needed to do to achieve success. Like the cue-seekers, the cue-conscious understood 'that there was a technique involved' and that 'authority could be affected by spurious things such as personal likes and dislikes; and marking might not

be perfect' (1974, p. 63) but they were not committed actively to do anything about it. The cue-deaf seemed to believe that examinations were about learning the 'right' body of knowledge as decreed by an authority who was a teacher who was seen as knowing what was best for the students. Another way of interpreting the work of Miller and Parlett is to suggest that the cue-conscious students, whose functioning was equated with more sophisticated conceptions of knowledge, were more able to detect the appropriate relevance in learning situations (see Chapter 1). In this respect, this work also relates to the work on approaches to learning that is described in Chapter 4.

The last case study relates conception of knowledge to reflection and as such is directly related to material later in this book (Chapter 7). There are a number of schemes in the literature that describe qualities of reflective writing arranged in different depths of reflection (e.g., Van Manen, 1977; Hatton and Smith, 1995). A new framework is presented in this book which draws on the literature on reflection and the experiences of practitioners (p. 214). The several levels of reflective writing relate to work on conceptions of knowledge. The initial level in the framework is the description of an event without further processing. The second level is reflection in which only one point of view is used and in the later stages there is more sophisticated reflection in which the learner is aware of there being potentially different views of the same event. She also recognizes the role of her own processing in influencing the form of her reflection, and this will include an awareness of her emotional state on any conclusions that she might reach.

Conceptions of knowledge and learning processes

The examples above begin to relate the theoretical approaches to the conception of knowledge to 'real-life' events in education. How do the different conceptions of knowledge relate to the theoretical ideas about learning that were introduced in the previous chapter? This chapter was introduced as relating to the process of learning to learn, in contrast to much of the last chapter that was about the process of learning content and we suggested that the same principles apply to it as were applied to the learning of content. Thus, we can say that the development of the conception of knowledge is a matter of learners modifying their view of knowledge in progressively more sophisticated manners according to the schemes described above. It is more useful to say, however, that they frame the manner in which they work with knowledge in progressively more sophisticated manners. This enables them to deal with more complex learning or representation of learning tasks. The conscious or unconscious decision about how to frame knowledge means that the learner is working with her internal experience as opposed to the material of learning

(her external experience). She is bringing a way of thinking about her learning process to the process of accommodating new material of learning. In the previous chapter, we described this as a flux between internal and external experience.

As a learner becomes more sophisticated in the manner in which she conceives of knowledge, we can say that she becomes more flexible in the manner in which she works with knowledge – and more flexible in the way in which she sees knowledge is used by others. Most of what we do with knowledge relies on knowledge that has been generated by others. On the basis of King and Kitchener's work, learners who use true reflective judgement understand that learning is constructed and are also able to understand the ways in which others (who have less advanced conceptions of knowledge) view learning. In an assessment of evidence to justify a position in an argument, a sophisticated learner is more able to see that it is possible to view the same matter from a number of different frames of reference, and to work with different figures and grounds in the same situation. An example of this arises in Miller and Parlett's work on assessment. The 'cue-seeking' learners were able to see assessment within a broader frame of reference – as a feature of a system (i.e., higher education) – in which they choose to succeed. They had more choice of frames of reference.

Furthermore, in the progression towards understanding of the constructed nature of knowledge, learners become more metacognitive, understanding that their own processes as learners affect the manner in which they construe knowledge. This does not mean that they are always in control of the manner in which they learn; the next section on personal management of learning suggests that there may be many more variables at work here. However, if a learner understands her own processes of learning, her awareness gives her more tools available to improve or change an approach to learning or behaviour in a given situation. For example, if a learner knows that a certain aspect of work triggers feelings of discomfort, she is more able to work to alleviate it.

Entwistle (Entwistle and Walker, 2002), referring to studies of the conceptions of knowledge, talks of the development of a 'nested hierarchy' of conceptions. This implies that the sophisticated learner can have a more flexible approach to learning through her 'expanded awareness' of the nature of knowledge and how it is constructed. He relates Perry's work to the outcomes of interviews with adults of varying levels of educational attainments (cited from Saljo, 1979). Saljo found that the subjects displayed different conceptions of learning – from learning as 'acquiring information' to learning as 'making sense of ideas and the real world' and later as 'developing as a person' (ibid., p.18). While these are conceptions of learning, Entwistle sees them as relating to the epistemological sophistication of the individual. In other words, if knowledge is seen as absolute (lowest epistemological stages), then learning is a matter of being able to memorize and reproduce it. If knowledge is recognized to be constructed, then the assimilation and

accommodation processes are a part of the person, and in learning the material of learning, the person is transformed.

Holding a conception of knowledge as constructed does not make life easier but, in fact, complicates it because it means that everything is potentially questionable and, as a result, there are more areas of uncomfortable cognitive dissonance to be managed. In a sense, this may reinforce Perry's notion of commitment as an unsophisticated response to an initial recognition of the complexity implied by the view of knowledge as constructed. The learner copes by saying: 'In this chaos of constructed knowledge, I have to make up my own mind and hold on tight to my view.'

Barnett (1997) puts the developing sophistication of knowledge into a broader context of how we might wish higher education students to function. While he rejects some elements of Perry's work as 'a psychological theory of cognitive development', it is difficult to see how the attainment of the levels of critical thinking that he describes, is not underpinned by a developmental sequence of the kind suggested in this chapter. This is particularly the case when the sequence is illustrated in the words of the students (as in Baxter Magolda's work).

Chapter 3

The framing of learning

Emotion and learning

Introduction

This second chapter of the three that consider the framing of learning, focuses on emotion and feeling in learning. Current thought about the role of emotion in learning has been stimulated by Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995, 1998). Without appropriate self-management, a learner will not have the capacity to cope with maximum efficiency in learning tasks or to progress in her understanding of the structure of knowledge. However, this is not all there is to the relationship of emotion to learning. A brief review of the literature suggests that there are a number of different kinds of relationships between emotion and learning.

The first section of this chapter takes a broad view, considering some beliefs about emotion and learning and then clarifying terms. We then consider the different forms of relationships that are suggested in the literature, starting off with 'emotional intelligence'. The categorization in the literature seems to neglect a number of situations in which an emotional experience leads to change in orientation and often change of behaviour. In the apparent absence of other terms, 'emotional insight' is adopted. This seems to be a useful concept in relation to the process of reflection and the learning that can emerge from it. In the following section, we review the nature of emotional insight and a particular approach to it (Donaldson, 1992). The final sections of the chapter look at the manner in which the relationship between emotion and learning relates to conceptions of the structure of knowledge (Chapter 2) and to more general issues about learning in Chapter 1.

This chapter does not attempt to be a comprehensive review of the literature, but is concerned with plotting the manner in which the literature on learning attempts to deal with the influence of emotion. There are many

overlaps. Ideas relating to all the other relationships between learning and emotion, for example, are included in the (very) broad sweep of material on emotional intelligence.

An interpretation of the relationship between emotion, feelings and learning

We use both terms ‘feeling’ and ‘emotion’ in this chapter because it is difficult in the literature to make a clear distinction between the uses of the terms. Feelings can be emotions (e.g., anger, excitement, etc.). However, feeling can imply a more generic behaviour – we can ‘feel’ in control of a situation (e.g., a learning situation) or confused, and in a particular feeling state that affects the manner in which we learn which could not be said to be ‘emotional’. All of these meanings are relevant to this section. They are a linked set of ideas, which do not always accord with each other, but accord in their different ways with important aspects of learning. They could be seen as different ‘angles’ on the same topic. A major problem in trying to tease out the relationship of emotion to learning is how to make sense of the different ‘angles’ in the literature. For one writer, feelings and emotion represent one link to learning. For another, using the same terminology, the relationship will be different. For example, one will be talking about the actual experience of feeling something (e.g., excited, upset) while another will be talking about a person’s knowledge about managing emotion or feeling in others. A particular example here is the literature on emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995, 1998). The literature may also be a mix of advice and information that tends to simplify issues (e.g., in the training literature). In some writing, emotion is seen more as a negative influence on learning that needs to be controlled (e.g. in parts, Wilkes, 1997) or causes distortions in subsequent learning (Postle, 2000).

We should note, at this stage, that some writers actually characterize the process of reflection by the automatic inclusion within it of feelings or emotion (e.g., Boyd and Fales, 1983). That is not the position taken in this book. We would say that emotion is probably involved in all learning not only in reflection (Jarvis, 1987; Marsick and Watkins, 1990). We return to this issue in Chapter 6.

If emotion is involved in all learning, there is the question of whether that relationship is of one type of emotion, or many. Lewis (1990) suggested that they are inter-related like a fugue and virtually impossible to separate. We would disagree, and suggest that there are a number of different ways in which emotion and learning affect each other and that some greater definition is possible. We attempt here to make initial sense of observations and the literature on emotion and learning. The following groupings seem, at this

stage, to be appropriate and they are discussed in more detail and their categorization is revised below:

- emotional intelligence;
- feelings as the subject matter of learning (part of our external experience): we can learn about how our feelings impinge upon our lives and those of others (e.g., counselling and self-development literature);
- feelings and their involvement in the learning process.

Emotional intelligence

To many, the term ‘emotional intelligence’ might seem to be sufficient as a means of explaining the relationship between feelings and learning. Much has been written about it in the past few years. The idea of describing, in one term, the ability to manage personal emotions and the emotions of another emerged from a number of sources. One, in particular, was Gardener’s notion that the quality of human ‘intelligent’ functioning is determined by much more than is encompassed in ‘IQ’, and that it involves a number of facets – including elements of inter- and intrapersonal abilities (Gardner, 1983). Goleman (1995, 1998) expanded and developed the idea. For Goleman, ‘emotional intelligence’ includes self-awareness, impulse control, persistence, zeal and motivation, empathy and social deftness. It ‘guides our moment-to-moment decisions . . . enabling or disabling through itself’ (1995: 28). This is a broad view of emotion that has been helpful in considerations about learning and teaching (Mortiboys, 2002) and it extends beyond the notions of emotion as something ‘to be controlled’ or as ‘baggage’ to be managed in a new situation (Beard and Wilson, 2002). Its emphasis is on management of emotion and it is clear that feelings sometimes do need to be managed in order that a particular form of learning can take place. For example, a student in a lecture on philosophy might have difficulty in concentrating on the learning if she is highly excited about a new relationship. Another way of interpreting this is not of feelings ‘getting in the way’, but of intellectual material in the way of another entirely life-enhancing and worthy pursuit – that of potential romance! We should remember that the ‘guidance’ role of emotion in a learning situation may not coincide with the goals of the intellect in a social situation.

There is value, therefore, in the identification of something that can be called ‘emotional intelligence’. It has been important in reframing our view of what it means to be ‘good’ at learning and managing learning. It recognizes the importance of many other factors in contributing to effectiveness that go beyond the traditional notions of pure cognitive ability (IQ). However, a powerful approach engendered by the adoption of a term such as ‘emotional intelligence’ at the same time might have the effect of narrowing and too easily summarizing what seems to be a very complex array of functions. In addition, such simplification seems also to make emotional control easy to

manipulate and 'improve'. Goleman makes many suggestions about solving human problems by working with the concept of emotional intelligence (for example, dealing with melancholy (1995: 69); lifting moods (*ibid.*, p. 72); dealing with difficulties in marriages (*ibid.*, p. 129) and trauma (*ibid.*, p. 210), and acquiring self-mastery (1998: 47)). Similarly, Brockbank and McGill (1998) say emotional intelligence means judging when to deal with and when to 'park' emotion (1998: 193–4) in order to deal with another matter. Emotional intelligence can make the management of emotions sound easy.

However, there are important ideas in the writings of those who promote the concept of emotional intelligence that do not require the adoption of the concept as a whole with all of its summarizing and simplifying connotations (Salmon, 1995). For the purposes of this text, we distinguish 'self-management as a learner and management of personal learning situations' from the management of the feelings and emotions of others, both of which are incorporated in the notion of 'emotional intelligence'. An excellent counsellor who displays empathy and understanding may not be a person who is an excellent manager of her own learning. As a concept, 'emotional intelligence' has served an important purpose of awareness raising, but we need to recognize that its broad definition serves also to blur understandings of the relationships between emotion and learning.

Feelings as the subject matter of learning

Feelings are involved in the process of learning but also are the subject matter of learning. In other words, they can be part of external experience. It is possible to learn about the emotions without actually experiencing them, for example, learning how they affect people and their management in counselling, therapy and relationships (e.g., Heron, 1989; Postle, 2000; and other references in Moon, 1999a). The relationship between the processes of learning about emotion and working with one's actual emotions can tend to become confused. At times it will be completely 'dispassionate' with no emotional involvement other than that associated with the learning situation. At other times the learning about emotion will be associated with actual emotional experiences (i.e., involving the internal experience). For example, people who live together learn that a particular look from their partner is associated with forms of behaviour that may have consequences for the manner in which they relate to each other at the time. A 'grumpy' look may have emotional consequences for the observer – and the consequences may then consciously or unconsciously guide her subsequent behaviour. In other words, the grumpy look in the partner may cause the observer, in an emotional reaction, to reframe the determinants of her 'relating' behaviour for the duration of the grumpiness in the other. She may, for example, treat the other 'gently' until there is a change in expression. The observer

may feel emotion, but has also learnt about emotion in this example and knowledge and experience have become interlinked.

Feelings and their involvement in the learning process

Following the constructivist model of learning, we can identify several ways in which feeling can be involved in the learning process. First, feelings influence what we actually know about something. If it is the cognitive structure that is the basis of 'knowing', emotion is a part of the cognitive structure. What we know becomes associated with feeling, though the associations do not need to be permanent. Thinking about war for one person may generate a feeling of discomfort and fear. For another person, the idea of war may bring about a sense of excitement. Thinking about a particular person is likely to generate feelings that are associated with that person – love, sexual desire, dislike, and so on. It is interesting to speculate as to whether anything that we know is separated from associated feelings. When we try to recall something that has been forgotten, it is often the experience of the associated feelings that occurs before the name or nature of the object 'comes to mind'. Thus, awareness of feeling may be a system that operates more quickly than awareness of the knowledge object.

The association between feeling and knowing may be another area in which vocabulary is deficient. Above, the word 'sense' was used to describe a word concerned with emotional experience ('excitement'), whereas we would normally associate 'sense' with seeing, hearing, smelling, and so on – which is not the intended meaning in this case. In a similar way, the word 'war' may often be said to generate 'dark' feelings. Again, we have used a 'sensory' word to arrive at a meaning that is probably more to do with feeling (of threat, fear, unease, etc.). Poetry exploits words and word combinations that generate feeling (see p. 173, 230).

If we are saying that what we know is associated with feelings, then feelings are part of the internal experience that guides new learning and are, in this way, associated with the process of learning. This second way in which feelings influence learning is in the process of learning itself, within the action of accommodation in which internal experience is related to any current external experience. So new learning about war is matched against existing knowledge and feelings already present. Third, however, new feelings may be generated in the process of learning. New emotion or feeling seems to arise as a result of the flux between internal and external experience. Thus, the idea of war, having been a source of negative feelings, might become associated with excitement in the context of the new information. The possibility of being involved in action might appeal to the learner. In another example, Donaldson (1992) observes the delight that there can be in the process of new learning.

The fourth manner in which emotion tends to be associated with learning is commonly alluded to in the literature. It is where feeling or emotion creates a

condition conducive or not conducive to learning – it is seen as a potential facilitator or as a block to the learning process. Above, we have described feeling as being related to knowledge about grumpy behaviour in another, and both then acting as a guide for adapting behaviour (treating the partner gently). In that situation, the feeling is directly associated with the material of learning. However, emotion that is not directly associated with current feeling can also affect learning. This situation is most noticeable when learning is facilitated or blocked but these may be extremes on a continuum (Mulligan, 1992). The simplest example here is when internal experiences of non-associated feelings interfere with a learning process. For example, the new relationship might get in the way of learning in a philosophy lecture. A state of high emotional arousal (negative or positive), or very low arousal can make learning difficult.

Other situations in which emotions that are not associated with the learning affect learning are where the source of the 'emotion' may seem to be generated externally to the learner. For example, we talk of there being an 'atmosphere' of fear or threat that inhibits learning. The learner is disrupted by her perceptions.

There is also a considerable literature on the manner in which certain atmospheres seem to make learning 'easier'. Material pertaining to this idea arises in various cultures of the study of learning though it seems unlikely that we are talking of different situations. One example is 'accelerated learning'. Over the years there have been many publications on accelerated learning, arising initially in the training and development culture (e.g., Rose, 1985; Lawlor and Handley, 1996) and there are now reinterpretations of the idea within teacher education. Accelerated learning, in its original form, was the generation of an external atmosphere designed to enable the learner to reach a relaxed state which is considered to facilitate learning. This often involved the use of baroque music to encourage an appropriate brain state.

Another approach to facilitative atmospheres for learning is represented in a body of literature that describes the generation of 'flow' of feeling states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow occurs when a person is absorbed by a task, when she loses track of time, and when she seems to be achieving the objective without effort. Claxton (2000), in particular, applies these ideas, describing the state in which learners might study for hours, deeply focused on their subject matter. A personal experience of flow is evident after deep involvement in writing, when it seems to be an effort to 're-enter' the world beyond the writing. Some link the processes of flow and 'accelerated learning'; Beard and Wilson, for example, talk about 'Flow learning through relaxed alertness' (2002, p. 132). Whether flow or accelerated learning are or are not describing similar states is an important area to explore.

Another way in which emotion may facilitate or inhibit learning comes from the person-centred learning literature and this relates the manner in which a person feels about herself to her success in learning (e.g., Rogers, 1969; Heron, 1989). Rogers talked about the conditions that facilitate learning

(e.g., positive self-regard). On the other hand, learning is a neutral process. We have a tendency to regard learning as 'happening' only when the learning is in a direction that is approved or desired. Learning occurs also in very unsupportive situations – but the learning may not be the learning that is expected – it may be about how best to avoid the unpleasant situation.

We can summarize the points made in this section so far. We have moved beyond the initial three groupings of relationships between emotion and learning (p. 46). The new schema involves concepts of 'relevant' and 'non-relevant' emotion to distinguish between situations in which the feelings and emotion are related to the material of learning involved and where they appear not to be directly related. In summary, so far, emotion influences the learning process in the following ways:

- where relevant emotion is an influence on the structure of our knowledge, i.e., what we know;
- where relevant emotion has an influence on the process of learning: as part of our internal experience it influences the manner in which we process new material of learning;
- where relevant emotion arises from the process of learning (i.e., it arises not within the external experience, nor directly in the internal experience that we bring to learning but within the process of flux between the internal and external experience which results in accommodation);
- where emotion that is not directly relevant to the learning situation affects learning (e.g., in accelerated learning, 'flow' states and person-centred learning).

Do these, however, represent the full range of forms of relationship between emotion and learning?

The possibility of another form of emotional learning

Writing this chapter on emotion and learning has been a learning process. While there is much general material on the relationship of cognitive processes to emotional learning, as we have suggested above, it seems to treat the topic from a variety of angles with little in the way of systematic approaches. Initially it appeared that the topic of emotion and learning was largely covered in the sections above, but it then became apparent that there is an area of literature and experience that is not covered by the headings already written. For the moment we use the term 'emotional insight' for this. This new area would certainly overlap with some of the concepts of 'emotional intelligence', but the latter concept does not clarify the matter.

The form of emotional insight has become evident through examples. We therefore start with examples and move towards the definition of the term later. In the literature on which this section was based were several texts that seemed to be about feelings and learning, but would not directly match any of the headings above. Boal's work on theatre and therapy (Boal, 1995) is one example (see also p. 174) as are many of the states described in Storr's study of solitude (Storr, 1988) and the use of story-telling in the context of professional development (e.g., Winter *et al.*, 1999; Bolton, 1994; McDrury and Alterio, 2002) (see p. 174). It was noticeable also that learning about how to conduct counselling (i.e., learning about emotional behaviour) is covered above but we did not cover some of the learning that occurs as client behaviour changes. Also there are the experiences of encounter or sensitivity training (Rogers, 1969; Heron, 1989) and many alternative therapies, even the practice of hypnotherapy (e.g., Hartland, 1982). In addition, work on dreams may bring about a change of orientation (Progoff, 1975; Reed, 1985; Shohet, 1985). In all these examples, after an intervention, something seems to happen to the orientation of the learner in the way she perceives her world and, as a result, she may behave differently. She may try to describe this in terms of 'knowing something different', but often the change is apparently more profound than the description. The initiation of the change may be cathartic or it may be more subtle. Sometimes these kinds of change occur after an event such as a rite of passage or a meeting that has 'stirred the emotions' in some way. The source of learning or the nature of learning that has resulted in the changes may not be at all obvious if we seek it within the traditional frames of reference of cognitive learning.

The particular relevance of this form of learning in this book is in its role in reflective work in which learners might be engaged. In a previous publication on the use of learning journals (Moon, 1999b), we queried the form of learning that might emerge from the use of learning journals. Some learning in reflective learning journals clearly is related to consolidation of knowledge and the greater development of understanding. In the book, the chapter on learning from learning journals (1999b, Chapter 2) explored this but there has always seemed to be something missing. There can be learning that results in a behaviour change that seems to be more profound than simply knowing something.

What we are describing as 'emotional insight' is difficult to describe because the term 'emotional' is 'slippery' with many different concepts attached to it. It is helpful to use the notion of learning as 'change' here, but it is not quite change of conception (as in Marton *et al.*, 1997), rather, it might be change of something else for which we may not have a word, there may be lack of vocabulary here. The idea of change of orientation seems to be a reasonable description of it at present. It is not far from the ideas expressed by many writers. For example, Mulligan distinguishes feeling from reasoning (cognitive processes) as 'one of the two major ways in which we make judgements

about the world. It underlies our preferences and our values and emphasizes what is subjectively important to us' (2000: 56). The use of the word 'judgement' tends to imply the operation of emotional insight through the agency of reasoning, rather than a process that has a complete form in itself. McDrury and Alterio talk of the way that emotional insight reveals likes and dislikes, 'our values and preferences in contrast to thought being based on theories, frameworks and concepts . . . [and] . . . more objective' (2002, p. 41).

While, therefore, there seem to be many who have seen emotional insight as a form of learning, the nature of this learning is not so obviously explored and, correspondingly, nor is its relationship to other learning explored. We imply that the emotional nature of a person might itself 'learn' but such learning may be different from the manner of knowledge learning (Epstein, 1993). We note Carlson's observations again that 'integrating theories of emotion and theories of cognition is a longstanding challenge' (1997: 112). How might this 'learning' process relate to the traditional view of learning? One model of mind that can encompass the observations made in this section is that of Donaldson (1992), though to summarize the richness of this work in a few lines is to do it some disservice. Donaldson has worked primarily on child development, and her ideas have a basis in well-researched material, particularly in this age group. She suggests that mind has a structure that is subject to processes of development with characteristic changes in the operation that signal the emergence into the next phase. The main characteristic that identifies the different 'modes' of mind is what Donaldson calls the 'locus of concern'. The idea of locus of concern is applied to both emotional ('value-sensing') and thought ('intellectual') processes. The locus of concern of a baby is 'here and now'. Later there is development of an ability to have concern for things in the past or the future. In the third locus there is a greater generalization and an ability to deal with the nature of things rather than specific events/objects. The fourth and most sophisticated locus is concerned with abstract relationships, such as mathematics and complex reasoning. Donaldson's work seems to relate to the material of those working on the conception of knowledge (see Chapter 2) in the progression that she describes.

The loci of concern, described by Donaldson, follow a developmental sequence but in a sense become 'available for use' only by the developed adult. Emotion and thought are seen by Donaldson as separate, but acting together in different ways to produce different forms of mental activity. This is similar to the views expressed in the sections above. Most commonly, they work together in the third locus of generalization. A person becomes more skilled in deploying emotion and thought to achieve her goals. Most significantly for the arguments in this chapter, Donaldson suggests that the greatest form of development of emotion and intellectual thought is in the fourth locus of abstract relationships, where there are more pure forms of functioning of these components. While it is easy to observe academic or deep thinking work as intellectual with little involvement of emotion, Donaldson proposes that there is an equivalent state for an emotional or

value-sensing state. She roots her reasoning in cultural and historical tendencies for particular ways of functioning, suggesting that the more pure emotional states are most clearly represented in Buddhism and Zen, in states of ecstasy (Laski, 1961) or spirituality. However, the way in which people clearly 'learn from' or change as a result of experience suggests that such functioning may be much more common. This brings us back to the series of examples with which we began this section that are not intellectual processes but relate to Donaldson's view of emotional development (therapy, learning from story, etc.). We therefore suggest that emotional insight is a common activity that becomes evident when we acknowledge and label it as relatively distinct.

Emotion and learning: drawing the ideas together

We have suggested, therefore, that emotion and learning have a number of different relationships and we can reconsider the headings that were employed. 'Emotional intelligence' as a term is important in applied situations where it emphasizes that good functioning (management, teaching, teamwork, and so on) involves emotion. However, as we have noted above, the term seems to be somewhat 'all-encompassing'. We chose to see it largely in terms of self-management.

We then looked at feelings as the subject matter of learning. At times there may be a very close relationship between learning about feelings as subject matter, and emotional learning as described in the last section. The section on feelings and their involvement in or as an influence on the learning process indicated a number of different ways in which emotion is involved in learning. It is linked to knowledge which, as the cognitive structure, guides new learning. It is part of the process of learning itself; feelings emerge as a result of learning and, whether or not related to the topic of the learning, emotional states can block or facilitate learning. Finally, we came to understand the possibility that there is something beyond all of the above that is apparent when people work with their emotions and in some way, change their orientation. We called this emotional insight.

Donaldson's work on the nature of mind promotes the idea that emotion is involved in all learning, sometimes with cognitive or intellectual processes, and sometimes, in a more pure form. This is a helpful model to support the exploration of reflective and experiential learning in later chapters. In suggesting that there is not one, but a number of different relationships between learning and emotion, including one form that is emotional insight, it might be reasonable to talk of *emotional processes* and learning, rather than the more simplified notion of emotion and learning.

We can suggest that emotion relates to learning in the following ways:

- Emotion influences the structure of knowledge.
- It influences the process of learning.
- It may arise in the process of learning.
- Emotions that are not directly relevant to the learning facilitate or block learning.
- There is emotional insight where the emotional orientation of the person changes.

Emotional processes and learning: an example

While it has been important for the development of this section to view all these relationships between emotion and learning as separate, it is likely that, as processes, they are often all active, interweaving with cognitive processes metaphorically ‘without seams’. There are times, however, when the identity of the processes become clearer, for example, when feelings are overwhelming and block learning, or when they need to be controlled or in the purer forms of emotional learning such as learning from mediation. We illustrate the varied relationships between feelings and learning by reference to a situation reported by Marsick and Watkins (1990). In the context of a study of informal and incidental learning in the workplace, Marsick and Watkins viewed the learning of a group of self-identified adult children of alcoholics who met to explore their experiences in relation to problems in their functioning in the workplace. There was an assumption that there would be factors in common in their feelings and behaviour because of their early experiences. For the group, the intention was to move beyond the stage of therapy to an understanding of the emotional situations that they had experienced. We consider the different relationships between emotion processes and learning under the headings identified above:

- *Emotional intelligence* is illustrated in the statements about development of self-management (in this case, in terms of the group and the work of the facilitator). It was evident in the concern to maintain the group as a group focused on the development of competence rather than as a therapeutic situation. The tensions between these ways of working needed constant adjustment.
- With regard to *feelings as the subject matter for learning*, the group talked about their feelings in objective terms. Examples were the exploration of family dynamics, or expressions of what they wanted from the group, e.g., a request from a member of the group for ‘an alternative to working with men who intimidate me’ (1990, p. 138).

- *The links between emotional processes and learning* were evident in the following ways:
- Emotion that had an influence on the structure of knowledge: one of the participants commented to another that he reminded her of her alcoholic father because both were tall. She said that this resulted in 'a kind of feeling freeze' (ibid., p. 139).
- Emotion that had an influence on the process of learning: the very basis of the group illustrated this. Feelings engendered by the alcoholic parents had influenced the learnt behaviour of the participants and hence their involvement in the group.
- Emotion that arose in the process of learning: the concept 'double hit' is introduced (ibid., p. 141) in which the work on one case 'triggered learning in a second person of a similar or greater intensity' (ibid.).
- Where emotions not directly relevant to the learning situation affected the learning: the value expressed for the 'double hit' was that in direct work with a participant there might often be 'a natural tendency to distance ourselves psychically from new, painful learning.' In contrast, 'In observing others . . . learning, the process can be less threatening or, conversely deeper, since our defenses are down' (ibid., p. 150). In addition to this example, much in the chapter concerns the process of creating a helpful emotional climate that would facilitate learning.
- *Emotional insight* was illustrated in the following way: the processes in this group described by Marsick and Watkins were both cognitive and emotional and the value of both was the major consideration in the design of the intervention. Initially, a more therapeutic stance was taken. For example, there is reference to the exploration of family-of-origin dynamics being 'highly emotional and cathartic' (emotional insight). Later frameworks were introduced to enable the participants to recognize and understand the situations they had been in and to enable them critically to review and adapt their views of themselves and behave differently in future situations.

Emotional processes and the generic view of learning

Chapter 1 introduced concepts of frames of reference, the distinction of figure from ground and the importance of variation in order that learning can take place. Where emotion is the subject matter of learning, it is material of learning in external experience like any other material of learning. When it is involved in the learning process, it is part of the internal experience of an object and therefore will influence the learning by guiding the frame of reference and the determination of the figure from ground. However, while

cognitive processes might often be accessible if not actually conscious, some of the influences of emotion on learning seem to be less accessible, sometimes because we do not have appropriate vocabulary. Thus, going back to the example of adult children of alcoholics in the last section, the woman who experienced a specific reaction to a male participant because he was tall and reminded her of her father would probably, under previous circumstances, just have 'irrationally' disliked or feared the man. Under the conditions of therapy, she became aware of the emotional influences on her behaviour.

Emotional insight seems to be different from other emotional involvement in learning. Therapists and counsellors and others who work directly with people learn about the kinds of intervention that can bring about emotional insight. Schools of therapy might adopt particular metaphors through which to work (e.g., Freud) or areas of function and activities (such as the use of dreams, hypnosis, art, drama, etc.) but there does not seem to be an agreed theory that covers all these forms of emotional change or insight. The search for a unified theory would seem to be blocked in several ways. First, the relationship between learning and emotional processes appears to be varied, second, those who work with the more pure forms of emotional insight tend to be experts in their field, often with cultural boundaries to their vision and they do not necessarily have an overview of the whole picture. Third, there are cultural issues. As Donaldson suggests (see above), work on emotional insight is not well developed in the West at the current time. In terms of the generic view of learning, emotional insight would seem to be characterized by the change of a particularly significant frame of reference that results in a considerable reorientation of many frames of reference that affect significant areas of life.

Emotional processes and conceptions of the structure of knowledge

The previous chapter considered research into the development of conceptions of knowledge (Perry, 1970; King and Kitchener, 1994). How does this material relate to emotion and feelings? We touch on this topic here by making some observations that need to be developed.

We first reiterate what may be an incidental point that arose in the discussion of Donaldson's model of mind. The loci of concern in the model move from 'here and now', to past/future to anywhere/anytime to the capacity for abstract relational thinking. King and Kitchener's 'stages' of reflective thinking assume an underpinning of the loci of concern. The level of conception of the structure of knowledge that is implied in the higher stages of reflective thinking requires a capacity to think in the abstract. However, this point may only relate to emotion and learning in the need to understand the role of emotion in order to make more sophisticated judgements (see below).

King and Kitchener address the issue of the emotional development of the college students with whom they worked, in two pages (1994, pp. 246–7). In these pages they consider a number of different ways in which emotion relates to learning with emphasis on the development of facilitative and supportive situations for learning. There is relatively little concern for the way in which sophisticated processing such as reflective judgement requires some understanding of the relationship of emotional aspects of the self, to the learning.

It is clear that to function in the more sophisticated stages of development, a certain level of general self-management as a learner is required ('emotional intelligence'). Because reasoning at that level is a controlled process, and may involve systematic examination of evidence, there is a need for some level of personal recognition and control of the way in which emotions might steer judgements by influencing the frames of reference that are adopted. However, we have said that emotion is part of what we know as feelings are associated with knowledge. To work with uncertainty and weigh up alternative solutions to a problem (King and Kitchener, 1994) may require deep recognition of the relationships of personal emotional influences on knowledge as well as a metacognitive understanding of how emotion shapes frames of reference. To suggest that we can ever 'know perfectly' how our (personal) emotions influence our processes does not seem possible at present.

Chapter 4

The framing of learning

Approaches to learning

Introduction

The third chapter in this set of three on the framing of learning focuses on the learner's approach to learning. The material on the approaches to learning is based on a well-known body of literature, which concerns the manner in which a learner tackles a learning task. As in the previous two chapters, this chapter is about an aspect of framing that concerns learning to learn. The approach that a learner adopts will be influenced both by her conceptions of knowledge and her personal ability to manage her learning. These were the subject matter of the previous chapters. Some of the factors that contribute to the approach that a learner adopts are related to the local context of the learning in contrast to the conception of knowledge that would appear to be a more general trait.

The first fairly long section of this chapter explores the concept of the approach to learning with reference to the literature. The second and third sections bring in the subject matter of the previous chapters: the conception of knowledge and the role of emotion in framing learning and we consider the relationship of approach to both of these. The last section suggests that the approach that is adopted to learning by a learner is likely to be a culmination of a variety of influences that include the conception of knowledge and emotional state. In other words, the learner's conception of knowledge and emotional state may sometimes influence learning by affecting the approach to learning adopted by the learner. There is discussion on the possible interrelationships of these influences on the framing of learning. The chapter concludes with a short section that anticipates subsequent chapters on reflective and experiential learning.

Deep and surface approaches to learning

The significance of the approach that learners take to learning tasks for the results of the learning process has been a key development in research on learning. These ideas were summarized in an earlier book (Moon, 1999a) and accounts that are particularly helpful are found in Candy (1991), Wilkes (1997), Marton and Booth (1997), Marton *et al.* (1997), Trigwell and Prosser (1999), Biggs (1999), and Entwistle *et al.* (2002). We describe these briefly below.

Research in the late 1970s in Sweden began to suggest that a major variable in learning, particularly in formal education, is learners' understanding of the nature of the learning process and their conception of any learning task itself. This influences the approach that they might tend to adopt towards that task. The research culminated in the descriptions of approaches to learning as 'surface' or 'deep'. In a typical surface approach, the general intention of the learner is to 'absorb' (in her terms) as much of the content as it is necessary for the task at hand. The learner might do this by memorizing material in a routine manner without reflecting on it or the underpinning purposes or structure of it or without relating it to previous learning or knowledge. A consequence of this approach may be a superficial 'learning', but the learner might have difficulty in reiterating it in forms other than the manner in which it was initially learnt. She is unlikely to be very interested in the material because interest would tend to drive her towards making sense of it (and taking a deep approach). A surface approach is not necessarily associated with low intelligence. It may also be a consequence of the learner's belief that this is the 'proper way' to learn or it can be a consequence of a state of anxiety or pressure, for example, in learning for assessment situations. Vicious circles can be set up with a surface approach proving inadequate for tasks at hand, and the learner consequently becoming anxious and perpetuating her inadequate approach.

In contrast to the surface approach, a deep approach to material of learning is characterized by an intention in the learner to understand the material of learning, seeking the meaning and understanding the ideas in it. The learner who takes a deep approach seeks the underpinning principles and endeavours to relate the material to previous knowledge and understandings. She may question the logic and argument. A learner who is interested in a topic is likely to take a deep approach and it appears to be harder for learners to sustain this approach when they are anxious or under pressure (Entwistle, 1996).

Entwistle (1988) illustrates the approaches to learning from studies of students reading an article. Those who adopted a surface approach had the intention to 'memorize those parts of the article that they considered important in view of the questions they anticipated afterwards. Their focus of attention was thus limited to the specific facts or pieces of disconnected information that was rote learned'. In contrast, those who took a deep approach to learning:

started with the intention of understanding the meaning of the article, [they] questioned the author's arguments, and related them both to previous knowledge and to personal experience, and tried to determine the extent to which the author's conclusions seemed to be justified by the evidence presented.

A particular significance of this work on approaches to learning is the manner in which it is conducted. Earlier studies of learning had often confused the teaching and learning processes in formal educational situations, exploring learning through the activities of teaching and instruction or within the learner's environment. In studies of approach to learning, the learner and her process of learning became central with a recognition that what is important is not how others, even relevant teachers see or design a learning task, but how the learner sees it and how she responds to it. This phenomenographical approach involves discovering the learner's perceptions of the task at hand and thus it becomes possible to recognize these considerable differences in approach to learning and the consequences in the effectiveness of performance.

There are many examples of how this work on approaches to learning has been applied. Most of the work, in particular in the early days, was based on student work on texts. However, it has subsequently been related to many other areas of student learning and as this has occurred, the ideas have been expanded and refined. For example, Hounsell (1997) looked at the approaches that students take to writing essays and how the approach adopted relates to the quality of the essay produced.

Hounsell's findings are supported by work using the SOLO taxonomy ('structure of learning outcomes', Biggs and Collis, 1982). SOLO is a model that is most easily applied to student writing, though has been applied much more widely. It is a hierarchy of five levels of complexity in the structure of represented learning. Written work that characterizes the simplest stages takes few aspects of a topic and simply lists them. At the stage of greatest complexity ('extended abstract'), learners write coherently within a structured whole and they are able to generalize principles from their work to other situations. In a crucial piece of research, Van Rossum and Schenk (1984) demonstrated that the taking of a deep approach to learning was necessary for learners to reach the more complex structures implied by SOLO, and that the learning achieved in those taking a surface approach was not adequate for this. Moon (1999a) used the ideas from SOLO and approaches to learning to link the process of learning with the form of representation of learning. She used the term 'best possible representation' to suggest that the choice of approach to a task acted as a kind of limiting factor (Odum, 1968) on any representation of the learning. Moon's model made a distinction between the approach adopted to learning and the representation of learning in a structured form and we return to it in Chapter 6.

In later work by Biggs in Australia and at Lancaster University, inventories were developed to standardize the questions that were asked of students about their study (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983; Biggs, 1993). The sequence of

questions was shown to be a reliable means of determining how students view their study and how they intend to approach a task. In the course of this work another apparent approach to learning was identified and labelled the 'strategic' approach (see also Miller and Parlett, 1974). The strategic approach differs qualitatively from deep and surface approaches. While the latter two are more closely identified with reference to the quality of the learning, the strategic approach concerns the way in which a learner chooses to tackle a task. The aim of a strategic learner is to succeed, particularly in assessment tasks. She will take a deep approach if she perceives that this is the method of success but if she can 'get by' with the use of memorization, she will learn in that way. Her commitment is to success on the programme, not necessarily to interest or the nature of the learning. The 'strategic' approach seems not to be the same as deep and surface approaches, but is a quality that steers the choice of deep and surface approaches within formal settings – a superordinate frame of reference. There seems to be plenty of evidence that modern learners in higher education need to be strategic. Passion about their own interests in a discipline will not enable them to progress successfully through a modular programme in which there is frequent assessment (Svensson, 1997).

The distinctions between deep and surface approaches to learning are, of course, stereotyped in order to display the distinction between them. This has become evident in the application of these ideas to Asian students in academic education. Marton and Booth (1997) indicate that memorization can be involved in a deep approach to learning where the intention of the learner is to use it to understand the meaning of the material. While memorizing is associated with surface approaches to learning in Western education, repeatedly memorizing the same ideas to study was associated in research with the reviewing of different facets and different ways of seeing the same idea in the Asian students (Kember, 1996). In this way the Asian students attained understanding as it was 'built up stage by stage' (Marton and Booth, 1997: p. 44). The students saw their methods as enabling them to apply the ideas to other situations. What we cannot know is how much students are relating other prior knowledge to that which they are memorizing. However, the important ideas that emerge from this work are that forms of memorization can be a means to understanding when used in accordance with the intention to understand.

The deep approach, used in a reasonably strategic manner, not only tends to produce higher quality learning in assessment tasks but enables the recall of content in a more effective manner after a period of time (Marton and Saljo, 1984; Prosser and Miller, 1989). It could be said that the material of learning is stored more efficiently by those taking a deep approach because it has had the effect of changing conceptions, rather than being assimilated as relatively isolated ideas that might be 'filed' inappropriately (Harvey and Knight, 1996). Students taking a deep approach to their learning and who are reasonably strategic tend to achieve higher classes of degree in formal education

(Ramsden, 1992). However, it has been observed that taking a predominantly deep approach to learning does not lead as reliably to good results as the taking of a surface approach relates to attainment of poor results (*ibid.*).

The literature on approaches to learning has never suggested that learners consistently adopt one approach. Ramsden opens a chapter on approaches to learning with six quotations about deep and surface approaches to work in different subjects in higher education. The reader is invited to guess how many students made the comments. They were, in fact, made by three students, each illustrating a deep and a surface approach with their approach depending largely on their perception of programme requirements. We should probably be able to assume that most students who have reached higher education are capable of taking a deep approach. However, they often manage reasonably well with a surface approach for much of their study.

The nature of the encouragement for learners to work in one way or another is an important matter. We have already mentioned that the learner's conception of the process of learning is important. However, there are other factors. Since we are taking a phenomenographical stance and the learner's perception is all-important in determining the approach, we could say that the encouragement is part of the learning environment. This could include any teachers, their teaching or assessment processes, and the physical, sociological and psychological surroundings of the learning. The learning environment is anything that the learner herself perceives as influencing the manner in which she learns. Generalizations about the environment of learning are therefore difficult to make. For one learner the noise of a busy road outside can be distracting enough to mean that she adopts a surface approach to a task when she knows she needs to understand it well. Meanwhile her friend in the same room on the same task adopts a surface approach because she thinks that this is adequate. Marton and Booth (1997) discuss aspects of the learner's perception in greater detail.

Emotion and approaches to learning

Chapter 3 lists different ways in which emotion relates to learning. We suggest that emotion can affect learning partly through its more direct effect on the approach adopted by learners. A study by Entwistle and Entwistle (1997) illustrates aspects of this. A group of students was interviewed during the revision period for their examinations. Students who adopted a deep approach indicated that their learning gave them a sense of satisfaction. Sometimes it was an 'aha' response as 'confusion on a particular topic was replaced by insight'. Sometimes it was a sense of achievement – of now being able to understand something that had previously not been clear. There was a sense of 'provisional wholeness' in their learning, a sense that something was 'clicking into place or locking into a pattern', though there was

potential for more learning at a later stage. Students who adopted a deep approach were able to talk about their learning with a sense of confidence that they could explain it and apply it elsewhere. The idea that there is a particular quality of learning that must have taken place in order that the subject can explain her learning in a coherent manner is important for the later development of these ideas about learning. In contrast to the deep approach group in the same study, the surface approach group did not feel confident enough to explain their learning and in emotional terms, they were apt to feel panicky and anxious about the prospect of the forthcoming assessment. They might have thought that they 'knew' the material, but either their sense of 'knowing' itself, or their judgement as to the kind of 'knowing' required was defective. They probably did 'know' isolated bits of information, but not in a manner that they could relate them to whole ideas, or apply them. In this way, emotion seems to be generated as a result of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the approach adopted.

A second form of relationship between emotion and approach is illustrated above in the tendency of students under the effects of stress to adopt a surface approach to their learning. It is frequently an experience in formal education that students will start new work with the intention to learn in a meaningful manner, taking a deep approach, but as the pressures build for assessment tasks, examinations, and so on, they 'surface' and increasingly struggle to get by using memorizing. For a student who intends to take a deep approach, or who is interested in the subject matter, this is a disturbing process that, in itself, brings more distress and initiates the vicious circles described earlier.

The work of Entwistle and Entwistle (1997) seems also to illustrate what we have termed emotional insight (p. 50) in relation to the approach adopted. The students used metaphors such as learning 'clicking into place' when they used a deep approach.

Approaches to learning and conceptions of the structure of knowledge

There is anecdotal evidence of a relationship between conception of knowledge (see Chapter 2) and the approach adopted to learning, particularly where quotations from learners are included in the literature on the development of conceptions of knowledge. As illustrated earlier, Baxter Magolda's (1992) work uses many quotations. For example, at entry to college, Gwen was at the stage of Absolute learning (p. 38) and she provides a good example of a surface approach to learning. She describes how she learns in relation to her note-taking:

I try to keep ideas real separate . . . when I'm taking my notes . . . so I can visually see a breakage between ideas and subtopics of a main idea. I think

that when you read over your notes so many times, you remember what they look like – so sometimes you almost find yourself looking in your mind as to what the page looked like and how your notes were arranged.

(Baxter Magolda, 1992, p. 31)

Barry, who was at the 'Independent' stage (p. 38) in his conception of knowledge and further on in his college career, says of seminar situations that provide a good illustration of a deep approach to learning:

I want to be challenged. I am in a gender theory course that has a lot of women's studies students in it. I feel challenged. My own politics are closely like theirs but I don't have the background . . . that they do. When I speak up, I really have to concentrate on what I think, communicate it effectively and then, if there is a discrepancy between what I and what someone else thinks, then I feel I can grow.

(*ibid.*, p. 53)

More links between the approach to learning and conceptions of knowledge become apparent when learners' ideas of the nature of learning are considered. The stage of conception of knowledge is likely to affect the way in which learners perceive the process of learning. There rarely is more than a passing reference to this (for example, Beaty *et al.*, 1997 and Morgan, 1995). Mostly the reference is to Perry's work only and not to that of the other writers on conceptions of knowledge who have both confirmed and expanded Perry's model (see Chapter 2). Entwistle and Walker (2002) make more detailed reference than most others. They talk of the development of a 'nested hierarchy' of conceptions of the nature of learning. This implies that the sophisticated learner can have a more flexible approach to learning through her 'expanded awareness' of the nature of knowledge and how it is constructed. They relate Perry's work to the outcomes of interviews with adults of varying levels of educational attainments (cited in Saljo, 1979). Saljo considered that the subjects displayed different conceptions of learning – from learning as 'acquiring information' to learning as 'making sense of ideas and the real world' and later as 'developing as a person' (*ibid.*, p. 18). While these are conceptions of learning, Entwistle and Walker see them as relating to the epistemological sophistication of the individual. In other words, if knowledge is seen as absolute (lowest epistemological stages), then learning is a matter of being able to memorize and reproduce it and this characterizes a surface approach. If knowledge is recognized to be constructed, then it is a part of the person, and in learning the material of learning and the existing knowledge can become transformed. This corresponds to a deep approach.

Meyers (1986) makes a different link between the work on conceptions of knowledge (referring to Perry's work) and approaches to learning in his recognition that the ability to think critically is limited by the epistemological stage of the learner. More sophisticated thinking ability would be associated

with a meaningful understanding of subject matter (a deep approach). Meyers considers that 'the real value of Perry's work is the insight it offers into the reasons why most students do not think critically' (ibid., p. 97). Helpfully he suggests that students can be more able to think critically in one area of study than another. He gives the example of a student who was very able to think critically in an accountancy programme, but was not critical in his religious belief system. This inequality of progress in different areas of learning invites further investigation.

There is also an inter-relationship between the learner's conception of knowledge and the repertoire of choices of behaviour that are present for her. If she understands knowledge to be 'right' or 'wrong' and she sees the teacher as a purveyor the 'right', then the task of learning is to learn what the teacher says and, at best, simply to use it to modify previous knowledge. On the other hand, learners who see knowledge to be constructed have a greater repertoire. They can question the material of teaching. New material of learning can either be 'added' to what they know in an unquestioning (surface) manner or they relate it to what they know already and can think it through, perhaps changing how they construe broader knowledge areas in a deep approach. The approach that they adopt will need to take context and purpose into account, and strategic skills are needed to support this judgement in formal contexts where what is learnt is tested by specific methods.

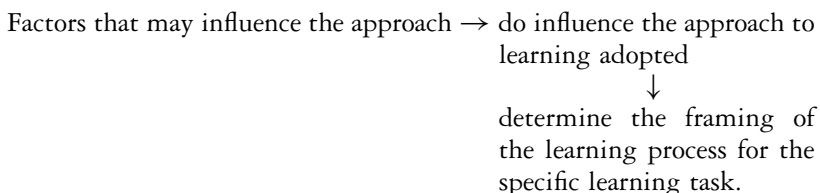
The framing of learning and the approach adopted: an overview

This chapter on approaches to learning as a form of framing learning has suggested many factors that can influence the manner in which a learner approaches her studies in a formal setting. In some senses they could all be summarized as 'the environment of learning' in that anything could be perceived by the learner as an incentive to adopt a particular approach to her learning. However, this generalization is not always helpful, and in the formal learning situation there are some very obvious elements that consistently influence a learner's approach. We draw the following from the text above as factors that may influence the approach that a learner adopts to a task. Some factors that may influence the approach to a task are:

- the learner's conception of the learning process;
- influences of any teaching or assessment requirements;
- perceptions of the demands of this learning task;
- personal aims and outcomes associated with the task;
- personal prior knowledge of the subject or subject matter;
- the learner's emotional orientation in terms of self-management;

- her experience of the current physical or psychological environment;
- relevant learning habits;
- the learner's conception of the structure of knowledge;
- the learner's emotional orientation in relation to the task.

Clearly, whether a learner seeks to engage with the meaning of a task, or simply tries to retain the surface characteristics of it can be very significant in determining what is learnt, how well it is learnt and what can be done with the knowledge. Any one of these factors that influence approach alone could persuade the learner to adopt one approach or the other towards a particular learning task. In a situation of formal assessment, for example, the nature of the assessment task is likely to be influential. If the learner is very stressed at the time, stress may be the prime influence. So, in relating the approach that a learner adopts to the framing of a learning task, we could say that one 'route' of influence is:



However, this is simplistic and denies any separate influence of what we have listed as the 'factors that influence approach' in the learning situation. For example, we have already suggested that factors such as the learner's conception of the structure of knowledge and emotional orientation can influence the way in which a learner frames her learning independently of the approach adopted. Additionally, we have suggested that the whole theoretical background of the material on the approaches to learning is based on formal educational situations (Bowden and Marton, 1998). In formal situations, expectations of the quality of learning are overt through teaching processes and assessment tasks and there is encouragement for deeper engagement with subject matter. In other words, 'approach' is a concept largely tied to formal learning. To broaden our context to all learning suggests that it would not be appropriate to consider that these factors only influence the framing of learning through the approach that a learner adopts, though sometimes, this may be the case. We can redraw the map to suggest that the approach to learning takes the role of an intermediary variable, using the factors discussed above:

Factors that may influence the approach or the framing of a learning task

- influences of any teaching or assessment requirements;
- perceptions of the demands of this learning task;
- personal aims and outcomes associated with the task;
- personal prior knowledge of the subject or subject matter;
- the learner's emotional orientation in terms of self-management;
- the learner's emotional orientation in relation to the task;
- her experience of the current physical or psychological environment;
- relevant learning habits;
- the learner's conception of the learning process;
- the learner's conception of the structure of knowledge.



determine approach to learning



determine the framing of the learning process for the learning task

In this revised map, the variables listed above (e.g., the learner's emotional orientation to the task) may influence the approach that the learner takes to the learning task but independently may also influence the engagement with the task (e.g., through bringing about increased confidence or uncertainty).

As with the variables that affect the framing of learning, the approach adopted by the learner relates not to the content of what the learner learns, but to the way in which she perceives and then enacts the learning process which is the external experience of this learning. The variables listed influence her internal experience of the learning task and the cues in the task determine to which of those she pays attention. They will be those which are relevant to her internal experience. Any variation in the external experience in comparison with the internal experience may mean that she learns to tackle the task in a different manner.

The framing of learning in relation to learning, reflective and experiential learning

We now return to the 'bigger picture' and the notion that it is the experience of a learner that determines ultimately what she learns and the approach that she adopts to the learning. We cannot influence a learner other than through

what she experiences, and we cannot make her experience something in a particular way though these processes can be 'engineered' with an intention that they will influence the experience of a learner. Such 'engineering' could be said to extend from brainwashing, to training, to classroom teaching, to counselling, to the presentation of documentary programmes in the media. These are all attempts to influence the experience of a learner such that she learns in a particular manner. What may vary most here is the nature and level of the intention of the agent who attempts to influence and the differences in technique may reside largely in the different frames of reference within which the material of teaching is presented. The next chapter explores in more detail the nature of interaction between these external influences on the learner and the process of learning (mediation of learning). This is in recognition of the fact that one of the perceived characteristics of reflective and experiential learning is that they are 'untaught'.

Part II

Exploring reflective and experiential learning

Chapter 5

Reflective and experiential learning

Taking stock

Introduction

This chapter performs a number of functions. It could be said to have a ‘pivotal’ role in the book. The first section is a summary of the generic view of learning that has been developed in the earlier chapters of this book. This includes vocabulary that will be used later in discussions of reflective and experiential learning. The second section is an overview of the exploration of reflective and experiential learning in the chapters ahead. The third section is concerned with one feature that reflective and experiential learning both have in common – that both occur relatively independently of a teaching (mediation) process.

A summary of the generic view of learning

Important vocabulary in this section is emphasized in *italics*. We have indicated that the focus of this book is on the relatively conscious learning of ideas and largely not the learning of physical skills. We could say that a person learns when she retains an idea in such a manner that she can use it to guide new learning. Our interest has been on the nature of good quality learning that contributes to a person’s knowledge.

We describe learning in relation to a simple example. The learner is learning about the leaf of a tree that she thinks that she has not seen before. The process of learning involves the bringing to bear of relevant prior knowledge

and experience of tree leaves on the current *external experience* of the leaf and its context – the tree. This is the process of *assimilation*. In trying to identify the new leaf, the learner focuses her attention on different aspects of the leaf and its nature in a process that is guided by her *internal experience*. This will be a matter of contrasting them with other generalities – in a process of distinction of many *figures from many grounds* that is driven in a relatively controlled manner by the invocation of different *frames of reference*. Initially, for example, the learner might be seeing this leaf in relation to other leaves on other trees. She might look at the leaf in terms of its physical structure, in terms of how it seems similar to or different from other leaves that she knows and her knowledge of taxonomy. She might look at the leaf and tree in the context of its apparent ecology.

The learner is noticing, in this process of shifting figures and grounds, the *variations* between the content and relationships of characteristics that she has in her internal experience, and what she observes to be new or different in this leaf. Her previous (internal) experience will enable her to use her frames of reference in order to focus on relevant features, with relevance guided by her purpose for the learning. For example, if she has reasonable prior experience of leaves, she will focus not only on the leaf colour because the colour may not indicate the species. If the leaf is yellow, it might be autumn, or the leaf might be diseased, or yellow because it is yellow by nature. These are all frames to be examined. *Appresentation* will mean that if she can only see some aspects of the tree and leaf (e.g., if she is looking at a picture of the unidentified leaf and tree in a book), she will ‘fill in’ more details than those to which she has current and direct access. When the learner develops knowledge of the leaf, she changes the structure of her concepts, thus changing her *cognitive structure*. As a result of assimilation of the ideas about the leaf, the cognitive structure may be modified in order to adapt to the new material of learning in the process of *accommodation*. The learner’s general view of the nature of leaves will be expanded or modified in relation to its prior status.

Also affecting the framing of learning will be factors of a more general nature such as *emotion*. For example, there may be a sense of excitement (the tree is very unusual) or the learner might be under pressure of time and therefore frames the whole process of learning with an attitude of expediency.

The discussion of learning as a general topic has been presented in this book with its focus on experiential and reflective learning for two main reasons. First, experiential and reflective learning are forms of learning. As such, we can only understand them by referring to learning in more general terms. They are figures in the ground of learning and trying to understand them without reference to the broader frame in which they reside can only lead to a partial picture. As we have mentioned previously, there are some well-known attempts to identify the nature of experiential learning as a cycle of processes (cycle of experiential learning, see Kolb, 1984) with many wider

implications drawn. Out of the context of other learning, the model and therefore its implications are not well founded.

The second reason concerns, in particular, the three chapters that explore the framing of learning because, in different ways, they have specific relevance to later discussions on reflective and experiential forms of learning.

An overview of reflective and experiential learning (Chapters 5–9)

To start the process of teasing out the meaning of reflective and experiential learning, we return to the rationale for considering these two areas of learning in one book. We said in the Introduction that they are both topical, and indeed, increasingly topical as aspects or representatives of what are called ‘employability skills’ in higher education (Moon, 2003). In addition, neither is clearly defined. Two people, even if they are working with the same learners, may have different concepts for the terms and their role in learning. Confused students may be the first to notice. The concepts for these forms of learning need to be better defined. We need to consider if the terms represent single or multiple activities and while the meanings are clearly inter-linked, their actual relationship is not obvious. In considering both, we need to clarify how reflective learning is involved in experiential learning and whether it is essential or only sometimes involved. All the time, we are relating these specific forms of learning to the generic view that has been developed in the earlier chapters.

This part of the book consists of five chapters that focus on reflective and experiential learning. In the current chapter we explore a feature in common between reflective and experiential learning: that they are both conducted without the direct mediation of a teaching process.

Chapter 6 focuses on reflective learning, forming a basis for it in the previous work of the author and then extending both the literature review and relationship of reflective learning to the generic view of learning. Reflective learning is interpreted as a function of what has been described earlier as internal experience. Chapter 7 covers a new perspective on reflective learning – the depth of reflection. It provides a framework to describe and form a basis for assessment of depth of reflection. Depth is related to the framing of learning that was described in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. In Chapter 8 we focus on experiential learning, first of all reviewing the literature and then considering it as a form of generic learning (Chapter 9). Finally, in this group of chapters, we explore the relationships between experiential and reflective learning – how much they overlap and to what degree they are separate and have a distinct identity.

The Resources section continues the exploration of reflective and experiential learning in a more practical manner.

Reflective and experiential learning and the mediation of learning

One main factor that brings reflective and experiential learning together in a significant way for the management of education is that both are forms of learning that are relatively independent of mediation. In this way, this learning extends beyond formal education and becomes very important in self-managed continuing professional development. These forms of learning also characterize much of the extensively ignored learning that happens in life beyond the formal systems of education – what we call everyday learning in this book. If reflective and experiential learning are relatively independent of teaching, we need to question the implications of that fact.

Instruction or teaching is essentially a means of providing, for the learner, material that has been processed either in order that the learner will be more easily able to assimilate it or in order to challenge the learner to learn more about learning itself. Laurillard (1993) used the term ‘mediated learning’ for situations in which learning is aided directly by another person or through the use of a medium that simplifies the material of teaching. Thus, there may be a teacher or an instructor present, or a computer program or a textbook (that has been created by a teacher) may be used. The idea of ‘mediation’ is useful because it focuses on the material of teaching rather than on the activities of the teacher. The characteristics of mediation in the learner’s process of learning are made clearer when they are related to unmediated situations. In an unmediated situation, the learner is responsible for choosing what to learn about something. We explore this in relation to an example, in this case a learner is attempting to learn about an insect that she has come across, an insect that looks like a bee.

The learner looks at the insect. She might be seeing shape, colour and movement, hearing sound and movement, recognizing different patterns of behaviour, and so on. For a reasonably observant learner, gaining knowledge about the insect will entail initial effort in recognizing it as distinct from other insects such as bees, wasps and flies (figure against ground). It might involve noticing that there are several species of the insect and that they can look quite different. In most learning situations, the learner will have a purpose for learning and this will play a part in framing her attention to relevant aspects of the object of learning and it may affect and be affected by the approach that the learner takes to the learning. In addition, we have suggested that factors to do with emotions and the learner’s conception of knowledge may also influence the manner in which the learner goes about the task. She may tackle the learning in a manner that accords with her disciplinary background, for example, a scientist might tackle the process in a more scientifically systematic manner than a colleague from the humanities. In essence, in an unmediated situation, the learner herself will decide how to direct her attention through engagement of frames of reference that she decides to use

either in informed or less informed ways. They will organize her learning process and the manner in which she accommodates to the new ideas. As part of this process, if it is to be effective, she will be evaluating the amount of the learning and its reliability in relation to her purposes or intents. These do not necessarily stay the same. Over the duration of learning, she might be getting cold or hungry, finding the activity less appealing than earlier and hence modifying her intentions.

There are many different ways in which mediation can operate but all the time it will be an attempt to modify the experience of the learner (Marton and Booth, 1997). It is not the material of learning, itself, that is mediated. This suggests a revision of the term 'mediated learning' to 'mediated (learning) experience'. We can still say that the process of learning is mediated and that teaching is one means by which the learner's process of learning is mediated. As we said in Chapter 1, teaching is a separate activity from the act of learning and its intention is to guide and facilitate learning.

The teacher's role in mediating learner experience can take many different forms, all with different roles in the simplification and guiding process. Mediation may be a face-to-face situation such as teaching or lecturing or advising. It may be a distance learning programme, which can direct the learner to a range of different learning activities. It may be in the form of printed material – textbooks, books or television. Mediation may also occur in the provision of assessment criteria only, with little direction before the learners begin to learn. The assessment criteria then have the function of guiding the learning required. This is the process used in National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).

To take a step further in looking at the role of mediation in relation to learning, we use the example of a lecture on the insect discussed above. The lecture can perform some of the following mediating activities with regard to the learner's processes – all the time, guiding her towards appropriate frames of reference and guiding her in how to manage the framing of her learning about the insect. The lecturer can do the following:

- take into account what she perceives to be the content of the learner's internal experience of the insect so that the level of complexity of the material of teaching is appropriate;
- simplify and provide structure or classification in the material of teaching;
- highlight variation between what she perceives to be the learner's internal experience, bearing in mind what she perceives to be the current external experiences;
- act as a resource for clarification so that the learner can work to achieve coherence in her cognitive structure;
- signal to the learner what she believes to be the appropriate conceptions of the knowledge; the emotional connotations and the approach the learner should adopt for the learning process;

- enable the learner to know to what standard the learning should be performed (often with reference to a task in which the learning is to be represented by the learner).

Essentially what we are calling ‘mediation of learning experience’ is any act in which the material of teaching is modified with the intention of affecting the learning situation of a learner. This could involve simplification or it may mean that the material is made more challenging in order that the learner’s processes of learning are challenged. Alternatively, it may involve suggestion to the learner of how to use her learning processes differently.

Some would say that there is a clear division between the learner having direct (‘raw’) experience of something (e.g., the bee-like insect described above) and the mediation of the learning experience (e.g., Laurillard, 1993). This is the point at which we can start to look at what we mean by ‘experience’ in terms that are relevant to learning in order to lay a base for consideration of ‘experiential learning’ later in the chapter.

Mediation and experiential learning

The idea that there is a dividing line that can be drawn between situations of direct and mediated experience is attractive and tends to underpin many assumptions made about what is called ‘experiential’ learning. The idea follows on from the assumption that there is a different process in experiential learning from other forms of learning, which is then described separately in the literature. However, the notion of a strict dividing line becomes more problematic in examples such as the following, which is drawn from a discussion of this issue in Moon (1999a). The example considers different ways of learning about ancient texts, such as the following:

- 1 An interested adult visits a museum to view, handle and read from an ancient text.
- 2 An interested adult visits a museum to view, handle and read from a facsimile of an ancient text.
- 3 A theology student handles and examines an ancient text in its original form.
- 4 The student listens to a taped version of the ancient text and writes notes as she listens.
- 5 The student examines and reads an edited copy of the ancient text.
- 6 The student attends a class in which there is a presentation about the text with a teacher quoting from an ancient copy of it.
- 7 The student attends a tutorial class in which there is a presentation about the text by another student, with the student quoting from an ancient copy of it.

- 8 Students are given some specific assessment criteria that relate to their learning or knowledge of a text.

Which of the above are experiential and which are mediated? We could say that 1 is experiential. We might say that 2 is experiential but it is not quite the same. We might say that 3 is experiential but then in the context of her programme of study, the student might have been given very clear directions as to what to read and how to experience the reading of the text and then it might not be experiential learning. Number 4 is mediated if the intended learning is focused on the nature of the actual text as an object, but not if the intended experience is about the learner making sense from the language and words of the text. Number 5 is mediated if the task is about the ancient text but it is not mediated if the task is about making sense of the ideas presented and, perhaps relating them to those in another text. We could probably say that 6 is mediated, but then what of 7? Is 7 mediated for the students who listen and not mediated for the student who presents the material? What, also of 8 which might seem to involve both mediated and experiential learning?

Whether these situations exemplify mediated learning or learning from direct experience depends to some extent on the purpose of the learning. Any number of examples could be given, but in the end we could provide plausible rationales for many of them to exemplify mediated experiences of learning or direct experience. We suggest, therefore, that there is a continuum between the process of learning from direct experience with no help or support given to the learner and the processes of learning from mediated material but the nature of the continuum is likely to vary with the purpose for the learning. An additional complication is that 'purpose' can apply to the intentions of the teacher and to the intentions of the learner though the teacher could put huge effort into mediating a learner's learning experience with the learner being completely unaffected.

We take this a step further: it could be said that learners mediate their own experience through the processes of bringing prior experience into the present, and bringing them to bear on the new material of learning. It is perhaps salutary to remember that once we have engaged in the process of learning, the encoding of the experience in the language of the brain is a multiple pattern of nerve impulses and chemical reactions in the brain. It is in the same form whether we are learning about volcanoes by sitting beside an erupting volcano or learning about one from being taught in a classroom, or watching television. It is worth remembering this when encountering the plentiful literature that states that 'learning by from direct experience is best'. The same reasoning applies to learning through different media, for example, 'e-learning' or the lecture. Without exception, the most important medium is the nerve impulse. It might be reasonable to assume that the learning from sitting by a volcano will be richer, with many more connections and connotations and probably the role of emotion in learning would be much

stronger than would be the case in a lecture about earthquakes. Some teachers are better than others at evoking emotion in their mediating actions and for some learners, the involvement of emotion will be more relevant than for others.

On the basis of the reasoning above, we can consider what some characteristics of good mediation of learning are likely to be:

- clarity about the purpose of the learning and the kind of understanding that the teacher hopes the learner will achieve (i.e., the result of the learning);
- the mediation process anticipates the nature of relevant prior experience of the learners, in other words, the internal experience that they are likely to bring to bear on a new situation, and guides them to bringing this into the current learning situation;
- the anticipation of the manner in which learners perceive the process of learning so that mediation processes can guide them to take an appropriate approach to learning (see Chapter 4).

Mediation of the experiences of learning, reflective and experiential learning

This is not the whole story about learning in formal situations, or about the mediation of learning but it serves to question many beliefs about the relationship between learners, experience and reflective and experiential learning.

In the section above we have described the processes of mediation in the experience of learning. The logic of this is that a defining characteristic of reflective and experiential learning in formal learning situations is that there is relatively little direct mediation. It is not possible to say that there is no mediation because there is usually some level of stated purpose to activities in which people learn in formal education and this is a form of mediation because it guides learning. Largely, therefore, reflective and experiential learning are forms of learning that are recognized to take place with little mediation of the learning. There are relatively few directions given by a teacher or other agent about the details of the learning – though a general purpose may be set.

Chapter 6

The nature of reflective learning

Introduction

Reflective learning is the topic of this chapter and the aim of the chapter is to relate reflective learning to the picture built of generic learning in the earlier chapters in the book. The first section of the chapter is concerned with clarifying the terminology such as reflection, reflective learning, reflective writing and reflective practice. The focus is on reflection and reflective learning. The second section is a review of new literature on these areas. In the third section the different forms of reflection suggested by the literature and common observation are defined in relation to previous work conducted by the author. This forms a basis for a consideration of the relationship of reflection and learning (fourth section). In the fifth section we deal with some common beliefs about reflection.

With the development of a clearer picture of reflective learning, it is possible to move on to a consideration of how it relates to the generic view of learning developed in the earlier chapters of this book. Against this material we can consider if learning can either be 'reflective' or 'non-reflective'. The next section explores the role of frames of reference in different forms of reflection and it explains how learning from reflection is problematic – particularly when formalized in educational situations. The final section of the chapter provides a link to the subject matter of Chapter 7, which, in essence, follows on the exploration of the nature of reflective learning through consideration of another dimension of reflection – the depth of reflection.

A discussion of terminology

The concept of reflection is represented by a number of different words that are in current parlance. We talk of 'reflection' itself, 'reflective learning', 'reflective writing' and 'reflective practice'. 'Reflection', as a process, seems to lie somewhere around the notion of learning and thinking. We reflect in order to learn something, or we learn as a result of reflecting – so 'reflective learning' as a term, simply emphasizes the intention to learn as a result of reflection. The content of 'reflective writing' is not a direct mirror of what happens in the head, but it is a representation of the process within a chosen medium – in this case, writing. The representation of reflection in the form of writing is likely to differ from that represented in other ways such as speech or in a drawing. In making a representation of personal reflection, we shape and model the content of our reflection in different ways and learn also from the process itself. In other words, there is secondary learning.

'Reflective practice' is a relatively new phrase that came into use particularly as a result of the work of Donald Schön (1983, 1987). Schön's first book was actually called *The Reflective Practitioner*. 'Reflective practice' emphasizes the use of reflection in professional or other complex activities as a means of coping with situations that are ill-structured and/or unpredictable. The idea of reflective practice was developed initially in nursing and teacher education and is increasingly being applied across the professions. It is, in essence, a professionalized form of 'reflective learning', but any kind of definition has remained problematic (Lyons, 1999).

On the basis of the reasoning above, we will be using the terms 'reflection' and 'reflective learning' interchangeably as the main terminology, recognizing that 'reflective writing' and 'reflective practice' represent expansions of the ideas in different directions and these terms will be used appropriately.

The literature of reflection and reflective learning

A major summary of the literature on reflection is contained in Moon (1999a). It was further developed in Moon (1999b), which focused on an application of reflection and reflective writing in learning journals. This latter book reviewed issues such as the nature of learning from reflective writing, reflection in journals in different disciplines and areas of work (e.g., professional development) and how to help learners to start reflecting.

Since the end of the 1990s not only have ideas about reflection continued to spread across professions in their professional development agendas (e.g., Burns and Bulman, 2000; Taylor and White, 2000; McAlpine and Weston, 2002) but they have also crossed many disciplines in undergraduate studies

(e.g., Stewart 2002; Lowy, 2002). Now there is a great deal of literature available on how to introduce reflection into disciplines (e.g., Jones, 2002; Race, 2002), or how to embed it in programmes (e.g., Knowles *et al.*, 2001). In addition, there is a wealth of material about reflection in the context of personal development planning (PDP) which is being introduced across whole institutions at present (Moon, 2001b). Reflection also plays an important part in employability skills and student work experience (Moon, 2003). Hinnett (2003) has recently provided a general review of the applied uses of reflection in two linked papers.

There has been some concern to continue to relate reflection to learning and to understand the relationship between reflection and effective behaviour (Ferry and Ross-Gordon, 1998; McAlpine and Weston, 2002). Related to this is an increasing awareness of a 'depth dimension' of reflection (see Chapter 7) and the recognition that superficial reflection may not be effective as a means of learning (Mezirow, 1998; Kember *et al.*, 1999, 2000; Kim, 1999). These ideas are developed in this chapter and in Chapter 7. In a very different area, there is also increasing acceptance of the value of reflection in qualitative research methods (e.g., various topics in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). What is still substantially missing from the literature, however, is good empirical evidence that the development of reflection in academic contexts has long-term and definite benefit to the majority of learners (Mackintosh, 1998).

There is still relatively little literature that directly and explicitly links and explores reflection and learning from experience. However, the work of McAlpine and Weston (2002) is a valuable example. It is small-scale, but detailed and, on an empirical basis, predicts much of the theory presented in this chapter. McAlpine and Weston were primarily interested in the reflective processes of exemplary teachers and how they used their prior experiences to reflect on and to maintain the quality of their teaching in an ongoing manner. Central to the activities of these teachers were processes of monitoring and decision-making in relation to their goals. They used a range of areas of knowledge in order to maintain these processes. For example, they used knowledge of the learners, of pedagogy and of the content of their teaching. In this process they were observing and learning about the principles of their action, which further guided more teaching. McAlpine and Weston say:

Transforming experiential and tacit knowledge into principled explicit knowledge [in this case] about teaching requires . . . intentional reflection for the purpose of making sense of and learning from experience for the purpose of improvement . . . Reflection requires linking existing knowledge to an analysis of the relationship between current experience and future action . . . They go on to say that reflection aids in the reflective processes themselves, thereby building or expanding knowledge.

(2002, p. 69)

Some definitions of reflection and reflective learning

Moon (1999a) set out to clarify the nature of reflection, having observed the extraordinary complexity of the literature in this area. Some of the literature seems to suggest that reflection is no more than a form of thinking (the 'common-sense view of reflection', see below). However, that does not accord with the manner in which reflection is often operationalized in formal education (the academic view of reflection, see below). Enormously complicating the situation, too, is the literature from various disciplines, including education, professional development and psychology, that appears to use the idea of reflection in many different ways. The definitions have been refined and developed.

The common-sense view of reflection

The common-sense view of reflection is developed by examination of how we use the word 'reflection' in everyday language. We have said that reflection is akin to thinking but there is more to be added to this. We reflect usually in order to achieve an outcome, or for some purpose. We may, however, simply 'be reflective', and an outcome might then be unexpected. Reflection is an activity that we apply to more complex issues. We do not reflect on the route to the bus-stop, or on how to do a simple arithmetical sum where there is an obvious solution. We think it through or plan it. However, we might reflect on whether or not to complain about something when the complaint may generate difficult consequences. In addition, the content of reflection is largely what we know already. It is often a process of re-organizing knowledge and emotional orientations in order to achieve further insights.

On the basis of the reasoning above, a common-sense view of reflection can be stated as follows:

Reflection is a form of mental processing – like a form of thinking – that we may use to fulfil a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome or we may simply 'be reflective' and then an outcome can be unexpected. Reflection is applied to relatively complicated, ill-structured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution and is largely based on the further processing of knowledge and understanding that we already possess.

(based on, but extending the definition in Moon 1999a)

Reflection applied in academic contexts: a development of the common-sense view

Since the late 1990s, the theory and practice of reflection have attained a much more significant role in educational contexts. Unless there is clarity about

the strictures that tend to be imposed upon reflection in these specific contexts, there is the danger that we will make an everyday activity technical. Reflection that is a requirement of a curriculum is likely to have some characteristics that are specified in advance. On this basis, it is useful to recognize a second view of reflection in order to encompass its application in the academic context. It would not be appropriate in academia, for example, to say that professional development is enhanced when a person goes for a sunny walk in a reflective mood. We would require something more tangible and directed – or the reflection might be expected to occur within a given structure. An element of the structure is likely to be a description of an incident. Furthermore, the outcome of reflection, which is most likely to be reflective writing, is usually seen by a tutor, and is often assessed. This can lead to some students writing the ‘reflective’ material that they think will be viewed favourably by their tutor (Salisbury, 1994). In addition, evidence of learning or change of behaviour may be expected to result from the process of reflection. These factors are also likely to influence the nature of reflective learning (Boud and Walker, 1998).

On the basis of the paragraph above, we can add to the common-sense definition of reflection as follows:

Reflection/reflective learning or reflective writing in the academic context, is also likely to involve a conscious and stated purpose for the reflection, with an outcome specified in terms of learning, action or clarification. It may be preceded by a description of the purpose and/or the subject matter of the reflection. The process and outcome of reflective work are most likely to be in a represented (e.g., written) form, to be seen by others and to be assessed. All of these factors can influence its nature and quality.

In practice, the way in which reflection is used in educational situations is often quite narrowly defined. For example, it may be defined in terms of learning from recognized error or ineffectiveness in practice (Mackintosh, 1998; Hinnett, 2003) and it is often subject to some of the beliefs that are discussed later in this chapter. An example of such a belief is that reflection is always about the self.

Views of reflection that are focused on the outcomes of the process

As indicated above, much of the book *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development* (Moon, 1999a) was devoted to an exploration of how apparently different accounts of reflection in the literature could be describing the same basic process. It was observed that while accounts seemed to assume the common-sense view of reflection, their focus was on the ways in which reflection can be applied and how they produce a particular outcome rather than the mechanics of the process. This different focus seems to explain the diversity of the literature on reflection and the manner in which it has

become complicated. From evidence of the literature, Moon suggests that the following outcomes can result from reflective processes:

- learning, knowledge and understanding;
 - some form of action;
 - a process of critical review;
 - personal and continuing professional development;
 - reflection on the process of learning or personal functioning (metacognition);
 - the building of theory from observations in practice situations;
 - the making of decisions/resolution of uncertainty, the solving of problems; empowerment and emancipation;
 - unexpected outcomes (e.g., images, ideas that could be solutions to dilemmas or seen as creative activity);
 - emotion (that can be an outcome or can be part of the process, see Chapter 3);
 - clarification and the recognition that there is a need for further reflection.
- (developed from Moon, 1999a, 1999b)

Although ‘learning’ (as above) is deemed to be an outcome of reflection in its own right, we could say that all the outcomes in the list are concerned with how we use understanding and knowledge to achieve other purposes. In other words, these factors link reflection with the process of learning.

A basis for discussion of reflection and learning

Reflection and its roles in learning

If the process of learning is implied in all the outcomes of reflection that are identified in the previous section, does that mean that we can say that reflection seems to be involved in all forms of learning and, in that case, is simply a part of the learning process? The consideration of reflection in learning in Moon (1999a) suggests that reflection is involved in some forms of learning, but probably not all. We return here to the work on the approach to learning adopted by a learner (see Chapter 4) that suggests that a deep approach is where the learner seeks to understand the meaning of material in relation to previous knowledge. A surface approach is characterized by the attempt to memorize the facts. Moon (1999a) linked the idea of approach to reflection in the proposition of a continuum from surface to deep approaches to learning. In this model, learning is conceived as a sequence of stages from superficial ‘noticing’ (perceiving, superficial observation), ‘making sense’, to ‘making meaning’, ‘working with meaning’ and finally ‘transformative learn-

ing' which indicates the deep approach end of the continuum. In the latter stage, the learner is willing extensively to modify her cognitive structure and is able to evaluate the sources of her knowledge and her process of learning. The representation of the learning from these progressively more sophisticated stages relates closely to the increasing complexity described in the SOLO taxonomy (structure of learning outcomes) of Biggs and Collis (1982) (see Chapter 4).

We use the SOLO model as an initial indicator of the relationship between reflection and learning but can develop the ideas of this relationship beyond the model itself. We can identify here four ways in which reflection is involved in learning. First, reflection is involved in the process of meaningful learning when a learner takes a deep approach. In terms of the stages of learning described above, this would imply that reflection is increasingly involved from the stage of 'making meaning', through 'working with meaning' to 'transformative learning'. Second, reflection is involved when meaningful learning is represented meaningfully (e.g., in writing, orally, etc.) because we have to modify ideas in order to represent them (see Chapter 1). The process of modification involves taking into account the purpose and format of the representation as well as reformulating the current understandings to meet it. Often there is greater understanding of ideas once they have been represented. The act of teaching is an example of the representation of meaningful knowledge. There is a common adage that understanding is bettered only when it has been taught to another. There is a secondary matter to learning from the representation of learning – we learn from the process of representation and from the material that is generated as a result of representation.

The next two ways in which reflection is related to learning are poles of another continuum. The third manner in which reflection is involved in learning is in the 'upgrading of learning' (Moon, 1999a). Here there is no immediate new material of learning, but ideas learnt in a relatively non-meaningful way are reconsidered in the light of more or different prior experience (i.e., are reviewed with different frames of reference). In this way, less meaningful learning is made more meaningful ('deepened'). For example, childhood history learning tends to remain in corners of the brain as stereotypes – King Richard the Lionheart was 'good', King John was 'bad'. In upgrading this knowledge, we might reconsider the reign of King Richard (or King John) in the light of a more sophisticated knowledge of history or politics. In more substantial terms 'upgrading' could be said often to be the process of traditional adult education. Typically prior learning, that is characterized by a collection of relatively factual and non-theory-bound ideas, is reviewed and recontextualized in the light of a more coherent and theoretical approach and through the processes of discussion and critique.

In the fourth way in which reflection is related to learning, we generate apparently new and meaningful ideas (knowledge and understandings) that are not immediately related to specific existing knowledge though clearly they are based on what we 'know'. This is the form of learning that is most

obviously called 'reflective'. An example is a learner who needs to evaluate her study skills over the past semester. She needs to recall difficulties and achievements and to relate them to the study ability that seems to be demanded by her level of work. It is not a straightforward process, but one of moving around in different ideas (framing and reframing). This learner has a purpose for generating understanding but we should not ignore the common occurrence of day-dreaming – the reflection under the cherry tree on a sunny day – when there is no particular intention to learn or to seek new meaning, and yet inspiration is suddenly there. We say 'the penny dropped' or 'I saw the light'. Some would call this intuition (Atkinson and Claxton, 2002).

In addition to being part of process of learning something that is identifiable as described above, reflective processes also play a part in the enhancement of other learning. In these situations reflection could be said to enhance conditions that favour learning. Some examples are the following:

- Reflection slows the pace of learning. A helpful idea that expresses this is the provision of 'intellectual space' (Barnett, 1997).
- Carl Rogers wrote much about the importance in learning of the development of a sense of ownership of learning by the learner (Rogers, 1969). To reflect on something is to bring it into ownership. This may be related to the suggestion by Elbow (1973) that reflective or personally expressive writing facilitates learning, and Selfe and Arbabi (1986) that students who write reflectively about their process of problem-solving become more able at solving that type of problem.
- Reflection also encourages metacognition that supports learning. Learners who achieve well are more often those who are aware of, and able to reflect on, their own learning processes, their weaknesses and strengths (Kuhn *et al.*, 1988; Ertmer and Newby, 1996; Hadwin and Winne, 1996; Dart *et al.*, 1998).

So we are suggesting that reflection not only plays a part in the process of good quality learning, but it is also important in the development of appropriate learning behaviour. However, the structure of the material of learning needs to be brought into the picture and this develops the picture further.

The interplay between the structure of the material of learning and intentions to understand

There is another important issue to consider in the relationship between reflection and learning. In the common-sense view of reflection, it seemed entirely plausible to suggest that reflection occurs when the material of learning is relatively complex or is relatively ill-structured. As yet that idea has not been linked into the section above about how reflection is related to learning. We come back to constructivism. The structure of the material of learning is related by implication to the intention of the learner to achieve meaningful

learning. It is the learner who judges the structure of material of learning in relation to her current level of understanding and her intentions. Material of learning that is challenging and apparently ill-structured to one person may be well-structured and a small learning challenge to another. In terms of the learner's intentions, the same material of learning may be both challenging and not challenging to the same learner. An arithmetical theorem can be used as a simple rule to follow or the learner may be asked to explain the intricacies of its proof – which may be a complex task. When we bring these learning challenge issues into the considerations of the relationship between reflection and learning, some new forms of relationship emerge.

We can pull together the ideas from the sections above, taking into account now the material of learning and the learner's intentions.

Reflection and learning: a summary

In terms of the material of learning, we have said that reflection or reflective learning occurs:

- when learning is relatively ill-structured or is challenging to a learner;
- when the learner is intent on meaningful learning/wants to understand the material for herself.

In assimilating new material of learning, reflective learning occurs:

- when the new material of learning is challenging either in relation to internal experience or to the intention of the learner and the learner wants to understand the material in a manner that is meaningful to her (takes a deep approach).

In learning from the representation of learning, reflection occurs:

- when representation is challenging to the learner because of the task of representing the material or in presenting the ideas;
- when there is new (secondary) learning that occurs as a result of representing the initial learning and that represents a new learning challenge.

When there is no new material of learning and the learner is attempting to develop her understanding on the basis of what she knows already, reflection occurs:

- in situations of 'upgrading' of existing ideas where meaning is made from prior experiences that were not necessarily meaningful to the learner;
- in situations in which there is reconsideration of existing ideas that may be meaningful in order to seek additional or deeper meaning;

- where there is general reflection without a specific intention to make meaning – but meaningful ideas occur.

Reflection also appears to enhance the conditions for learning in a number of ways, which we can summarize as ‘reflection facilitates good learning behaviour’.

Some beliefs about reflection

There are some particular views of what reflection is which could obstruct further understanding (Moon, 2003). We discuss the following:

- Emotion is central to reflective processes.
- Reflection is about ‘my own’ processes (i.e., always in the first person).
- Some people cannot reflect.

We have discussed the various *roles of emotion in learning*. To some, reflection is seen to be characterized by its emotional components. Others note significant roles for emotion in reflection. They suggest, for example, that reflection and feeling act in an interdependent relationship with emotion (Taylor, 1997); that emotion is represented sometimes as tacit knowledge (McAlpine and Weston, 2002). They also suggest that past emotional experience ‘highlights’ issues to be dealt with (Mezirow, 1998; Boud and Walker, 1998); or there is recognition that reflective learning may demand ‘emotional stamina’ (Mezirow, 1998). In Chapter 3 we made an assumption that emotion was intimately involved in all learning – not just reflection. A number of different relationships between emotion and learning were identified and we suggest that any of these can be operative in reflection. It is possible that the nature of reflective activity leads to greater awareness of emotion and greater account being taken of the role of emotion but we would not say that emotional involvement characterizes reflection. Some possibilities are that:

- Emotion may be the subject matter of reflection – feelings are labile and become involved in or complicate issues that are the subject matter of reflection.
- There may be a more permissive attitude towards the involvement of emotion in reflective activity than in other areas of formal education.
- Reflection involves the ‘slowing of the pace of learning’, it is more possible to recognize the role of emotion in the process of learning when it is slowed down.
- Chapter 3 suggested the existence of a form of learning that has particular emotional content – emotional insight. From the examples of emotional

insight it might be possible to say that reflective processes are sometimes an important medium for emotional insight.

- We have suggested above that one outcome of reflection is metacognition. Metacognition involves the consideration of personal emotional functioning along with other modes.

There is further discussion of emotion and reflection later in this chapter.

Another belief about reflection is that *it always concerns the self* – in other words, it is always about the role of the ‘first person’ (I). There is no reason why this should be the case, although the self does tend to be central in many of the ways in which reflection is applied in formal educational contexts, for example, in learning journals, in professional development and in personal appraisal. It is possible to reflect, for example, on morality issues in a personal relationship whether it is one’s own relationship, or that of others. In deep forms of reflection (see Chapter 7), the first person is involved because awareness of the role and processes of the learner herself is drawn into reflection.

Finally, there is often a belief that *some people cannot reflect*. Much of the latter part of this book is based on the observation that when asked to reflect in formal educational situations, many learners have difficulty in understanding what they should do or they resist reflection (Boud and Walker, 1998; Jasper, 1998; Tomlinson, 1999; Lucas, 2001). In contrast, other learners will have no difficulty and will not understand the problems encountered by their colleagues. There are also cultural norms that may resist ‘navel-gazing’. Since reflection is suggested to be an element in good quality forms of learning, we clearly take the position that everyone can reflect, though this may not always be a conscious activity and may not be done willingly when required. The acceptability of overt reflective processes may be related to different practices in disciplines. Assuming that everyone *can* reflect does not assume that everyone uses reflection effectively to improve performance. Ferry and Ross-Gordon (1998) and McAlpine and Weston (2002) present evidence that professionals vary in the effectiveness with which they use reflection and that this is not just a function of their level of experience.

Reflective learning in relation to a generic view of learning

In the remaining sections of this chapter we relate the view of reflective learning developed in the first part of this chapter to the generic view of learning developed earlier. Learning is presented in this book as a process of the accommodation of the current cognitive structure of the learner to new material of learning (usually represented as the external experience), under the guidance

of internal experience, which will take account of the intentions of the learner. New material of learning has, so far, been seen as a variation between the internal experience and external experience of the object. In a given situation there will be many simultaneous variations and to manage relevance is to use appropriate frames of reference to distinguish the significant figure material from the non-significant ground material.

We have conceptualized internal experience as the sum of intention and prior knowledge and experience of the object and have suggested that it guides the process of meaningful learning, in this case, new material of learning. What we are describing as 'internal experience' would seem to accord with some aspects of the role of reflection in learning, for example, in the case of reflection within a process of meaningful learning of new material of learning. We now need to explore the role of reflection in internal experience in relation to the presence or absence of new material of learning. Above we categorized reflective learning in the following ways (in a different order now):

- there is new material of learning;
- there is no new material of learning;
- when there is learning from the representation of learning.

In the case of reflection where there is *new material of learning* that is relatively complex or ill-structured and/or where the learner intends to understand meaningfully, reflection seems to accord with the functions of the internal experience in the process of guiding learning and accommodation. Reflective learning is simply part of the operation of internal experience in meaningful learning of relatively complex material.

What happens, however, when there is *no new material of learning*? The new material of learning has, up to now, been broadly equated with external experience. We used examples of learning about the geological nature of Beer stone to illustrate this. We have said that reflection may not involve any new material of learning. In this case the learner is dealing with material that is already part of the cognitive structure and the outcome is a reorganization of cognitive structure with accommodation to newly developed ideas (Ward, 1999). The concepts of variation and relevance are as valid in this form of reflective learning as they would be in situations where there is the processing of external experience. We have used the term 'cognitive house-keeping' to describe the re-ordering of thought where there is no new material of learning (Moon, 1999a).

A further issue now is how we conceive of this process in terms of internal and external experience when there is no new material of learning. Since we are dealing with a model, the reconceptualization is a matter of seeking the best explanation. It is probably easiest to conceive of reflection of this sort mainly as a process of internal experience. This fits with some observations,

for example, we may find reflection easier when we find ways of externalizing it and thereby engaging external experience processes. This is illustrated in the next chapter on depth in reflection which introduces phrases such as 'standing back from the event' (p. 95). In addition, the role of representation of reflection in learning journals (p. 159) or through work with critical friends (p. 147) is a process of engaging external experience in what would otherwise be an internal process.

The process of '*upgrading*' learning also fits the pattern of learning when there is no (immediate) new material of learning and we conceive of a similar process of reordering cognitive structure through the processes of internal experience.

Learning from the meaningful representation of learning is more complex because there is a secondary process of learning that is involved in which there is learning from the representation of the initial learning. First, there is the transformation of the initial knowledge into the format required for the representation. This usually will mean a reformulation of what was initially learnt so that it meets the demands of the task – an example would be the marshalling of ideas within the development of an argument. The ideas may be known, but are not directly associated with this particular context and need to be applied. The process of organizing internal experience towards the appropriately marshalled argument may often involve reflective learning. Second, there is the opportunity to learn more from the represented form, in this case the argument, which has now become an object of external experience (i.e., is now potentially new material of learning). Depending on the form of representation, there are greater or less opportunities to learn from the representation of learning. In the case of written examinations, there may not be much learning in the second part of the process because there is often little opportunity to read through scripts. On the other hand, the initial drafting and then the redrafting of written material can be the source of much learning. The process of reflective writing relies on learning that results from the process of writing.

We describe learning from the representation of learning here as if it is a two-stage process of representing initial learning (e.g., in writing) and then (later) learning from the representation (learning from the written material). The process is often likely to be integrated so that adjustments to the ongoing representation process can be made by learning from what has already been represented. In terms of learning processes, this would be a delicate and rapid interplay between internal and external experience using tightly controlled frames of reference. We might call this self-evaluation or self-feedback. Sometimes the learning from the representation of the learning will involve taking into account the simultaneous reactions of others (e.g., when representation is performance) as well as from personal processes.

‘Reflective’ and ‘non-reflective’ learning

Viewing reflection now in the context of internal experiencing, it becomes evident that we should again take note of constructivist principles and check some assumptions. We have essentially defined non-reflective learning as the kind of learning that is relatively unchallenging to the learner and that does not involve much restructuring of the cognitive structure, and in which processes of internal experience are fairly inactive. But is it as simple as this – is this distinction of learning into reflective or non-reflective categories appropriate or are we talking here of a matter of degree of ‘reflectiveness’? We can look at this issue through some examples. The task of memorization of a list may not seem to be very reflective and may not seem to involve much processing of internal experience (except when seen in the context of Kember’s work (1996)). Another example, say, the consideration of the rights or wrongs about a friend’s casual love affair, may seem to be very reflective. But is this the whole story? The rights and wrongs of a love affair could be processed by some in a non-reflective manner because those people view moral issues categorically as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. This may come from pre-existing religious conviction or it may be because their conception of the nature of knowledge is at the absolutist stage (Baxter Magolda, 1992, see Chapter 2) or these two explanations may coincide. There is nothing to reflect on and there is little need for a process of internal experience.

The point made here is that it is not possible to say that a task is reflective or not reflective because we cannot determine how the internal experience of another operates or the nature of the other’s prior experience or her intentions. It is only possible to say that a task is designed to stimulate reflective or non-reflective learning – to stimulate the activities of internal experience – or not. We cannot even say that a list for memorizing is a non-reflective task because the whole list or some items can stimulate reflection in some subjects. Items in the list might remind a subject of a prior experience, which leads her into reflection on personal issues that have been triggered.

Frames of reference in reflection

We use the example of the ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ of a love affair to move on to a consideration of the application of frames of reference in reflective learning, and in particular to the notion that there can be different frames of reference for the same event.

The framing of learning is discussed in Chapters 1 to 4 in relation to situations in which there is new material of learning. Different frames of reference are used in the processing of new material of learning. The framing is guided by the learner’s internal experience. Observation of the theory and practice of

reflective learning in this chapter would suggest that these ideas apply equally well to the processes of internal experience when there is no new material of learning involved. Thus, the conception of knowledge, the approach to the learning and emotional factors can be seen to be involved in framing the processes in reflection.

There are some interesting points that differentiate the experience of learning about an object in external experience and when processing is purely internal. When there is an external object, there is a reference point, which probably has some permanence. The workings of internal experience progress in relation to the object that is to be learned. In a process of reflection, there may be no external reference points. For example, when reflection is on the self, there is no one particular way in which to understand ourselves and there is no stable means of assessing what we know about ourselves. No-one else can see the world in the exact manner of another. Reflective learning, when there is no external experience, is very 'slippery' and subject to the influence of an even more slippery entity, emotion. Here more issues arise. Since reflection is an internal process, current reality is likely to coincide with the emotional influence on any reflective activity. We may only be aware of the influence of a mood or emotion on internal reflective processes when we are in a different mood a few days later. For example, if I am feeling angry when I reflect on something, the anger may influence the process of reflection. Because the feeling of anger is congruent with the outcome of my reflective processes, I may not notice the influence of the anger until I consider again the same issue on a day when I do not feel angry. The influence of emotional state on reflective work is more obvious when the reflection is represented (e.g., in writing), and can be reconsidered.

We can give another example of the manner in which emotional frames of reference change. It is a common observation that, when asked to engage in reflection, most women may initially be more comfortable with the idea than most men. Workshops on reflection in academic contexts may include 20 per cent of men – not often more (from personal experience). Perhaps women are more able to be reflective or are more open to the idea of reflection because the menstrual cycle gives many women the actual experience of seeing an issue in different emotional states on successive days. An implicit understanding that the same object/issue can seem different on different days may be 'good practice' for managing personal reflection on complex issues.

We mentioned the role of variation and relevance in the context of learning (see Chapter 1). Where there is new material of learning, learning is the experiencing of variation between the new material of learning and the internal experience and the choice then to accommodate to that variation because it is in accordance with the learner's intentions. However, where there is no new material of learning, we have to conceive of variation as being within the internal experience. In this way, an important aspect of reflective learning is the bringing of different frames of reference to bear on the same material of learning in order that new variation can be developed

to which to accommodate. The judgement of the relevance of any variation elicited is also to be made within internal experience and is also likely to be subject to the current frames of reference. We have said above that there is no source of objectivity in reflection and it is easy to go round in circles without being able to shift into new frames of reference that would allow the development of new variation and hence new learning. We can use an example. A teacher on a Master's programme is asked to write a reflective account of an incident that she has experienced in her school as part of an assignment. The situation chosen is in a dance lesson in a primary school classroom (Resource 10, p. 217). The teacher reflects on her behaviour and her ability to cope when there was an incident concerning the management of a statemented child. In reflecting on the incident, what is it that is relevant to the 'story' that the teacher will 'tell' in her assignment? What are the aspects of the situation that lead her to learn from it – indeed, what did she learn from it? How can she manage objectivity when the incident happened yesterday and she was very disturbed by it? The management of variation and relevance in learning is a much more complex situation in reflective learning than learning about new material of learning that is relatively much more stable and where there is an external reference point.

Another dimension of reflection: depth

Another factor is raised by the example of the teacher in the dance class (see above). The example in Resource 10 provides three written accounts of the same incident. The teacher in question might have written any one of the accounts, but if she is new to this kind of writing, it is most likely that she will have written the first account which is descriptive and demonstrates relatively little of the quality we might expect from reflective writing. The accounts differ in what we term 'depth'. Any resultant learning for the writer of this material will be a situation of learning from the representation of learning. On this basis, there are two potential sources of learning – learning from the process of writing and learning from the process of reading back what is on the page and reflecting on the implications of that. Chapter 7 will consider what is meant by depth in reflection and how depth of reflection is related to the resultant learning.

At the end of Chapter 7 there is a general summary of the material on reflection and reflective learning as forms of learning.

Chapter 7

The depth quality of reflective learning

Introduction

The last chapter introduced a new dimension to reflection – that of depth. It is part of the common experience of reflection that is demonstrated in statements such as ‘she was in deep reflection’, but the idea of depth has become more important as reflective activities have been increasingly applied in formal education and professional development. There is a frequent observation that while an initial struggle of getting learners to reflect can be overcome, it can be difficult to persuade them to reflect in other than a superficial manner – which might be little different from descriptive writing (Lyons, 1999). This chapter explores what we mean by ‘depth’, how it might relate to the learning process and the difference in outcome between deeper and more superficial reflection.

The treatment of depth in this chapter is in two sections. The first introduces the concept of depth, relates it to the literature and describes framework for reflective writing that are structured in terms of depth. The second section of the chapter explores the nature of depth in reflection in relation to the generic view of learning described in the earlier chapters of this book.

The final section of this chapter is a summary of the content of the two chapters on reflective learning – this chapter and Chapter 6. In discussing depth in reflection below, we mainly refer to reflective writing both because it is in the context of written reflective work that the issues of depth mainly arise and because written work is tangible. It is important to recognize that reflective writing involves learning from the representation of learning (see Chapter 6).

Depth of reflection and its measurement

We use the terminology 'levels of reflection' to imply a hierarchical model of reflective activity that demonstrates progression from what is little different to description to a profound form of reflection. Most models that incorporate the notion of depth of reflection do not imply that the levels are qualitatively different, though they may use specific terms for the different levels (e.g., Van Manen, 1977). Examples of reflective writing at different levels are provided in Resources 5, 6 and 10.

Frameworks that incorporate the idea of depth of reflection have often been developed as a result of practical work with learners. Some examples are Hettich (1976, 1990), Van Manen (1977), Mezirow (1981), Wedman and Martin (1986), Ross (1989), Sparkes-Langer *et al.* (1990), Sparkes-Langer and Colton (1991), Hatton and Smith (1995), Barnett (1997), Kember *et al.* (1999) and Kember *et al.* (2000). Generally this material seems to be consistent, attributing similar qualities to the deeper levels of reflection and generally viewing superficial reflection as descriptive. However, much of the work seems to be lacking substance in its approach and had not been put into general use. This may be because it has not been sufficiently developed with appropriate support materials. There are exceptions that are described below.

In the frameworks described in the references above, deep reflection is generally characterized by perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991, 1998), transformatory critique (Barnett, 1997), or transformative learning (Moon, 1999a). These terms refer to the ability to revise the 'meaning structures' (Taylor, 1997) which are the bases of judgements. In other words, we are talking here about a review of the manner of the function of internal experience and what frames of reference are used and how. In turn, this implies a functional understanding of the constructed nature of knowledge and a meta-cognitive stance. Another quality of deep reflection is its critical orientation to one's own and others' understandings. A number of writers have commented on the inadequacy of much activity performed in the name of reflection because it is non-critical and non-reflective (or non-reflexive) (Kim, 1999). Taylor and White (2000) provide a well-illustrated argument of the inadequacy of the reflective practice model and the importance of criticality in professional situations:

The primary focus of reflection is on process issues . . . Its focus on knowledge is primarily confined to the application of 'theory to practice' . . . Reflexivity takes things further. Specifically, it problematizes issues that reflection takes for granted . . . For example, it assumes that through reflection the worker can become more adept at applying child development and attachment theories more effectively. Reflexivity suggests that we interrogate these previously taken-for-granted assumptions.

(2000, p. 198)

All those who discern levels of reflection seem to agree with the statement above, but use different terminologies so 'reflexivity', like 'critical reflection' or perspective transformation would be seen as the deepest level of reflection. In addition, among the theorists there is an implied agreement that deeper reflection yields better quality outcomes in terms of learning.

Kember *et al.* (1999) provide a well-developed and substantiated levels framework for written reflection. They developed the early work of Mezirow (1981) with seven levels of reflection described from 'non-reflective action' to 'premise reflection' (which matches other descriptions of deep reflection). They tested the hierarchy of levels and it appeared to be generally reliable. In a later paper (Kember *et al.*, 2000), a questionnaire was developed to test the ability of students to engage in reflective thinking. The four levels in this construct were still substantially based on Mezirow's work, with 'habitual action' at the least reflective level and 'critical reflection' at the deepest level. This framework was shown to be a reliable indication of reflective thinking in learners.

The work of Hatton and Smith (1995) is probably the best-known framework of levels of reflection. This was developed in experimental work on the reflective writing of teacher education students. It was then formulated into a tool for wider use. A brief description of the levels follows (using some of Hatton and Smith's own words):

- Descriptive writing – writing that is not considered to show evidence of reflection. It is a description with no discussion beyond description.
- Descriptive reflection – there is description of events. The possibility of alternative viewpoints is accepted but most reflection is from one perspective.
- Dialogic reflection – the work demonstrates a 'stepping back' from events and actions leading to a different level of mulling about discourse with self and exploring the discourse of events and actions. There is a recognition that different qualities of judgement and alternative explanations may exist for the same material. The reflection is analytical or integrative, though may reveal inconsistency.
- Critical reflection – 'demonstrates an awareness that actions and events are not only located within and explicable by multiple perspectives, but are located in and influenced by multiple historical and socio-political contexts'.

Hatton and Smith's work was used with several cohorts of higher education work experience placement learners. For assessment purposes, these students were required to produce a reflective account. Initially the accounts had been disappointing since they were so superficial. The tool, therefore, had a purpose both for guiding the work of the learners, as well as providing a rationale for assessment purposes (i.e., by providing assessment criteria). An interesting point that became evident in the process of this work is that we should

take care not to reject all descriptive writing. Some description is necessary in a reflective account that is used in an educational situation to provide the background for the reflection. However, this 'statement of how things are' has a different role in the writing from the role of reflection and should not be confused with the latter.

Despite the use of Hatton and Smith's framework, it was still difficult to help learners to properly understand the nature of deeper reflection. They seemed to need actual examples of reflective work in order to understand what was required. A further stage was then to develop the exercises to which reference was made earlier (Resources 5, 6 and 10) where different levels of reflection are based on one initial descriptive account of a particular situation. The use of these exercises is described in Chapter 10. In association with two of the accounts (Resources 5 and 6) but, separate from them, a rationale was constructed which identified ways in which reflective activity characterized the different levels so that a progression from superficial descriptive to deep reflection was demonstrated. These exercises have proved helpful for many learners who have to write reflectively, and for the staff either in managing the reflective work of students, or for their own professional development.

A further stage of the work above involved the development of a generic framework of reflective writing. This drew on the rationales associated with the practical exercises and on observations of the use of the exercises and the comments made by staff and students working on them. It is intended to be generic and can be used in association with any of the reflective exercises. It describes four levels in a notional continuum from superficial and descriptive to deep levels of reflective writing. It is important to note that it does not relate by terminology or number to specific accounts in the exercises. The Generic Framework for Reflective Writing is reproduced in Resource 9.

We could say, in the terminology of Fazey and Marton (2002), that increasing depth in reflection relies on an increasing awareness, use of and sophistication in the use of variation in the internal experience (i.e., in cognitive housekeeping processes). These ideas are developed below.

Logically, there is no 'end-point' of deep reflection – it can go on and on examining issues in a wider and wider context and at different points of time from the event (see below) to infinity. However, in most situations in which reflection is applied, there will be logistical reasons for limiting the account, for example, word limits in the academic context. An element of strategy is, therefore, to be able to write appropriately within given constraints. It has become evident both in the development of the exercises on levels of reflection and from working with learners, that deeper reflection often requires more word length than superficial reflection, especially if, within the word length there is to be a short description of the event/issue. It is not unusual to ask for 'reflective pieces' in, for example, 200 or 500 words in educational situations and short word limits may inhibit deeper

reflection. Extending the word limit in these situations has been observed to encourage deeper reflection.

Theoretical bases for the concept depth of reflection

There is relevant underlying theory to this list of characteristics of deepening reflection. We suggested in the previous chapter that reflective learning is, essentially, a purposeful framing and reframing of material in internal experience with the intention of learning. There is not necessarily an input of new material of learning. Increasing the depth of reflective learning implies a development in the ability to use different frames of reference with associated flexibility, openness and awareness of the range of relevant issues. Frames of reference as described in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are particularly relevant. These forms of framing are the developments of the conception of the structure of knowledge; the role of emotion in learning; the learner's approach to learning.

Conceptions of knowledge and depth in reflection

The ideas that characterize the more sophisticated conceptions of knowledge also underpin deeper levels of reflection. For example, the stages of reflective judgement (King and Kitchener, 1994) and that of 'contextual knowing' (Baxter Magolda, 1992) include the idea that knowledge is constructed and that it is supported by evidence that is related to a particular context. There is use of multiple frames of reference (flexibility) and there is the suggestion that reasoning, at this level, implies a consideration of the processes of reasoning themselves (metacognition).

At the other extreme of the continua of conceptions of knowledge, there is an assumption that knowledge is 'right or wrong' and is 'given'. This understanding of knowledge really cannot provide any basis for reflective activity at all as we have described reflection as occurring in situations where there is not an obvious solution or where knowledge is ill-structured. Reflection is not about the seeking of 'right or wrong' answers. It may be that the attainment of the slightly more developed conceptions of knowledge coincides with the beginning of the ability to be reflective.

Emotion and reflection

Chapter 3 explored aspects of the relationship between emotion and learning. It concluded that there are many relationships between emotion and learning (p. 44). Deeper and more sophisticated levels of reflection must rely on

some understanding of how emotion affects the process of reflection and, in practice, the reflection must demonstrate a practical ability to manage personal emotional processes in relation to the subject matter of the reflection. This is implied in the process of metacognition and further, in the judgments that are made of the quality of personal reasoning. It is manifested in the awareness of the 'slipperiness' of reflection (Fraser, 1995; Fenwick, 2000).

The approach to learning and reflection

Since meaningful processes of learning involve reflection, one way of looking at the relationship between approach and reflection is simply to say that where there is reflection, there is a deep approach to learning and vice versa. However, there is another angle. When learners are given tasks that involve reflection, in the same manner as in other areas of study, their approach can be to produce writing that looks generally reflective, but that does not yield personally valuable learning. This strategic approach may be the starting point for many learners who do not entirely understand why they are being asked to reflect, or what is expected of them. However, there is a complex variety of factors that characterize the deeper levels of reflection, and guidance on what we might call 'techniques of deeper reflection' is rarely available. It is likely, therefore, to be mainly those who adopt a deep approach to the task of learning from reflection with the intention to pursue meaning, who find their ways into deeper levels of reflective activity. Perhaps there are a few who, in taking a relatively strategic approach to reflective tasks, stumble across useful understandings of the subject matter which encourage them subsequently to adopt a deeper approach.

Characterizing depth in reflection: a summary

We have said that depth in reflection is characterized by increasing ability to frame and reframe internal and external experience with openness and flexibility. It is related to the increase of the range of variation that is taken into account in the reflective process and to the ability to recognize and manage relevance. It also requires sophistication in a number of areas of development, in particular, the learner's conception of the structure of knowledge and the notion of knowledge as constructed which appears to underpin most deep reflection. In deep reflection, the learner requires the ability to manage emotion, and where appropriate to work with it, understanding also the manner in which it is related to the context of the reflective and learning process. In addition, the learner will need to be able to frame her approach to learning in accordance with her (and given) intentions for the task.

Reflection and reflective learning as forms of learning: a summary of Chapters 6 and 7

- There are several words in the vocabulary of reflection that may be used in different ways. These include reflection, reflective learning, reflective writing. Reflection and reflective learning are used interchangeably in this book, but reflective writing is a form of representation of learning and there are secondary learning processes involved.
- The term 'reflective practice' seems to relate to the work of Schön (1983, 1987). It emphasizes the use of reflection in professional or other complex activities as a means of coping with situations that are unstructured and/or unpredictable.
- Three views of reflection are provided:
 - a common-sense view;
 - a view of reflection when it is applied in academic contexts;
 - theoretical views that are focused on the outcomes of reflection.
- Earlier books by the author have reviewed the relationship between reflection and learning. This material and later considerations suggest that the role of reflection in learning where the intention is to do the following:
 - understand the meaning of new material of learning;
 - learn from the process of representing (meaningful) learning;
 - learn in situations where there is processing of existing ideas (i.e., where there is no new material of learning).
- In addition, some specific situations in which the process of reflection enhances the conditions for learning have been identified.
- Reflection is seen as having a role, therefore, in the process of good quality learning, and in the development of appropriate learning behaviour.
- Some views of reflection that might tend to create a source of confusion in the literature are recognized and discussed:
 - that emotion is central to reflective processes;
 - that reflection is always about 'my own' processes (i.e., always in the first person);
 - that some people cannot reflect.
- In terms of its relationship to a generic view of learning, reflection is seen more or less to coincide with the process of 'internal experience' (Marton and Booth, 1997) which guides meaningful learning when there is new material of learning. Where there is no new material of learning, reflection involves a reordering of internal experience in order that new ideas are developed from existing experience. We described this as the engagement of different but appropriate frames of reference in internal experience important in reflection. In this way, variation is produced and new learning can occur.

- In relation to learning, reflection is the purposeful framing and reframing of material in external or internal experience (depending on whether there is new material of learning) with an intention in the learner of learning from the process.
- In both cases, reflection and reflective learning occur when the intention is for meaningful learning and/or when the material of learning is relatively ill-structured, complex or unpredictable. We do not appear to reflect on straightforward or simple material unless there are several simple ideas that need to be combined. However, on the basis of a constructivist view of learning, it is the learner's intention and her regard of meaningfulness and the learner's view of the complexity/ill-structuredness that are relevant.
- Another dimension of reflection is evident particularly when reflective learning is used in academic practice – that is termed 'depth', and depth of reflection is represented in a hierarchy of 'levels' of reflection.
- It is commonly observed that when asked to engage in reflective writing, learners will often not manage much more than a descriptive level of reflection. To support their ability to reflect at a deeper level and to facilitate assessment processes of reflection, frameworks for reflective writing that incorporate the notion of depth have been developed.
- Depth of reflection seems particularly to be characterized by increased flexibility and ability to manage the framing process in an open and flexible manner. Depth is demonstrated in the following:
 - the learner's intentions for the learning;
 - the increase of the range of variation that is taken into account in the reflective process;
 - the ability to recognize and manage relevance;
 - the sophistication of the learner's conception of knowledge;
 - her ability effectively to frame emotional factors;
 - her understanding of the effect of emotion on learning;
 - her framing of the approach to learning that she adopts.

Chapter 8

Exploring experiential learning

The literature

Introduction

Chapters 6 and 7 have attempted to tease out the meaning of reflective learning in order to provide a basis for the more practical approach in later chapters. A similar process will be applied to experiential learning. As with reflective learning, one concern of this book is to consider its relationship to the literature of learning as well as to its own literature (i.e., on experiential learning). A further stage is to consider to what degree reflective and experiential learning refer to the same or similar processes and to what degree they are distinctive. This is complicated by the fact – as will become evident in this chapter – that experiential learning is seen in a number of different ways with different processes therefore being involved. Often it is the allocation of a common term – ‘experiential learning’ or ‘learning from experience’ that often seems to be the factor in common between these diverse behaviours. Terminology is discussed below.

As has been mentioned earlier, while the literature on reflection and reflective learning has been well explored in previous books of the author, apart from one chapter in Moon (1999a), the literature on experiential learning has not been treated in the same way. It therefore needs to be treated here in more detail.

The first section of this chapter provides a broad context for the terms ‘experiential learning’ and ‘learning from experience’. The former term tends to focus on the formal learning situations that are the main topic of this book. The next section returns to discussions in earlier chapters on the meaning of experience but now experience is taken in the context of discussions of

experiential learning. We then look at the matter of defining experiential learning. There is no one appropriate definition because there are many different ways in which the term is used. In some, there seems little concern about the process of learning but the focus is on the purpose for the learning (e.g., for consciousness-raising). These latter definitions do not help in the effort to find distinctive features of this learning process. The section concludes with a description of the 'boundaries of meaning' of experiential learning. We then discuss some of the concepts of experiential learning in which the sequence of stages of the process are captured in 'experiential learning cycles' (for example, as in Kolb, 1984). The next section identifies some of the issues on experiential learning that remain unclear and the final section draws together key points.

Experiential learning and learning from experience

The earlier chapters of this book show that all learning is, in effect, learning from experience. Among others who explicitly express this are Dewey (1938), Chickering (1977), Boud *et al.* (2000), Jarvis (1987), Laurillard (1993) and Michelson (1996). On this view, what is significant about this learning that makes it worthy of exploration as a topic in itself?

To start this consideration, the distinctions drawn in various places between the 'learning from experience' and 'experiential learning' seem to be particularly helpful. Usher and Soloman (1999), for example, see 'learning from experience' as 'taking place in the lifeworld of everyday contexts'. In contrast, they see 'experiential learning' as 'a key element of a discourse which constructs experience in a particular way, as something from which knowledge can be derived through abstraction and by use of methodological approaches such as observation and reflection' (*ibid.*, p. 161). A similar view is expressed by Brah and Hoy (1989). The review of the literature that follows would support this distinction. While this book has taken a generic view of learning as its basis, the discussion of experiential learning in this chapter is directed towards the more specialized sense of it made by Usher and Soloman – usually in the context of formal education. It is still, however, a term 'with a spectrum of meanings, practices and ideologies' (Warner Weil and McGill, 1989a, p. 3). One particular use of the term that is somewhat narrower than most (and not used here) is where 'experiential learning' is interpreted as situations in which prior learning is accredited and thereby incorporated into programmes of formal learning (Evans, 1992).

On the basis of the above, we do not seek a unified 'experiential learning theory' (Saunders, undated). However, we can still inquire into the range of meanings, how the term is generally understood and how elements

of experiential learning relate to the generic description of learning and to reflective learning.

There is a vast literature on experiential learning in a variety of fields. There are examples from training and development, adult education, school science education, work experience and work-based learning, nursing, outdoor education and other forms of professional development, management and, more specifically, decision-making (e.g., Zsombok and Klein, 1997), political and social activism (e.g., Friere, 1970). There is also much literature dedicated more directly to experiential learning itself (e.g., Warner Weil and McGill, 1989b; Boud and Miller, 1996; Greenaway, 2003). We seek the meaning, first, with reference to the word 'experiential'.

Experiential learning and experience

In the context of experiential learning, even the notion of experience is treated in many different ways with different aspects of the idea emphasized. The approach that is adopted hinges to some extent on how writers view the relationship of learning to experience (see above). For some, the experience in the process of experiential learning is special (Beard and Wilson, 2002) and far from the more generalized meaning of experience used earlier. But maybe it is special because it is deliberately associated with a deliberate act of learning. Winter (1989) helpfully points out that having an experience and learning from experience are different: 'Experience' is not quite the same thing as '*learning* from experience'. We have heard the witticism directed at a colleague who is supposed to have had 'ten years' experience'; 'No,' comes the reply, 'They've had one year's experience repeated ten times over' (Winter, 1989, p. 8).

Many writers are relatively clear that the experience in experiential learning is generally not mediated experience (see Chapter 5). However, some see the experience as specific and as a formal element of a curriculum which is usually active in some way, or more active than other elements of the curriculum (Beard and Wilson, 2002). Examples are field courses, games and simulations, work experience placements, aspects of outdoor education, years abroad within programmes, and so on (Boydell, 1976; Chickering, 1977; Green, 1995, 2003). Also looking at experiential learning within the context of education, Newman (1999) distinguishes between those approaches to experience that concern the life events of the students, and those in which the experience is constructed through such techniques as role play and simulation. In the former situation he suggests using methods such as visualization and writing to elicit the material; in the latter, he suggests further activities that would normally be used to encourage reflection on the resulting material (see Chapter 10).

These educationally orientated experiences are often 'engineered' by a facilitator and tend to include what we could regard as the more objective views of what experience might be. Sometimes they appear to suggest that all

there is to experiential learning is to have an experience and then to follow through a sequence of activities such as is depicted in the Kolb cycle (Kolb, 1984). There is an assumption that the learning that can result from the experience, if the activities are manifested 'properly', is a commodity called 'knowledge'. This tends to be the view of the training and development literature (Moon, 2001a). The recognition of the 'slipperiness' of experience brings greater conceptual complexity to the view of experiential learning and greater realism. As Eraut says, 'Tidy images of learning are usually deceptive' (2000, p. 28).

Marion Milner illustrates very well the difficulty of learning from experience in her various studies of her own behaviour from journal writing and psycho-analytic techniques (Field, 1952; Milner, 1957, 1987). She found that different interpretations of the same event would occur from one day to the next. Fraser picks up the same point: 'We internalise our knowledge of the world in a manner which is consistent with our world view. If that manner is jaundiced and fragile, then how do we know that we are "seeing" anything other than a reflection of our own fragility?' (1995, p. 59). Such comments relate to the material on emotion and learning (see Chapter 3) and to the idea that one aspect of deepening reflection is the understanding that learning is influenced by current states of mind and perspectives of understanding (see Chapter 7). Other good examples of learning from experience are provided in Lennon and Whitford (1994), and in particular, Seller (1994).

Another writer who recognizes the constructed nature of experience in his approach to research on learning from experience is William Torbert (1972). Torbert adopted both phenomenological and empirical methods in his study but, like Milner, started with his own behaviour. While his book is not easy to follow, he raises many issues about the nature of experience that are still current and unresolved.

It is those who see the experience in experiential learning as constructed who can begin to recognize the wider issues involved in the process (Sutherland, 1997). Newman (1999) provides a well-reasoned demonstration of the subjective nature of experience when he discusses his experiences of a visit to South Africa. He describes the potential distortions in the experiences of the visit. First, with reference to experiences recalled from the visit, he describes walking down some stairs into a basement and seeing a mural on a wall. He used this as the basis for the potential of short stories (i.e., reconstruction of material as a creative writer rather than a rapporteur). Second, he looks at the reconstruction of experience in terms of experiences forgotten – the ability to 'forget' the details of a death. Third, he talks of the manner in which immediate experience is endowed with different sets of meaning according to (for example) the listener. Finally, he points out that many human experiences are vicarious. For example, he describes the ways in which he learnt about experiences of different people who had been victimized in their communities through the stories they told. He recognizes that stories construct and distort to purvey the most poignant or important aspects of

a story to others for information or entertainment. He goes on to demonstrate how it is the construction and reconstruction of experience that lead to and support conflict. This latter principle and its reverse underpin many of the more political uses of experiential learning. To summarize these and other points, Newman says 'Experience is complex . . . We construct and reconstruct our experience, falsify it, break it up into episodes, allocate to each episode particular truths of our own (1999, p. 19). Cell provides another dimension to this in his suggestion that 'We tend to experience what we believe we will experience' (1984, p. 178).

Despite the evidence for the constructed nature of experience, the naïve view persists that experience represents the 'authentic' representation and voice of the individual (Usher and Edwards, 1994; Fraser, 1995; Usher, 2000a, 2000b). On a reasoned basis, it is hard to deny the significance of the role that socially developed culture and norms play in the construction of individual experience and its interpretation. An experience itself has no meaning until it is endowed with meaning by the individual who mainly draws on socially constructed meaning (Jarvis, 1987).

It is useful to round off this section on experience in experiential learning with an important point made by Dewey, whose work on exploring the idea of experience was highly influential in the development of the field of experiential learning. Experiential learning tends to have an aura of 'good' around it (see later). Some of this comes from the enthusiastic but often simplistic writings on the topic. Clearly what is learnt from experience cannot be either 'good' nor positive to the learner. Dewey (1938) makes this point through his distinction between education and experience: 'some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience' (ibid., p. 25). He goes on to talk of other ways in which experience may stunt development, before making the main point of his book that traditional education 'offers a plethora of examples of experiences of the kind mentioned' (ibid., p. 26). Many would suggest that the alternative progressive education is equally capable of providing a source of 'mis-educative' experiences (Peters, 1966).

The problem of defining experiential learning

With a variety of views of experience, it is hardly surprising that the matter of definition of experiential learning is complicated. In various articles and books, Boud has defined and redefined experiential learning in a manner that would be difficult to challenge or improve and a review of his position concludes this section. However, since experiential learning is, itself, at least in part, a constructed term (Usher and Edwards, 1994), one set of meanings of it is the meanings of all of those who have contributed to the literature, and therefore we include a sample of other definitions.

It is worth noting at this point that the development of the meaning of experiential learning has a historical dimension. Houle (1976), Boydell, (1976), Cunningham (1983) and Boud (2001) provide interesting historical perspectives.

Some definitions

We begin with a general comment from Fenwick (2000) who also works at defining experiential learning. She summarizes the breadth of views of experiential learning in the educational context:

the notion of experiential learning has been appropriated to designate everything from kinaesthetic-directed instructional activities in the classroom to special work-place projects interspersed with critical dialogue led by a facilitator, to learning generated through social action movements, and even to team-building adventures in the wilderness. Definitional problems continue when one tries to disentangle the notion of experiential learning from experiences commonly associated with formal education such as class discussions, reading and analysis and reflection.

We now provide a general flavour of definitions of experiential learning:

The insight gained through the conscious or unconscious internalization of our own or observed experiences which build upon our past experiences or knowledge.

(Beard and Wilson, 2002, p. 16)

The contrast between non-experiential and experiential learning is one between more and less abstract and more and less linguistic sets of symbols that are employed in the transactions in which learning takes place.

(Tumin, 1976, p. 41)

experiential learning means that learning that occurs when changes in judgements, feelings or skills result for a particular person from living through an event or events.

(Chickering, 1977, p. 63)

experiential learning . . . is synonymous with 'meaningful-discovery' learning . . . which involves the learner in sorting things out for himself by restructuring his perceptions of what is happening.

(Boydell, 1976, pp. 19, 20)

experiential learning is learning that is rooted in our doing and our experience. It is learning which illuminates that experience and provides direction for the making of judgements as a guide to choice and action.

(Hutton, 1989, p. 51)

The . . . term 'experiential learning' insists that there can be no fundamental distinction between what is personally understood and what is personally, intimately experienced through living . . . We cannot come to know any aspect of the world without taking up a particular kind of stance towards it.
(Salmon, 1989, pp. 131, 133)

Experiential learning concepts offer a way of structuring and sequencing learning that leads to the increased effectiveness of the experience.
(Green, 1995)

Experiential learning is the strategic use of challenging outdoor and indoor experiences to stimulate insight and improvement. Its most basic purpose is to assist individuals, teams and whole organizations in increasing their business successes.

(Rumsey, 1996, cited in Saunders, undated)

[In experiential learning] the fact that the learner, not the educator, must be able to apply the knowledge gained from the teachings is the bottom line.
(Saunders, undated)

Experiential learning is a process in which an experience is reflected upon and then translated into concepts which in turn become guidelines for new experiences.

(Saddington, 1992, p. 44)

The received professional ideology of experiential learning is that it empowers individuals to gain control over learning and hence their lives and to take responsibility for themselves. [It is] widely regarded as empowering learners perhaps in ways that non-experiential learning does not.

(Griffin, 1992, pp. 32, 31)

Sometimes the definition of a topic is presented indirectly instead of directly. In a recent workshop, experiential learning was presented as differing from formal learning in that it is largely unstructured; begins with the experience, not principles and concepts; is more personal or individualized; may be 'unconsciously acquired' and is 'usually more permanent' (Noble, 2002).

Another indirect, but rather important source of views about experiential learning is teachers and learners involved in programmes that overtly use experiential learning. Burnard (1991) sought such information from nurse tutors and their students. He summarized the main responses as learning by doing and personal learning and learning that involved reflection. It was seen as active rather than passive and, in this situation, was contrasted with 'lecturing' or 'being taught'. He says, 'The idea seems to be that in experiential learning, we learn by taking part and learn something that is personal to us, whereas in the lecture approach, we are more passive; we adopt knowledge [from the public domain]' (ibid., p. 217).

A significant view of experiential learning is evident in the design of one Master's programme in 'experiential education' (Saunders, undated). Students on the programme are from widely differing backgrounds. There are two bases for the programme design – the first is that students are required to 'leave the classroom and develop meaningful learning experiences for themselves'. The second is that 'raw, direct experience is complemented with careful thought and reason. In this light, core seminars are orientated towards the analysis and questioning about the fundamental theory of experiential education' (Saunders, undated). One of the most useful definitions that takes a wide range of interpretations into account (see below) is that of McGill and Warner Weil (1989). They see experiential learning as:

the process whereby people individually and in association with others, engage in direct encounter, then *purposefully* reflect upon, validate, transform, give personal meaning to and seek to integrate their different ways of knowing. Experiential *learning* therefore enables the discovery of possibilities that may not be evident from direct experience alone.

(*ibid.*, p. 248)

As we have said, the views of experiential learning differ widely. Seeking unanimity from this range of views is not possible.

Typologies of experiential learning

Another way of working with this array of definitions is to produce a typology. We ended on the definition of McGill and Warner Weil, who also produced a typology as a means of ordering presentations in the First International Conference on Experiential Learning in 1987. Their typology describes four 'villages'. Their 'villages' represent clusters of inter-related ideas and concerns and the significance of the ideological aspects of experiential learning is evident in their choice of categories. The first village is concerned with 'assessing and accrediting learning from life and work experience as the basis for creating new routes into higher education' and other opportunities. The term often applied here is APEL (accreditation of prior experiential learning). The second 'village' 'focuses on experiential learning as the basis for bringing about change in the structures, purposes and curricula of post-school education. This includes work on simulation, role play and learning from work experience in higher education. In terms of theory, it tends to lean towards the managed sequences of experiential learning such as the Kolb cycle (Kolb, 1984). The third 'village' is concerned with 'consciousness raising, community action and social change'. Examples here are the work of Friere (1970) and Hart (1990) and the fourth is concerned with 'personal growth and development' and examples are Progoff (1980) and Rowland (2000).

Another typology that is very different is that of Davies (2001) who suggests three approaches to experiential learning. The first approach includes those who have developed sequences for the process of experiential learning. This is epitomized by the work of Kolb (1984) and Boud and Walker (2000). The second approach is represented by those for whom the significance of experiential learning in relation to the learner's views or behaviour is the main consideration. A third approach is concerned with comment on the processes of experiential learning. Mulligan's view of the internal processes of experiential learning would seem to exemplify this approach (Mulligan, 2000).

The definitions of Boud and associates

While it is tempting to pick out issues raised in the list of definitions of experiential learning above, it is a selected list, it is very wide-ranging but does not cover the field. In a number of publications, Boud and his colleagues have noted the general features and significant boundaries of the literature of experiential learning and beyond adding a few points, we accept this as an appropriate characterization of this complicated literature. In effect, they progressively identify the boundaries of experiential learning. In 2000, Boud, Cohen and Walker developed five 'propositions' about experiential learning. They are:

- Experience is the foundation of, and the stimulus for all learning.
 - Learners actively construct their own experience.
 - Learning is a holistic process.
 - Learning is socially and culturally constructed.
 - Learning is influenced by the socioemotional context in which it occurs.
- (ibid., pp. 8–14)

These are statements that are completely in accord with the content of the generic view of learning in Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 of this book. Andresen *et al.* (2000), now using the term 'experience-based learning', restate the propositions as assumptions (ibid., pp. 225, 226) and add other 'features that characterise and distinguish it from other approaches' (ibid., p. 226). These are taken from Kolb (1984, p. 38):

- involvement of the whole person – intellect, feelings and senses;
- recognition and active use of all the learner's relevant life experiences and learning experiences;
- continued reflection upon earlier experiences in order to add to and transform them into deeper understanding.

It will be noted that these statements also coincide completely with the earlier material in this book, though in 1984, it is likely that the statements would

have been seen as quite distinct from the then current views of learning. One incidental characteristic of experiential learning, therefore, is that it is based on theoretical principles that have often been ahead of their time.

Andresen *et al.* go on to mention three further factors that may characterize the practice of experience-based learning:

- intentionality of design' – meaning that learning 'events' may be 'structured' (2000, p. 226);
- 'facilitation' – experiential learning situations tend to be managed by 'facilitators' rather than 'teachers' (*ibid.*). The former are normally seen as having equal status as the learners and aid the learning rather than providing material of learning.
- 'assessment of learning outcomes' – there tend to be processes of assessment of learning or practices that are particularly characteristic of experiential learning. Andresen *et al.* mention learning journals, negotiated learning contracts, peer assessment and self-assessment (*ibid.*, p. 227).

Finally, they mention what they deem to be 'essential criteria' of experiential learning. These are:

- that the learning that results is personally significant or meaningful to the learner;
- that it is important that the learner is personally engaged with the learning;
- that there is a reflective process involved;
- that there is acknowledgement that there is involvement of the whole person in all her capacities and relationships with the present and related past experiences;
- that there is recognition of the prior experience of learners;
- that there is an ethical stance of concern and respect for the learner, validation, trust and openness toward the learner which value and support the 'self-directive potential of the learner'.

(*ibid.*, pp. 227, 228)

There are a number of more general statements that we can add as a result of the current perusal of the literature. They provide mostly what might be called 'outside boundaries' and are fairly obvious but are important. The first is that experiential learning takes effort. It will not just occur automatically when a person has an experience. Mason (2000, p. 115) says: 'intentional learning through experience requires more than just trusting in haphazardly metonymic triggering of randomly stored memories'. In the same book, Criticos (2000) cites the Chinese proverb, 'I hear and I forget, I see and I can remember, I do and I understand' (*ibid.*, p. 161). He comments: 'If experience in itself was so valuable, then humans who are enmeshed in experience ought

to be more knowledgeable than they are. Sadly the only conclusion that can be reached is that we do not learn from experience' (ibid.). He suggests that experience must be processed in order that knowledge can result from it. It is likely that this is one of the most important statements in this chapter.

The second 'outside boundary' of experiential learning follows on. It is that it is not just any experience that can result in learning but specific experiences, often at the 'right time' and in the 'right place'. While Davies and Easterby-Smith (1984) agree that experience is the 'key to the development' of the managers whom they studied, it is not just a matter of 'any experience', but 'that some kinds of experience provide more effective development than others'. They identified the 'best' experiences for learning to come from situations in which their managers confronted novel situations and problems where their existing behaviours were inadequate (which, in terms used previously, were therefore ill-structured or challenging). Managers with steady and unchanging work experiences did not seem to develop as much.

The third boundary is that 'unlearning' can be a more important gain from experiential learning than 'learning'. In a sense, this statement contradicts the notion of learning as change, but it does emphasize that change, and changing back to the pre-change state – in other words, flexibility and openness to the possibility of mistake or error – can be important in learning. Brew (2000) provides a detailed account of such learning.

Finally, we return to the topic of the subjectivity of experience. Boud and Andresen and their colleagues do recognize this in several statements above, but do not emphasize it. Unless we recognize the 'slipperiness' of our processing of experience, we are looking at learning and, indeed, teaching, in a naïve and non-progressive manner. Experiential learning should explicitly recognize the subjective nature of experience.

We can summarize the four 'outside boundaries' of experiential learning that we have added to those of Andresen *et al.* above:

- Experiential learning takes effort.
- Learning can occur from some experiences more effectively than from others.
- 'Unlearning' from experience can be more important than learning more.
- Experiential learning should explicitly recognize the subjective nature of experience.

It is interesting to note that the social and ideologically orientated 'four villages' approach of Warner Weil and McGill (1989a) overlaps with the material above approach in some places, but mainly could be said to build on the basis of these various sets of statements.

The sequential approaches to experiential learning

This section is concerned with approaches to experiential learning that involve the detailing of sequences of the activities involved in the process of learning experientially (see Davies' typology, above). Probably the most common understanding of experiential learning is that based on the work of Kolb (1984) with his cycle of experiential learning which was developed from the work of Piaget, Lewin and others. Arguably it is because of the 'recipe' type of approach that is demonstrated in Kolb's work (Rowland, 2000) that 'experiential learning' has become so much a topic of discussion and use in educational and training circles. Basically Kolb's work and others that are based on it (e.g., Gibbs, 1988; Dennison and Kirk, 1990) make learning seem easy, though one might say that no approach would gain so much popularity if it did not work or have some value. One of the tasks of this section is to question why the Kolb cycle might 'work' and in what respects it may be deficient.

In its simplest form, the Kolb cycle has four elements drawn in a cycle, with elements linked. Notionally the entry point is 'concrete experience'. According to Kolb and Fry (1975), immediate concrete experience is the basis for observation and reflection. These observations are assimilated into a 'theory' ('Formation of abstract conceptions') from which new implications for action can be deduced ('Testing implications of concepts in new situations'). These implications or hypotheses then serve as guides interacting to create new experiences (*ibid.*, p. 1). The 'new experiences' are, then, in effect, new concrete experiences for further processing in the cycle. The usual interpretation of the cycle appears to be somewhat static, but Kolb not only suggested that learners might 'recycle' many times, but also that they start their learning at any stage in the sequence (Kolb, 1984). He also observed that people functioned more and less effectively in the stages of the cycle, for example, they might be more keen on the theorizing aspects of the task than the active testing phase. The implied differences in 'learning styles' have been widely applied (e.g., Honey and Mumford, 1992; Sadler-Smith, 1997; Rider and Rayner, 1998).

There are many criticisms of the Kolb cycle, some because it is simplistic (Jarvis, 1987; Rowland, 2000; Moon, 2001a) or 'formulaic' (Marsick and Watkins, 1990); some because it does not go far enough in considering factors such as the transfer of learning (Wallace, 1996). Some note that it is too much based on the notion of experience as a phenomenon of the individual, or that the notion of experience is simplified – tending to be small scale (Newman, 1999) or does not take account tacit knowledge (Eraut, 2000). Newman captures many of these sentiments in saying of the Kolb cycle:

I find it too ordered, too regular, too predictable. It seems to imply an imperative: that we must move through the cycle, that we must move on to the next stage, rather than letting experiences enter into our souls to rest there, develop, change and influence us in some more disordered, unexpected and 'natural' way.

(1999, p. 84)

As is not unusual in academic writing, one of the main problems about the cycle lies not with Kolb's work, but with the ways in which his work has been reinterpreted. It is another feature of the Kolb cycle that there are many sets of wording for the various phases of it (e.g., Boydell, 1976). Sometimes these are helpful (e.g., Gibbs, 1988). Sometimes the words used to depict the stages are hard to relate to the original, particularly with regard to the stage of abstract conceptualization and in many reinterpretations, the stage of testing is stated as 'action' or the sense of 'doing something' (Dennison and Kirk, 1990). For the sake of later interpretations, it is a shame that Kolb did not say more about the nature of the observation and reflection stages (Moon, 1999a).

There are, however, some fruitful interpretations of the Kolb cycle. Moon (1999a) analysed the stages in experiential learning that she could identify from four theorists writing before 1993 (Steinaker and Bell, 1979; Boyd and Fales, 1983; Boud *et al.*, 1985; Atkins and Murphy, 1993). Between them the following phases were identified (it is interesting to note the tendency to avoid the language of reflection in these earlier accounts):

- the 'having of' the experience;
- recognition of a need to resolve something;
- clarification of the issue;
- reviewing and recollecting;
- reviewing feelings/the emotional state;
- processing of knowledge and ideas;
- eventual resolution, possible transformation and action;
- possible action.

(taken from Moon, 1999a)

A more recent example of a sequential approach to experiential learning is Cowan (1998) who redrew the Kolb cycle 'rather like an over-stretched spring' (*ibid.*, p. 37) in order to incorporate more detail of reflective processes based on Schön (1983, 1987). He suggests that a sequence of activities for learning could begin with a period of anticipation in which the goals of a task were considered in relation to prior experiences. The next stage is a deeper exploration of the task. Part of the way through the task there is period of 'reflection-in-action' – a review of progress. There is then a period of consolidation of the learning, followed by reflection on the whole process.

Cowan considers that the process incorporates a number of cycles round the original form of the Kolb cycle.

Another considerable development of the ideas of Kolb is presented in Boud *et al.* (1985) and in a more refined form in Boud and Walker (2000). Again this depiction of learning from experience focuses more on the role of the processes of reflection, recognizing several phases of it in the preparation for experience, the experiencing itself and the processes following the experiencing, during which learning might be consolidated. In both Cowan's and Boud and Walker's models of experiential learning, there are added considerations that avoid some of the more mechanistic qualities of the basic Kolb diagram. Both, for example, acknowledge the role of prior experience. Boud and Walker also incorporate some of what Mulligan calls the 'internal processors of experiential learning' (Mulligan, 1992) which seem to be rather important and to coincide with the 'outside boundaries of experiential learning' mentioned above. One, for example, is 'intent'. Mulligan uses the term 'willing'. We use the term 'effort' as an outside boundary. One could say that we are not likely to learn from experience unless there is some intention or will to learn – on the other hand, work on incidental learning suggests that we do 'pick up' material of learning relatively unconsciously – but it depends at what level we define 'consciousness'. In formal learning situations, it would seem reasonable to say that intent that is 'unclear or unfocused' is a barrier to learning (Boud and Walker, 2000). Both sources also refer to the important role of emotion or feelings in learning from experience – an issue to which we return in Chapter 9. Mulligan adds a number of other 'internal processors' – memory, thought, sensation, intuition and imagination – but perhaps the list could be infinite depending on the breadth of conceptions of learning and experience.

It is interesting to note the way in which the Kolb cycle (and similar depictions) are used – particularly in the field of training and development. Often the cycle is used more to underpin a process of the management of learning, than necessarily as a description of the learning process itself (Moon, 2001a). The cycles provide a sequence of activities to support learning. The Cowan model, for example, represents blocks of activity in which students are told how to behave with respect to the material of the task. In this context, it is relevant to note a point to which we will return in relating experiential to reflective learning. In the Kolb diagram, the stage of reflection precedes the stage of abstract conceptualization (which is often labelled as 'learning'). In the earlier discussions about the place of reflection in learning, we have suggested (p. 82), even in the definition of reflection, that it is seen as a process that works with the material that has already been learnt. In other words, reflection follows initial learning. This observation both justifies the approaches of Cowan and Boud and Walker that identify reflection as functioning at several phases of learning from experience.

Some general issues in experiential learning

Two of the issues described in this section focus on the later stages of the cycle of experiential learning and one relates to the early stage of a task. The first described concerns the ability to progress in the learning after having 'an experience' and the second concerns the transfer of learning from the episode of experiential learning to another context. Both of these issues are relevant to a large part of the literature on experiential learning, but the first is most obvious in relation to the closed nature of the cycle of experiential learning as depicted in the Kolb cycle. The third issue described in this section does not tend to feature much in the literature as a specific topic and it is how learners learn to learn from experience in a formal context.

Progression in experiential learning: the role of evaluation

When something is depicted as a circle, a reasonable question is: 'where does progression occur?' Kolb and others to some extent deal with this issue in talking of spirals or 'spring' formations where the testing phase of learning yields a new and different concrete experience, which then is 're-cycled', but this still does not entirely move out of the cycle. It is possible, for example, that the test phase is inept and indicates to the learner that the abstract conceptualization is appropriate when, perhaps it is not. For example, a teacher sees a colleague using a new way of explaining to young children why a penny at the bottom of a glass of water looks larger. She works out how to explain it and the next day, runs the session. The children are quiet and do not ask questions. She assumes that they have 'understood' to the desired degree and uses the same explanation again in another class. The children in the first class had not 'understood' in the manner intended and the teacher did not recognize this because her testing did not include the appropriate evaluation – her 'evaluation' was based on the silence of the children. The teacher 'learnt' from her experience but did not learn 'correctly'. Because she had no external feedback and evaluated the 'wrong' characteristic of the learners, she perpetuated her learnt (erroneous) behaviour. There was no incentive to modify it. The brief but helpful statement of Cell (1984) that we tend to experience what we believe we will experience, is important here. The involvement of a more critical stance of the action by the teacher herself might have avoided this self-perpetuating situation. The involvement of a deeper form of reflection (see Chapter 7) at several stages in the process is a means of becoming more critical. This might involve some imagination (Mulligan, 2000 – see above), so that the action of the teacher and the children's responses are seen in a broader context. Another method is to

involve others. We have noted the somewhat individualistic orientation of much experiential learning. A formalized manner of involving others in experiential learning is through the use of action learning techniques (McGill and Beaty, 1992). In this way, proposed actions and their consequences are exposed to the constructively critical view of others.

Transfer

Transfer of experiential learning from an educational context to the situation of its main deployment – such as the work situation – is a major issue. There is a broad but rather depressing literature on the transfer of learning and though it is evident that humans are good at transferring ideas and skills learnt in one setting to another there are still somewhat contrary messages in much of the literature (Bennett *et al.*, 2000). Tennant says: ‘The problematic nature of transfer seems to me quite amazing. This is because educational discourse is imbued with the language of transfer; the idea that what is learned has some generic application is a fundamental tenet of education’ (1999, p. 166). Tennant reviews and assesses various approaches to this issue including that of the ‘situated learning’ theorists, for example, Lave and Wenger (1991) and Greeno (1997) whose views are sometimes interpreted as suggesting that learning is context-bound. He suggests that the issue is not a matter of whether or not transfer occurs but how best to facilitate and maximize the transfer, and when and why transfer does not occur as in the example from Wallace (1996).

Wallace (1996) describes a particularly graphic example of a situation in which learning from an experience did not transfer to a work situation in the manner intended and he analyses what would have improved the situation. Wallace was involved in an ‘intensive outdoor management training course’ in which there were physical tasks, theoretical lectures, and occasions for reflection on performance. The course yielded intense feelings and an ethos of self-improvement was engendered. He found that back in the work situation, he retained little of the learning and that experiences seemed irrelevant, despite the explicit assumptions about relevance and transfer that were made by the organizers of this course (and many others). He felt that his ‘transfer problem’ was ‘rooted in the way that the team tasks and the setting were . . . far removed by design from . . . [his] . . . routine managerial work and its context’ (*ibid.*, p. 18). He suggests that, while there may have been effective learning on the course, the contexts were too different. He suggests that the more different the context of the experiential learning situation, ‘the more additional learning is required for transfer into the context of use and the greater the need for learning support (*ibid.*)’.

Moon (1999a) observed similar problems in short course training situations and suggests a range of reflective activities that will enable the better integration of experiential learning into workplace practice. They are deliberate

activities that follow the sequence below ('current' practice is that as practised prior to the course):

- the development of awareness of current workplace practice;
- the clarification of the new learning and how it relates to current understanding of current practice;
- the integration of new learning and current practice;
- the anticipation or imagination of the nature of improved practice (in other words – responding to the question 'how will the new learning make my practice different?').

Probably the most significant part of this sequence is the use of imagination. Tennant (see above) would add other factors to this list such as the importance of a community of discourse through which learning occurs and is communicated and, in particular, a supportive climate in the transfer context (the workplace) (1999, p. 177).

Learning to learn from experience in the formal context

The main concern here is with experiential learning in formal educational contexts. Often in an experiential learning situation, students who have been used to a teacher being present who tells them what they need to learn are suddenly responsible for learning apparently important ideas without a teacher. Teachers observe that students do not automatically know how to learn from experience in a formal context and that they do not automatically know how to help them (Boreham, 1987). Sometimes it is a matter of the methodology and sometimes it can be a problem that relates to the perceptions of the learning task of student and teacher being different (Burnard, 1991). Often it is a matter of lack of clarity about the task in design terms – a matter that is raised in subsequent chapters.

Experiential learning: drawing out the key points

The literature on experiential learning is diverse and there is no easy summary that can pull it all together. While it is possible to make some generalizations about reflective learning that suggest it to be a certain kind of mental activity, even that kind of generalization cannot be made of experiential learning as it is depicted in the literature. It is a term that tends to be developed to suit the contexts in which it is applied (Sutherland, 1997). As Usher and Edwards point out, it is not 'something found in nature . . . different groups give it their own particular meanings and construct it in their own ways' (1994, p. 201). This is inevitable when, as indicated several times in this book, all learning is based on experience.

However, the term ‘experiential learning’ does have particular connotations or otherwise it would be meaningless. In some respects we come back to the definitions mentioned above. Some of the connotations of experiential learning are that:

- It is not usually mediated or ‘taught’.
- Following from this, the material of learning is usually direct experience.
- There is often a sense that experiential learning is a favoured manner of learning, is ‘better’ or is more meaningful or it is ‘empowering’. The sense of ‘empowerment’ may come from the manner in which the experiential learning is used, rather than the form of learning itself.
- There is usually reflection either deliberately or non-deliberately involved in experiential learning.
- There is usually some active phase of the learning (‘action’, ‘doing’, ‘experimentation’, and so on).
- There is usually some mechanism of feedback present.
- There is usually formal intention to learn.

The intention to learn at a particular time or from a particular experience is what justifies the use of a specific term such as ‘experiential learning’ and provides a distinction from incidental and what we call ‘everyday’ learning. We pick up these connotations of experiential learning in the next chapter.

Moving on: an important note

In many cases of experiential learning, particularly those where the aim has been to empower or raise the consciousness of a group of people, the description of the process of learning is too imprecise to be analysed in relation to generic learning or compared with reflective learning. However, in contrast, in situations in which experiential learning is depicted as a sequence of events, there is something more tangible, particularly since ‘reflection’ is often seen as having a specific role in the process. It, therefore, has to be these forms of experiential learning in which the learning process itself is better described that we take forward into the next chapter.

Chapter 9

Experiential learning and reflective learning

Drawing it together

Introduction

In the last section of the previous chapter we summarized the nature of experiential learning. Following on from that, we return to the questions posed about experiential learning:

- What is experiential learning in relation to a generic view of learning?
- How is reflective learning involved in experiential learning and is it essential or only sometimes involved?
- Does reflective learning sometimes or always involve experiential learning?

The previous chapters (in particular, the list of connotations of experiential learning in the last chapter) have laid the groundwork for the response in this chapter to the questions above. Here we can draw the threads together and use the general picture to explore the relationship of experiential learning to the generic view of learning (see next section). Through this consideration, some of the connotations of experiential learning also begin to provide a better understanding of the processes of experiential learning. For example, the involvement of action in experiential learning means that a learner must represent her learning and this, in two ways, is likely to improve learning. The following section, in a similar manner, analyses the cycle of experiential learning as presented by Kolb (1984). The Kolb cycle seems to ‘work’ as a tool for learning by employing at least three helpful learning activities which all involve reflective learning.

The sections described above draw a picture of the process of experiential learning as a sequence of learning activities that may work alone, or may be grouped. We are then broadly able to summarize experiential learning. The summary leads into the last section of this chapter which concerns the relationship between reflective and experiential learning. This chapter concludes the theoretical examination of reflective and experiential learning and leads into the more practical concerns of the last three chapters.

Experiential learning and the generic view of learning

A list of connotations of experiential learning was an outcome of the last chapter. In this chapter we use these connotations of experiential learning as a starting point for exploring the nature of experiential learning in relation to the generic view of learning developed in the first four chapters. Since reflection is included in the connotations of experiential learning this implies that the discussion is immediately drawn on towards a consideration of how reflective learning interrelates with experiential learning.

The connotations of experiential learning (now abbreviated) are that:

- Experiential learning is not usually mediated.
- The material of learning is usually direct experience.
- There is often a sense that it is a specially good form of learning.
- Reflection is usually involved.
- There is usually an 'active' phase of the learning.
- There is usually some mechanism of feedback present.
- There is usually an intention to learn.

This list of somewhat variable characteristics represents both ways in which we define experiential learning and the outcomes of it. The points will be discussed in this chapter, sometimes in a grouped manner and not in the same order as the list.

There is usually an intention to learn

The 'intention to learn' is mainly what makes experiential learning worth considering as a specific form of learning, otherwise, it is little different from incidental and everyday learning. There are reasons for using the qualifying word 'mainly'. We can say that there is always an overt intention for engaging in a particular act of learning, but some of the learning process involved may be incidental learning and therefore unconscious and not fully intentional. For example, a student nurse is told how to put a bandage on a

sprained ankle. She is asked to practise on her colleague. There is a conscious intention to learn from the whole experience, but there is likely to be much unconscious and incidental learning during the process. For example, she might find that getting her colleague to sit on a lower rather than higher stool makes the ankle more accessible – a useful insight that is not intentional in the learning process (Eraut, 2000).

Experiential learning is not usually mediated; the material of learning is usually direct experience and reflection is usually involved

These three connotations are linked through the notion of reflection. The chapters on reflective learning indicate that reflective learning takes place when the material of learning is not straightforward, or is relatively challenging to a learner who has the intention of attaining meaning (i.e., takes a deep approach). There are several possible situations described in which material of learning can be challenging to the learner, particularly when it is relatively ill-structured. Material of learning can be challenging when:

- it is complex in relation to the learner's prior experience;
- it is not complex itself but the learner's prior experiences do not or cannot guide the process of learning (e.g., the learner does not have the prerequisite prior understanding);
- it is not complex itself, but when the learner wants to use a frame of reference in a manner that is challenging to her (to 'problematize it', p. 28);
- perhaps the context of the learning is difficult or challenging.

It was indicated in the previous chapter that the directness of experience is relative to the learner. For example, it is possible that the same experience (e.g., learning to make crême brûlée), can be complex to one learner (e.g., to someone who has no confidence in her ability to cook anything) but not complex to another who enjoys cookery, understands the techniques and terms but who has still not cooked this dish before. In relation to experience, we have suggested that mediation is a secondary process in which the material of teaching is simplified or recodified usually to create an easier or more certain situation for the learner (Chapter 5). Mediation thus usually reduces the complexity of direct experience. Sometimes, though, mediation can involve manipulation of the situation in order to increase the challenge to the learner and guide her into useful learning about her learning processes.

There are few generalizations that can be made about the nature of the experience in experiential learning because it is more or less complex, not in relation to other experiences, but as external experience in relation to a learner's internal experience. However, because experiential learning is

usually unmediated and because it is usually direct and involves challenge to the learner, reflective learning is involved. The close relationship between experiential learning and reflective learning is an important way in which we can relate experiential learning to the generic view of learning.

In the language of the generic view of learning, the paragraphs above suggest that the learner may have relatively little guidance in sorting out how to frame her learning, the figure/ground relationships, decisions about what is relevant for learning, in other words, how to manage her own architecture of variation (p. 29). However, she can learn to learn from experience. As mentioned earlier, Fazey and Marton (2002) showed that learners learn more effectively when they are confronted with situations that challenge them to cope with a range of variations in experience (p. 28). However, the difficulty in managing variation and sorting figure from ground in unmediated learning from direct experience can dominate the learning situation and the learner may feel she flounders around, looking for tracks of meaning to follow. This brings us to another of the purposes of mediation. It is not only about a process of 'teaching' but it guides the learner in what it is that she should be learning. As an example: a learner is sent on a work experience placement with the expectation that she will learn from the experience. She is asked to write a learning journal but she is completely unsure what to reflect on or how to frame her learning. The more complex or ill-structured the experience in relation to the prior experience of the learner, the more need the learner will have for an indication of what it is that she has to learn to fulfil set requirements. This is an important principle that is often forgotten in the enthusiasm for experiential learning.

There is often a sense that experiential learning is a specially good form of learning

The word 'good' is used above intentionally. There is a sense of evangelism in some of the writings that relate to experiential learning. This may relate to a sense of contrast between 'tedious' classroom learning at which only a few might be seen to excel and learning from life, between the 'bookish' route and that at the 'coal face'. Dewey (1938) and many later educational writers propounded the values of learning by discovery in progressive education.

However, if we reinterpret 'good' as 'effective', is experiential learning any more effective than formal learning? The initial response is likely to be a series of further questions. Who is it who is learning? What is being learnt? How does the learner want to use the knowledge (i.e., what is the purpose of the learning)? How conveniently can the experience be experienced (i.e., has the learner got time to go and sit at the bottom of a volcano for direct experience)? All these factors have a bearing on the effectiveness of a given episode of experiential learning and at present suggest that 'effectiveness' might be relative to matters such as the context and purpose of the learning situation.

However, there are other factors about experiential learning and the connotations of 'goodness'. Boud *et al.* (1985) and Boud and Walker (2000) have pointed out that one feature that is often associated with experiential learning is also that it takes account of the functioning of the whole person, including her emotions. If experiential learning is exceptional in respect of its holistic nature, then it might warrant its reputation on that basis. Certainly, in the way in which experiential learning situations are developed, there may be greater account taken of the emotional aspects of learning. In Chapter 3 we argued that emotion is part of all learning. If this is the case, experiential learning might not be different *per se* but it is different in the aspects of learning that are noticed and assessed. The question then is whether taking specific account of emotional aspects of learning improves learning or not. Many would argue that taking account of the 'whole learner' does facilitate learning. In this respect, then, the perceived effectiveness of experiential learning is part of the construed notion of experiential learning. It is good because it is seen as being good or is managed in a good way with account taken of the emotion or feelings of the learners.

There are other reasons why experiential learning can be particularly effective. Boydell (1976) stressed the special intention to finding meaning. Moon (2002a) looked at the ways in which learning from work experience could enhance academic learning (see Chapter 12). More significantly, others have mentioned the role of action and feedback that are usually associated with it and this is the subject matter of the next section.

In experiential learning there is usually an active phase of the learning; there is usually some mechanism of feedback present

The role of 'action' in experiential learning may either be emphasized strongly or relatively ignored in the literature. Indeed, the behaviour that can constitute 'action' is also somewhat variable. It tends to be taken into account in a greater way in work that follows the Kolb cycle (e.g., Gibbs, 1988; Dennison and Kirk, 1990; Cowan, 1998) because on the cycle there is clearly an active phase implied (Kolb, 1984). The 'action' may be reinterpreted in different ways that subtly shift it away from any notion of physical action. Boydell (1976) suggests, for example, that experiential learning can occur in lectures if there is interactivity between students or with the lecturer. Cowan (1998) uses the notion of testing as action while others see the phase as one of planning.

We need to consider what it is that relates these different words for action and the notion of feedback and how are they linked to experiential learning. In effect, they are all words for the representation of learning. In Chapter 1 and in other places in the book, we have seen that the representation of learning is a source of further learning (Eisner, 1982). Conceptualizations of experiential learning that incorporate the representation of learning, as a

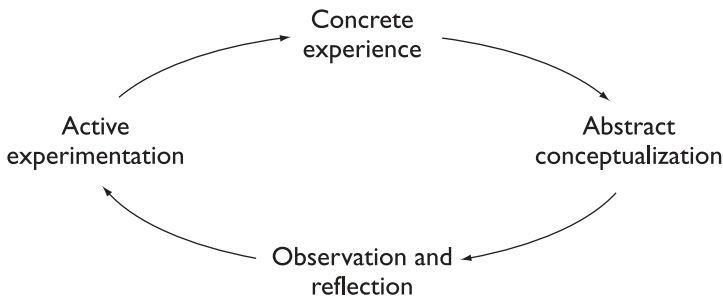
matter of course, imply greater effectiveness. In addition, because learning is represented in some form or other there will be a source of feedback to the learner and this too can improve the learning if the learner takes account of it.

There is another point here: in order to represent learning in a manner in which it is meaningful, it is likely the learner will have adopted a deep approach to the learning (Chapter 4, and Moon, 1999a). A surface approach would probably not lead to the ability to represent learning in an effective manner and therefore to enable the following of the cycle of experiential learning.

In this way, when the notion of action or a form of representation of learning is implied in experiential learning, there are automatically ways in which the learning is likely to be more effective. This reinforces the connotation of 'good' learning that we have discussed above and brings to bear material in Chapter 6 about the role of reflective learning in learning from the representation of learning.

Another look at the cycle of experiential learning

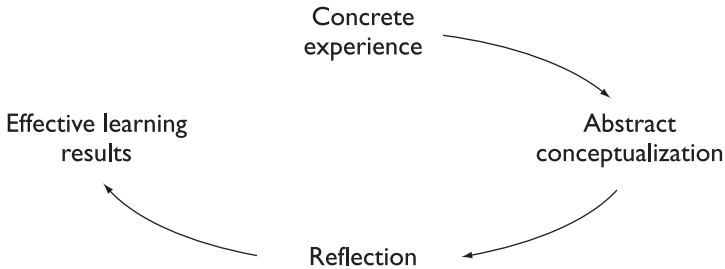
Following the reasoning of the sections above, we return to reconsider the learning that results from the cycle of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). We reproduce it following Kolb's terminology but using the sequence as suggested in Chapter 6, reversing 'abstract conceptualization' and 'reflection'. In the light of the discussion above, what is it that is going on in the cycle that makes it seem effective?



We suggest that the cycle seems to work on the basis of three components of the learning process that has been described in earlier chapters. It involves a reflective learning phase, a phase of learning from the representation of learning and a further phase of learning from feedback.

The reflective learning phase

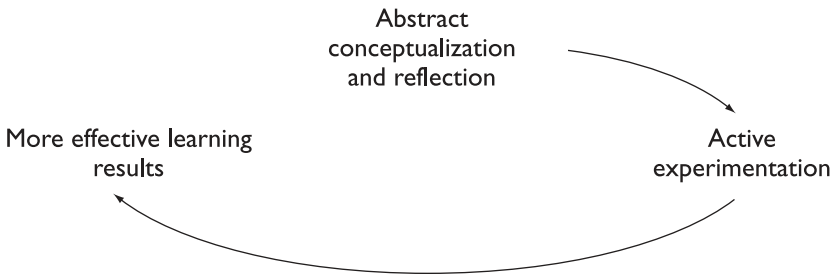
In the first phase of reflective learning, the essence of a 'concrete experience' is that it is relatively ill-structured material of learning. This element of the Kolb cycle is therefore a process of reflective learning:



The process of reflective learning is a manner of learning that implies a deep approach to learning which is likely to be effective.

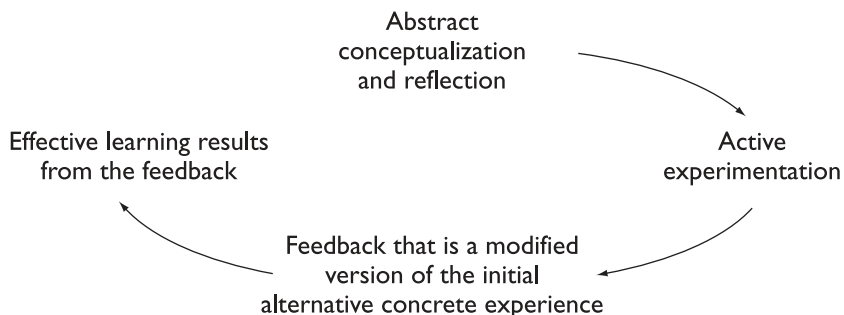
Learning from the representation of learning phase

However, the Kolb cycle does not stop at this point. In a separate operation of learning, the phase of learning from the representation of learning, learners are asked to represent their learning – which is another means of learning (see above). Learning is thus reinforced.



Learning from feedback

The third phase of learning from feedback somewhat overlaps with the second phase and implies that the cycle is seen (as Kolb suggested) as 'recycling' more than once. Learning from feedback in many ways is continuous with learning from the representation of learning but it implies also that we learn from situations in which things go wrong and then we have a chance to put the action 'right' in a further cycle.



In these ways, it would be appropriate to call the Kolb cycle a ‘system’. As a system it includes several discrete ways of learning and of reinforcing learning. Alternatively it can be presented as a smooth flowing sequence that can be used by those who manage the process of learning. In other words, it can either be about a sequence of learning activities or it is about the facilitation of learning. When it works, it works because of the involvement of the different forms of learning which, combined with the powerful processes of reflection, tend to result in effective learning.

Summarizing experiential learning

The last two sections of this chapter represent the fulfilment of some of the aims of the book. In this section we can now summarize some of the ways in which experiential learning relates to what we have called the generic view of learning. In formal settings, experiential learning seems to be involved in:

- managed situations in which the learning is structured within a powerful system that tends to include an action phase;
- situations in which we learn from the representation of learning;
- relatively new situations to us in which we learn directly from experience with relatively little mediation;
- a range of situations that may not fit any of the above – a construct of the literature.

In addition, the term may be used to describe learning from everyday events in the course of everyday living. On the whole, the approach of this book is to categorize ‘experiential learning’ as a form of educational activity that is exploited in formal educational contexts.

Experiential and reflective learning

In the course of this chapter we have addressed the questions at the beginning of the chapter. We summarize the response to them here.

In Chapter 6, we indicated the situations in which reflective learning seems to occur, using the following headings to describe when reflective learning occurs:

- when there is new material of learning;
- when there is learning from the representation of learning;
- when there is no new material of learning and the learner is attempting to develop her understanding on the basis of what she already knows.

We have suggested that typical features of experiential learning situations tend to be:

- that the material of learning is ill-structured and challenging to a learner;
- in addition, the expectation is usually that learners will engage in meaningful learning;
- in some forms of experiential learning, representation of learning is required (e.g., when there is emphasis on action).

Learning journals and other reflective tools that require learners to reflect without new material of learning are often involved in experiential learning activities.

To a greater or lesser extent, therefore, all of the forms of reflective learning may have a role in experiential learning. The exception is where the experience is not ill-structured and represents no learning challenge to the learner. We use a simple example. A subject who regularly entertains and serves wine is asked to learn how to uncork a bottle and serve appropriate wine. The task of learning, we assume, represents no challenge to this learner. We have said that a task can be a challenge to one learner and not to another, so choosing a wine, uncorking and serving it could prove challenging to a non-wine drinker. However, we have also suggested that the same learner with the same learning task may be able to interpret and accomplish the task simply, as above, but may feel more challenged when, for example, uncorking and serving wine connoisseurs. The more challenging situation is likely to involve reflective learning; the simpler situation is not likely to involve reflection. Both, however, could be construed as situations of experiential learning.

The learning challenge may not come directly from the nature of the task, but the situation in relation to the learner. We have already pointed out that learners may be confronted with complex situations in which they are told to 'learn from the experience'. The learner might be on a work experience placement in a small business and told that her task is to learn from the experience

of the placement. In this case, the challenge is, as we have shown above, in the appropriate framing of the learning and in the management of variations that will enable progress in learning. In such a situation much learning is likely to be incidental (Marsick and Watkins, 1990). The complexity is not in understanding what is learnt, but in the actions of drawing out and clarifying significant matters. In common parlance we might say it is in 'seeing the wood for the trees'. Reflective learning is involved. We are saying, therefore, that many situations of experiential learning involve applications of reflective learning.

So could we say that experiential learning is the same as reflective learning? We cannot say this because experiential learning is a construct that is accompanied by different meanings according to the context of its use. In addition, however, experiential learning, virtually by definition, will involve at some stage, an external experience of learning. This is not necessarily the case with reflective learning activities in which the learner may be working entirely with internal experience (cognitive housekeeping).

We have identified the processes of both reflective and experiential learning in relation to the generic view of learning in Chapters 1–4 and have discussed that:

- experiential learning usually involves reflective learning – except where the material of learning is unchallenging to the learner;
- reflective learning usually has an important role in experiential learning – however, it has an important separate meaning when there is no new material of learning and we reflect on what we 'know' already.

Part III

Working with reflective and experiential learning

Chapter 10

Introducing reflective activities to learners

Introduction

This chapter is the beginning of the more practical part of the book. The next three chapters are practically based and are designed to support work in education or professional development to enable learners to learn by way of reflective or experiential learning. There are a number of references to resources that are in the Resources section at the end of the book. This chapter is primarily concerned with reflective learning. Reflective learning itself is significant in formal education but it plays an important role in most experiential learning. For this reason, the content of the chapter may be used to support either activity.

The first of these practically based chapters concerns the introduction of reflective activities to learners. This is presented as a two-stage process, which is explained in the first section. Both stages consist of a range of activities and exercises and resources that are intended to help learners to understand what they need to do to manage reflective writing or reflective learning.

The two-stage approach to introducing reflective activities: an explanation

The approach is based on two observations that have practical implications for the introduction of reflective writing activities to students – we have referred to both earlier. First, just presenting learners with a task of writing a learning

journal, or reflecting on work experience or any task that involves reflection, is not always successful. Not all learners find reflection easy when it is introduced as a specific requirement. Some will simply 'take to it', recognizing its role in their learning and managing the process well. Some, who may be good students, will not understand what is meant by it and will ask 'what is it that you want me to do?' There are different views of what reflection is and the differences are just as likely to exist among staff as among students. It is worth remembering that staff who introduce reflective activities are likely to be those who understand reflection. They may not understand how other students or staff could fail to comprehend it. Differences in ability to reflect among staff has been demonstrated in difficulties that some experience in their own professional development requirements. It is therefore important when working with both staff and students, to consider carefully how reflection is introduced – both in order to enable students to function well, but also to ensure that staff are 'in tune' with the activities.

Sometimes there are inter-disciplinary issues in the understanding of reflection. The discourses of some subjects are, by nature, more likely to require reflective activity 'on paper'. In others, such as science subjects, the same activity is probably involved, but it occurs mentally and the written report may be the product but not the representation of reflection. We suggest that deliberately introduced reflective activity can play a role in supporting any discipline. It is of note that reflective journal activity is described in over thirty-two disciplines in the literature (Moon, 1999b).

There may also be cultural issues to consider in the introduction of reflective activity. Some languages do not have a word for reflection. Without a word to label a concept, there may be considerable difficulties in grasping the concept itself. We should be aware that misconceptions about the activity of reflection can occur very easily.

A second observation is that while most students do come to understand how to write reflectively, their reflection tends to be superficial and descriptive (Hatton and Smith, 1995). Relatively descriptive reflection can be what is required for a particular task. For example, it is unlikely that professional development bodies would want the profundities of personal reflection on the application for membership forms. However, where the objective of the reflection is to review personal understandings with a view to change through further learning, superficial reflection will often not be adequate. This suggests that an additional challenge to setting up reflective activities may often be of enabling learners to deepen, or make more profound, their level of reflection.

On the basis of the two observations above, a two-stage approach to the introduction of reflective activities has been developed. The first stage is termed 'presenting reflection'. This stage involves discussion and exercises and the provision of examples that introduce the idea of reflection and ensure that students come to a reasonable understanding of what is required

in reflective writing. The task for students is to learn to be able to manage a basic form of reflective writing. This may still be fairly descriptive, but students should understand how it is different from pure description. Once students are reasonably accomplished in producing at least basic reflective writing (some will be able to produce deeper work from the start), then the second stage is introduced with more activities which focus on deepening the process of reflection ('deepening reflection'). The two-stage model can be seen in relation to the Generic Framework for Reflective Writing (Resource 9), which is described in Chapter 6. There is no suggestion of a direct relationship between the stages and the levels in the framework. Different learners will achieve different levels sometimes in accordance with different subject matter.

There is no one best approach to the presentation or to the deepening of reflection. At both stages, we suggest the use of multiple approaches, providing different ideas and activities around reflection rather than just verbal instruction. Topics for helpful discussion, activities and exercises are listed below as a set of ideas from which to pick and choose – or pick and adapt according to the local circumstances.

The suggestions are likely to have their greatest value at a teacher's first introduction of reflective activities as much will be learnt about learners' needs for guidance once one cohort of learners has passed through. It is very useful to capitalize on the experience of those students who have gone through the process of learning about reflective learning. They will know more than anyone else about the help that they needed. They will also have produced materials that, with permission, can be used as examples (see below). If it is possible to organize, an advice-giving session by the 'experienced' learners to the next group can be extremely helpful and enables them to recognize and consolidate their own learning.

Stage 1 Presenting reflection: helping learners to get started in reflective tasks

Approaches, suggestions and ideas are summarized in Figure 10.1.

Consider what reflection, reflective writing, reflective learning are

- *Academic and common-sense reflection.* When reflective activity is introduced into higher education, there are a number of assumptions that may be made where overt discussion may be helpful to students. First, reflection is not the sole possession of academia. We all reflect and this occurs whether or not reflection is introduced as a technique in higher education. However, when we ask students to reflect in their learning in the academic context, we are likely to be asking for an activity that is similar

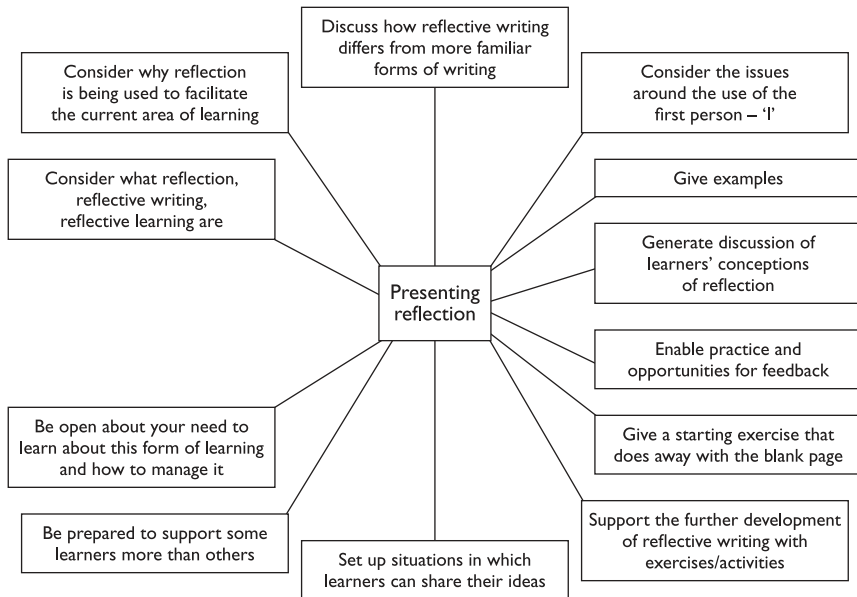


Figure 10.1 Presenting reflection

to, but not exactly the same as common-sense reflection (see below). Academic reflection will be more structured with an associated purpose. We may provide some structures in activities and exercises (see below). In addition, staff are likely to be viewing (if not assessing) the result of student reflection and in this way it will not be a private and personally motivated activity. If the outcome of reflective work is viewed, the object or context of the reflection will need to be described. In private reflections, we do not systematically describe what we are about to reflect on – we just do it. It is also likely to be assumed in an academic context, that learning will emerge from the process and the nature of the learning may need to be stated. Academic reflection is, therefore, more structured and more formal than what we will term 'informal' reflection. It is helpful if similarities between academic and common-sense reflection are clarified for students.

- *Some definitions.* In terms of definitions, a common-sense definition of reflection is presented on p. 82. In an academic context the definition is likely to be tighter because reflection is then a constructed and purposeful activity. The academic definition is on p. 83 (and represents an addition to the common-sense definition).
- *Helping students who do not understand what reflection is.* Students who indicate that they do not understand what they should do to reflect can be 'tricked' into being reflective for a moment. They can be asked to think

about what they have learnt from, for example, paid work situations in the past or how they felt about their learning in the previous semester, etc. It is likely that they will begin to reflect.

- *A model to support the development of reflective writing.* (Resource 1) It can be worth helping learners to think about what is involved in the process of reflective writing. A diagram (e.g., as in Resource 1) can provide a basis to discuss the kinds of content that may feed into the reflective process. The detail on the diagram could be simplified for this stage of presenting reflection.
- *Handout material to support the introduction of reflection.* (Resources 2 and 7) A handout on reflective writing ('Reflective writing: some initial guidance for students') is provided as Resource 2. The questions (Resource 7) can be added to the handout.

Consider why reflection is being used to facilitate the current area of learning

- *Clarifying the purposes of reflection.* It is important to be clear whether learners are being asked to use reflective writing as a means of generating knowledge (developing a 'product' of learning) or in order to learn the skill of being reflective (learning to use the process of reflection or reflective practice). In many cases, both process and product are important. The emphasis (process or product) of the learning will need to be represented in the criteria used for any form of assessment task.
- *Reflection as learning without a formal curriculum.* Another common reason why reflective writing is used is in order to learn from situations in which there is no formal curriculum to guide learning. These are usually ill-structured situations where reflection is used to generate knowledge (i.e., a product). Examples are situations of work experience, in placements, fieldwork in professional subjects, in the process of personal development planning (PDP) or other forms of experiential learning. Learners can be asked to discuss or write about their experiences of learning outside of the formal curriculum. What, for example, was their most significant moment of learning? How was the process of reflection involved?

Discuss how reflective writing differs from more familiar forms of writing

- *Charting the differences between reflective and essay/report writing.* (Resource 3) Resource 3 provides the basis of a chart that plots some of the differences between essay and report writing and reflective writing. This could be given to learners as a guide before they engage in reflective writing, or

as a means of emphasizing the differences between these forms of writing when samples of both are provided. Alternatively, it could be used to summarize differences in work that learners have already done.

- *Students chart the differences between reflective and essay/report-writing.* Instead of giving the learners Figure 10.1, they can be asked to discuss the differences and develop their own chart. Material such as this, developed by one cohort of learners can be useful as material to pass on to the next cohort. They could be asked to do the exercise once early in their reflective writing to facilitate their own learning and to review their initial attempts once again towards the end of the year/module/programme for the benefit of the next cohort.

The issues around the use of the first person – ‘I’

- *The place of the first person.* Most learners will have learnt that they should not use the first person singular in an academic environment. They can be confused if they are suddenly being encouraged to use ‘I’. The idea that the first person is permissible in an academic context can be difficult for staff too. It may be helpful here to talk about the manner in which knowledge is constructed and the relationship between our unique frames of reference and our attempts to be objective and how the use of the first person can be helpful in acknowledging this gap.
- *Learning from written expressive language.* It may also be worth noting that writing in the first person can be more powerful as a means of learning than formal writing. It can represent a form of expression that is closer to our current understandings (Moon, 1999b, Chapter 2) or it brings ‘ownership’ to expression. By ‘training’ students to write normally in formal academic language, we may be damaging their ability to learn. It can be useful to recognize that there are at least two roles for writing in study. The first and most usual is as a means of communication (as in formal reports or essays). The second is as a means of learning. It is this second form of writing that is advocated in reflective writing and it is probably not exploited enough in study. Learning from personal written language can be a point of discussion. It has particular relevance to the process of revision where often learners personalize notes.

Give examples of reflective writing – both good and poor

- *Samples of reflective writing (1).* (Resource 4) Learners find real examples of reflective writing helpful. Samples may be taken from other learners’ work (with permission), but it may be from published reflective work (fiction or biography). Several sets of sample material are provided in the Resources section. These or similar samples may be useful at the beginning of a reflective writing initiative.

- *Samples of reflective writing (2)*. (Resources 5, 6 and 10) These resources provide examples of reflective writing to which we will refer several times in this chapter (see also Chapter 7). They consist of three and four accounts of the same event, written at different levels of reflectivity. They provide some criteria that attempt to distinguish between what might be called the levels of reflection. The criteria may be held back until after the accounts have been read, considered and discussed. At this first stage of presenting reflection, it is probably not useful to introduce more than the first three stages of 'The Park' and with undergraduates, the first two stages of 'The Presentation' and 'The Dance Lesson'. The later parts will then be an effective contrast at the second stage of deepening reflection. An effective manner of using these resources is to ask learners to read the accounts and attribute a mark for the relative quality of reflectivity in each. They are then asked for the criteria that lead them to this judgement. They can compare their criteria with those listed after the accounts (or the general framework – Resource 9 'The Dance Lesson'). The exercise works better with small groups where there can be discussion of reactions.

Generate discussions of learners' conceptions of reflection

- *Discussion of conceptions of reflection*. It is useful at some stage (perhaps as a spin-off from another activity – such as that in the previous paragraph) to encourage students to talk about what they think reflection is. This will provide an opportunity for misconceptions to come to light. There can be misconceptions due to the lack of vocabulary for 'reflection' in some languages. It may also become evident that some students consider that reflection is only used in an academic context when something has gone wrong, or when something could be improved. Learners have been known deliberately to produce self-deprecating material when asked to write reflectively because that is what they thought their tutor wanted (Salisbury, 1994).

Enable practice and opportunities for feedback

- *Subject matter for practice (1)* A good way of getting learners to write reflectively without too much difficulty is to ask them to reflect on their own performance in something. The performance might be in the past or in the present. They are asked in advance to come prepared to give a 5-minute talk that might be on a topic that is relevant to the actual module – something that they are going to have to think about anyway. They do the talk and straightaway write a reflective account of how their performance went, feelings, weaknesses and strengths, assessment against their expectations, relationships to previous similar situations, etc. The

impact of this exercise can be increased if they write a brief descriptive account of their performance before they write reflectively.

There are several possibilities for providing feedback on a performance such as this:

- The tutor reads scripts and gives written feedback and maybe some generalized oral feedback to the whole group, perhaps providing examples of the best reflective writing.
- They are asked to consider the criteria that they might use to mark the scripts for evidence of reflection. These criteria might have been generated earlier from 'The Park' and the other exercises. They peer mark on the basis of these criteria.
- The group divides into subgroups and each subgroup passes all of the scripts to another subgroup. The subgroups then read the other group's material and identify examples of good practice to share with everyone (e.g., by highlighting in marker pen five or ten good examples of reflective writing from across all the scripts. Some scripts might have several areas highlighted and some none). To achieve this, the group will have to consider what is meant by reflective writing and will need to think about the criteria used for judgement.
- *Subject matter for practice (2)*. Rather than go through the process of learners giving brief presentations (as above), they could write reflectively on a recent assignment and the mark attributed to it; on their experience of the first few days on the module/programme (new learners); on the current level of their study skills, etc. It is useful to ask them all to write on the same subject or otherwise content tends to get in the way of considerations about the reflective process.

Give a starting exercise that eliminates the blank page

- *Avoiding the blank page*. Blank pages are threatening to many people (although they can be exciting to some). If learners are setting out on writing any ongoing reflective account like a learning journal, it can be helpful to them to have some reflective writing done before they know they have really started. This could be set as an exercise (as above) or it might be a preliminary exercise such as a set of questions relevant to the subject matter of the journal. The adoption of a loose-leaf formal journal is a basic necessity for this 'game'.
- *A framework of questions*. (Resource 7) One of the easiest ways of getting learners started on reflective writing is to use a series of questions that lead them into reflective writing. They can be encouraged to dispense with the structure as soon as they can manage to set their own structure for reflection, or feel sufficiently confident to manage without. Some will need the support for longer than others. Resource 7 provides a sample of some questions.

Support the further development of reflective writing with exercises/activities

- *Other exercises to expand reflective writing.* (Resource 8) There are plenty of activities and exercises available that can encourage learners to expand the range and variety of their reflective writing (e.g., in Moon 1999a, 1999b). The use of these exercises in occasional class situations can stimulate reflective consideration of specific topics. It may provide new ways of seeing issues or events and it will provide techniques to help them to deepen their reflection. Some of the particularly useful exercises entail the development of dialogues between the learner and an event or a project, or (in imagination) a person or organization (Moon, 1999b). It is usually easiest to start with a form of greeting, welcoming the chance to hold a dialogue, and then some words about the state of things as they exist at present. It is probably wise to encourage the imagined dialogues with real (but distant) people first, before going on to events or artifacts.

Set up situations in which learners can share their ideas

- *Develop situations in which learners can support each other.* Learners can be of great help and support to each other, not only in facilitating the learning of how to write reflectively, but also in improving the quality and range of their reflection itself. They could work:
 - in a group, sharing selected paragraphs or reading each other's work;
 - in pairs in the same way. The pairs should be self-selected and they could be stable for the duration of the task or set up for initial support or sporadically.

Expect to support some learners more than others

- *When learners still do not grasp the idea of reflection.* Some learners carry on saying that they are not clear about what is required in reflective writing. This is one of the reasons why it is so useful to have samples of reflective writing to hand. In addition, in a one-to-one situation, asking them to describe (orally) how they feel about a recent experience (module, placement, field-trip, semester, etc.) can prompt them into demonstrating reflective speech – from which the written alternative can be derived.
- *Peer support.* Organizing peer support may help those who are still in difficulty. The peer might be a learner of a previous year or one of the same cohort who is at ease with and aware of the processes of reflective writing. Peers can sometimes provide better support than teachers and once they have been through a process of reflective writing, it could be said that they are more expert in the process than are their teachers!

Be open about your need to learn about reflection as a form of learning and how you can improve your management of it

- *Learning curves.* Demonstrating that staff, as well as the learner, are on a learning curve when it comes to managing reflective tasks can facilitate the situation for everyone. Some suggestions are that:
 - a tutor might write a learning journal about the process of helping learners to learn reflectively – and share elements of it with the learners;
 - she might ask them for feedback on how the task could be better managed;
 - she might ask them to collaborate in the production of written feedback to her on the task and its management. This might occur after the first few weeks and then at a couple of times later in the process and at the end. In this kind of activity, there is benefit to both staff and learners.

Stage 2 Deepening reflective activities

Some learners will write profound reflective material without any further prompting. They may well be those who have written diaries and journals for some years. Other students will be able to deepen their writing by becoming aware of how to do it. For a variety of reasons, some will have difficulty in making progress.

The development of awareness of what is involved in deeper reflection seems to be important and this process will need to take into account the constructed nature of knowledge – enabling learners to start to understand, for example:

- that different people can see the same event in different ways;
- that events can be conceived differently by the same person if she views it with different frames of reference;
- that, for the same person, frames of reference may be different at different times;
- the role of emotions in guiding our conceptions of events or people;
- that different disciplines rely on different structures of knowledge and have different ways of working with knowledge.

In the same format as for Stage 1, we present approaches, suggestions and ideas that can facilitate the deepening of reflection (Stage 2). These are summarized in Figure 10.2 elaborated below.

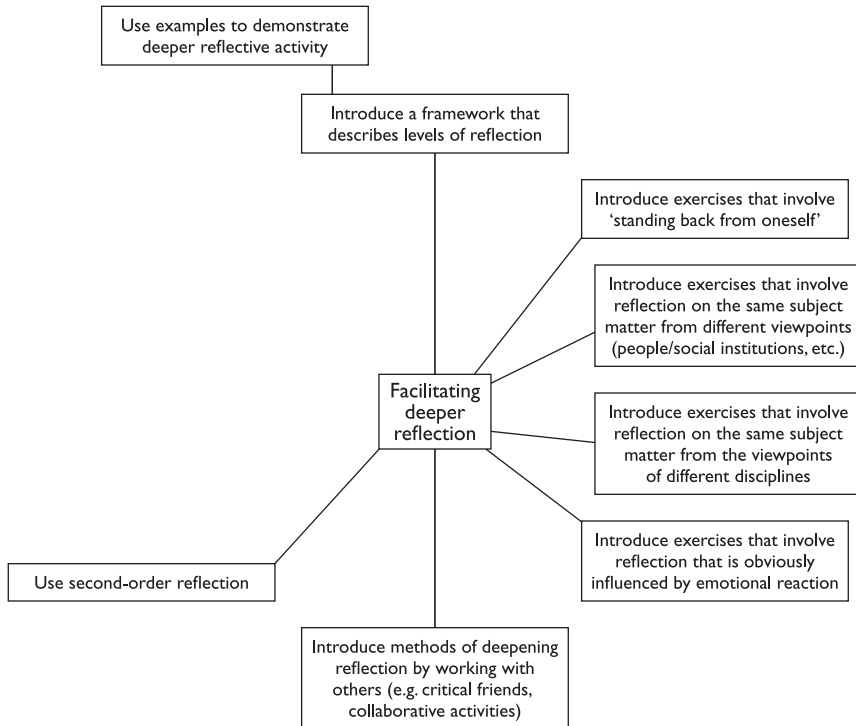


Figure 10.2 Facilitating deeper reflection

Use examples to demonstrate deeper reflective activity

- *Use examples to deepen reflection.* (Resources 5, 6 and 10) In the stage of presenting reflection, we suggested the use of material such as ‘The Park’, ‘The Presentation’ and ‘The Dance Lesson’. The focus now would be on the fourth account in ‘The Park’ and the third accounts in the other two, and the use of the criteria that distinguish the deeper account to the more descriptive accounts. Learners could be asked to read all of the accounts and (before seeing the criteria) note the differences between the less and more profound levels of reflection demonstrated. Again, the effect of this kind of work is enhanced if there are opportunities for sharing views.

Introduce a framework that describes levels of reflection

- *A framework describing levels of reflection.* (Resource 9) This chapter is written broadly on the basis that there are different levels of reflectivity in reflective writing, though here the idea is applied to the stages of teaching students to write reflectively. One of the most widely known

frameworks for tutors is that of Hatton and Smith (1995), which was prepared on the basis of written work presented by students. The introduction of a framework that describes the characteristics of levels of reflection is an important aid in developing awareness of the nature of deeper reflective writing for students at this stage. As a result of working within the broad framework of Hatton and Smith, a simplified form of reflective writing framework has been produced (Resource 9). Chapter 7 describes the background to this framework.

Introduce exercises that involve ‘standing back from oneself’

- *An exercise on ‘standing back’ (1).* ‘Standing back from oneself’ is like changing the camera lens in order to take a broader view of ourselves and the context in which we exist. When we are directly involved in an activity, the tendency is to describe immediate experience. But, for example, buying a drink for a friend in a pub involves the purchasing process but also the reason for being there is also the background to the behaviour. The event occurs in a context which is a workplace; there may be others involved, with different influences and considerations; the event may be governed by particular social norms; there are political and moral issues, and so on. Clearly, in any context only some of these broader issues will be relevant to the current reason for the reflection. Examples of writing that involves ‘standing back from oneself’ can be taken from Resources 5, 6 and 10. Topics that could be used to practise ‘standing back’ are:
 - preparing a meal;
 - settling down to study or a session of study;
 - finding a reference in the library;
 - a time when things went really well;
 - a time when things went wrong.
- *An exercise on ‘standing back’ (2).* Another form of ‘standing back from oneself’ is to imagine someone telling one what to do ‘over one’s shoulder’. There are some interesting accounts of students improving their problem solving skills by doing written reflection as they solve problems in science, mathematics and engineering. The account can either involve a description of the procedures taken, with relevant commentary on the role of emotion, or it could be written from the point of view of a third person who is giving advice.
- *An exercise on ‘standing back’ (3).* Another form of standing back from oneself is to view one’s performance or abilities in an objective manner (i.e., in the third person). This may be a specific account (e.g., ‘Jane’s ability to write an essay’) or it may relate to abilities within the context of reflection on an event. A bonus of this kind of exercise (and that above) is that it

involves the consideration on one's own abilities (metacognitive awareness). Learners who are metacognitive tend to be the better students (see Chapter 6).

Introduce exercises that involve reflection on the same subject matter from different viewpoints of people/social institutions, etc.

- *Considering the same situation from different points of view.* In deeper reflection, it is important to recognize that different people see the same situation from different points of view. This is exemplified in Resource 6. Learners could be asked to reflect on an event that has occurred to them, which involves others and to write the account from others' points of view. Thus, an event in work experience in a shop might involve the points of view of a supervisor, customer, counter assistant, onlooker, and so on.
- *Considering one's work from different points of view.* Alternatively, learners may be asked to reflect on a piece of work that they have done from a personal standpoint, from the imagined point of view of the tutor who is marking the work and from the point of view of any relevant others (e.g., other learners, any others involved). Again, this kind of exercise develops metacognitive abilities (see above).

Introduce an exercise in which there is reflection on the same subject matter from viewpoints of different disciplines

- *Investigating the viewpoints of different disciplines (1).* Different disciplines view the same object in different ways. The differences may be greater than simply the focuses of the interest as the structure of the way of knowing in disciplines is different. Because most of us do not cross-disciplinary boundaries, we do not tend to be aware of these differences. A way of beginning to address this kind of issue in reflection is to ask learners to write about a single object from the point of view of different disciplines. For example, they could be asked to write about a storm from what the viewpoint of an artist, physicist, geographer, and so on.
- *Investigating the viewpoints of different disciplines (2).* An elaboration of this exercise is to ask learners to write about the understanding of an abstract concept from the viewpoint of different disciplines. For example, they could look at the idea of a 'petness' (as in a child's pet animal) from the point of view of practitioners in sociology, psychology, medical sciences, English, art, and so on.
- *Investigating the viewpoints of different disciplines (3).* A variation on the exercise above would be to take a concept from within the discipline of the learners, and ask them to view it from the standpoint of one or

more disciplines. For example, the concept of disability has meanings within medicine, sociology, psychology, architecture, physical education, and so on.

Introduce exercises that involve reflection that is influenced by emotional reactions to events

- *The role of emotions.* The role of emotion in its influence on learning is complex. Some people suggest that taking feelings into account is one of the main characteristics of reflective writing. Others (including this writer) suggest that it is possible to be reflective without emotion being the central issue. We can reflect, for example, on how the activities of a current government meets or does not meet our understanding of the political movement that it purports to represent. There would probably be an attempt here not to be too swayed by emotional reactions.
- *Learning how emotional state can distort events.* What is important about the role of emotion in reflection is to recognize how it can distort reflection. This point is well illustrated by reference to an anecdote. I decided to write down my feelings about a particular event that had occurred – it was a family argument. Normally I would have simply written about it reflectively in my journal that evening and then, as things moved on, might not have referred to it again. However, I was trying to find out more about my process of learning and I decided to go back to the same event and write on it for several days in succession. In the successive accounts, I found that I was viewing the event differently as my emotional reactions to it changed and eased. I realized that had I just written one account of the event, for example as part of an assessed learning journal, the reflection would have been very narrow, and very much influenced by the emotions of the moment of writing. Learners may choose to write reflectively on events at the end of a week or immediately after. They need to recognize that the time period can influence what is written.

Learners could be asked to take an event in which they have been involved and work with it as described above, then to reflect on the role of their emotional reactions in affecting the reflective writing, and the learning that results.

- *Investigating the role of emotion in influencing reflection through use of fiction.* Alternatively such an exercise as that above can be done with a fictitious event – perhaps from literature.
- *The effect of mood on reflective writing.* It is not always the immediate emotions surrounding an event that will affect a piece of reflective writing. On different days, we may have different orientations to the world in general. Learners can be asked to consider how their general mood might affect the content of their reflection and how this relates to the ‘accuracy’ of reflective writing and learning. This can generate consideration of the notion of ‘accuracy’. They could experiment with writing

reflectively about a simple event imagining that they are at odds or at ease with the day.

***Introduce methods of deepening reflection by working with others
e.g., critical friends, group activities, etc.***

- *Work in groups.* Some of the best methods of deepening reflection involve working with others. The idea of work with others in itself will affect the nature of the material that will be written in the first place, and it is important that learners should recognize this. However, the effect may be less than the effect of tutors seeing or assessing reflective material. The groups will need to have common ideas about methods by which to deepen reflection and to see themselves as peer facilitators. The groups or pairs may work together over a period, learning how best to help each other by prompting and asking questions, querying frames of reference, and so on.
- *Model co-counselling.* One method of deepening reflection is to use techniques of co-counselling (Evison and Horobin, 1983; Moon, 1999b) where learners use sessions with a peer to explore issues before they write or reflect. The method of co-counselling involves pairs where each takes a turn of being first listener and then of speaker. There is an initial agreement between the students about the length of the sessions – ten minutes in each role is probably plenty to start with and as they become better at the technique, the time can be expanded. In the ten minutes the speaker chooses a subject and uses the time and the listening attention of the other to explore the subject. It might be ‘what I have learned while in work experience placement’, or ‘how I feel about my study ability and what I need to do about it’, and so on. The listener simply listens, encourages and prompts very briefly, helping the speaker in pursuit of her material. There is no conversation, and the focus is entirely on the speaker. This is a method, in effect, of people ‘finding out for themselves what they think about something or what they have to say about it’. After the session, the speaker might want to write notes about what she has covered with help of the listener. Then reverse the roles. Partners may choose to remain constant over several sessions, or may choose to change. Afterwards, both write on what they have learned.
- *Critical friend.* The role of a ‘critical friend’ is similar to the above but we use the term here to describe a situation where students read the material that a colleague has actually written. Looking at each piece of work in turn, they prompt each other with questions that lead to further and deeper reflection on the writing – ‘Why did you say that?’, ‘What did that mean to you?’, ‘How did you feel at that moment?’, ‘How do you think that X felt about that?’, ‘Do you think that Y saw it in the same

way?', and so on. Both then re-write some aspects of their material. This is a form of second-order reflection (see below).

Use second-order reflection

- *The double entry journal design.* Second-order reflection is represented in any technique that requires a learner to look through previous reflective work and to write a deeper reflective overview. One of the most convenient ways to do this is the double entry journal method. Learners write only on one page of a double spread or on one half of a vertically divided page. They leave space blank until, at another time, they go through the initial material writing generating further comments that emerge from their more coherent overview of the initial work. The activity of revisiting material relates to a number of the techniques mentioned above. For example, they act as their own critical friend. They may also recognize the influences of particular emotional states or orientations that may have changed (see above).

Chapter 11

Assessment issues

Introduction

Assessment matters for more reasons than most people recognize. Most see it as a means of producing a mark for a piece of work or for a learner. In fact, it has a great deal to do with enhancing learning itself. In addition, assessment matters in the context of this book because it is particularly an issue of concern in this area of reflective and experiential learning. Indeed, it has been suggested that until the assessment issues of reflective and experiential learning are solved, these cannot be easily used as forms of learning in higher education. However, the main message of this chapter is that there is no more to assessing these less usual forms of learning than to assessing any other common task, such as the writing of an essay or an examination script. This is not because there is necessarily similarity between assessment methods such as essays and journals (O'Rourke, 1998). The similarity is at the level of the application to both of a set of principles of assessment. This chapter, therefore, is an account of the basic principles of assessment as they can be applied to reflective and experiential learning.

The chapter deals with both reflective and experiential learning in tandem. However, we must recognize that the most obvious way of assessing experiential learning is to ask the learner to demonstrate the ability that the learning has concerned. We can ask a teacher to demonstrate the management of a difficult class, or a nurse to demonstrate her ability to give an injection. Much of the experiential learning in higher education and professional development involves reflective learning through reflective writing, which is the element that is assessed. In these cases there are overlaps in the assessment method. However, even for the assessment of practical activity, the same principles apply.

In this chapter, we consider first the general principles of assessment and then focus attention on specific issues that arise in the process of assessing

situations of experiential learning and those separate issues that relate to reflective writing or reflective learning. The last section of the chapter provides a list of assessment methods that might be used in a typical experiential learning situation (work experience placement).

Assessment in reflective and experiential learning

We first need to acknowledge the views of those who consider that reflective work should not be assessed (e.g., at undergraduate levels – Stewart and Richardson, 2000). More strategic learners will often not work on what is not assessed and an assessment process at least ensures that work is done. But to forego assessment is also to ignore the broader purposes of assessment. Certainly, at its worst, assessment is tacked onto the end of a programme and seen as something people just do because it is what happens in education. There is a tendency to associate the act of assessing with ‘giving a mark’, but we tend to muddle the attribution of marks with a number of other purposes for assessment. Some purposes or outcomes of assessment are:

- to give feedback to learners on their learning as well as on the reason for the mark (Mutch, 2003);
- the provision of information for the manager of learning on the learning and her management of it (in this case, supervisor, mentor, link person with the educational institution, etc.);
- for general quality assurance purposes;
- to indicate readiness for more advanced study;
- to focus learning;
- to motivate students to learn;
- to shape/direct learning;
- to require that students can apply or transfer their learning to unexpected situations. This may be an aspect of assessment that is not sufficiently exploited.

We also assess because learners expect us to assess. Often the simple attribution of pass/fail or pass/not yet pass would be sufficient (Rust, 2002), but it is learners who want to be graded, particularly where they are not certain about what it is that they should be doing.

We exploit the different purposes of assessment differently according to the nature of the subject matter and intended learning. Many uses of assessment in experiential learning, for example, focus on the enhancement and shaping of learning, and double as a means of attaining a mark. We return to this point below.

It would normally be desirable to look at assessment as a basic part of the design of reflective or experiential learning situations and not as a separate issue. This is important in these forms of learning because it is often not clear what the learner is expected to be able to learn. If the right thinking is done about assessment with assessment criteria properly developed, the right and proper thinking is likely to have been done about the development of the module. The separation of assessment from the learning perpetuates the tendency to see assessment as something added. Too frequently a pile of learning journals is handed in and the tutor is asking 'OK, How do I mark these?' It is too late at that stage to be thinking of how to mark. Building assessment into module design involves an ordered consideration of the learning expected (learning outcomes), in relation to standards (level) with this information related to expectations in terms of a chosen mode of assessment. The next section describes this sequence. It was written to support the design of modules in higher education, but the general principles will fit any learning situation. More detail, with plenty of examples, is provided in Moon (2002a) and Gosling and Moon (2001).

A map of curriculum design

Those developing assessment procedures in what might be construed as less unusual forms of learning in particular need to understand the structure of modules in order to understand how assessment 'fits in'. Too often the important linkages in the process are not articulated (e.g., between learning outcomes and assessment criteria). The aim of the module needs to be translated into learning outcomes in order to imply the assessment criteria, which are the basis for assessment. Figure 11.1, a map of curriculum design, depicts this.

The model is worked at the threshold, in other words, learning outcomes are written to denote the pass/fail point. Another way of putting this is that learners must achieve the learning outcomes or they fail this module or element of learning. This version of the map does not directly take account of grading. The map suggests that learning outcomes are developed as a result of thinking first about the aim for the learning or the aim. An aim is a teaching intention or a rationale for the curriculum or for the element of learning. It may provide an indication of context. For reflective or experiential learning, with no formal teaching, it is more likely to be written in terms of the coverage or content of the learning.

The standard of the learning outcomes is guided by reference, in higher education, to level descriptors, for example, those developed by SEEC (2003). A valuable extra step is to get subject specialists to translate the generic language of the level in which they are interested, into their own language, saying in it what they expect of their learners for this piece

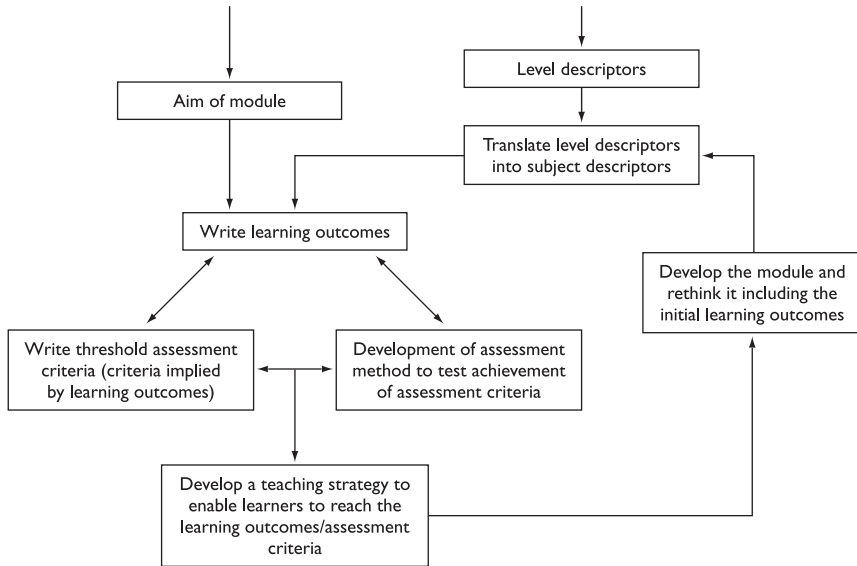


Figure 11.1 Basic map of module development

Source: Based on Moon (2002a)

of work. This activity facilitates the writing of well-considered learning outcomes. Learning outcomes imply assessment criteria. Assessment criteria can be written in many different formats, but in general terms provide more detail about the learning outcomes or they may describe what a learner must do in order to achieve a particular grade. They may be developed directly from the learning outcomes, or (as often happens) developed in relation to a chosen assessment method.

An example of a learning outcome with assessment criteria might be:

At the end of the work experience placement, the learners will be able to demonstrate an appropriate manner of dealing with a dissatisfied customer in the initial contact with the company.

Assessment criteria might be:

- The learner uses a polite and confident manner.
- The learner rapidly can decide whether she can manage the subject matter of the complaint in an appropriate manner herself – or needs to refer the matter to others.
- The subject matter is handled appropriately by the learner or is handed on to a correctly identified other.

Or, another learning outcome:

The learner demonstrates her ability to give a presentation on what she has learnt in her placement.

The presentation demonstrates:

- adequate content: the development of her learning over the period of the placement
- competent process: it is given with confidence and clarity;

The learner can manage and respond to a series of questions or comments during or at the end of the presentation and so on, see Moon (2002a).

In whatever manner assessment criteria are presented, they need to be directly related to the learning outcomes. If the work is graded, learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria are written for the pass/fail point and other assessment criteria (grade criteria) are linked to marks or ranges of marks.

On the basis of the map, an assessment method is any manner in which the assessment criteria can effectively be tested. Too often assessment methods are picked on the basis of long-held habit, rather than a clear consideration of effectiveness both for those who assess and the learners. Too often concern about a method is given primacy over concern about assessment criteria. It seems to be the case that some assessment methods have acquired their own 'traditional' assessment criteria that may have little relevance to the actual learning outcomes being assessed. In this way learners can learn to do well because they are effective report-writers, regardless of the learning outcomes under question. Work experience placements may be assessed by a written report with little concern for the nature of learning to be demonstrated within the report.

In reflective and experiential learning, assessment methods may have much to do with the enhancement of learning. An assessment method needs to be effective for the assessment criteria being assessed, but must also be convenient and efficient for learner and assessor. We have said that often in reflective and experiential learning, the assessment method doubles as a method of enhancing learning itself. In this situation, it is particularly important to find an appropriate balance for the learning function and result of the assessment method with the effort for student and tutor and effectiveness as a 'marking instrument'.

In the rest of the map, the guidance that is given is designed to enable the learner to achieve the learning outcomes/assessment criteria. An important feature of any sequence that links assessment with learning outcomes and levels is that it is not seen as static – it is iterative. It is important to check round the cycle a number of times, modifying elements of it until there is consistency. The only element in the cycle that is not changeable is the level descriptors that indicate standard.

Another general principle of assessment is that everyone involved in the process understands every element of the design – standards (e.g., as level), the aim, what it is intended that should be learnt, the assessment criteria and method, and how it all fits together. This includes all tutors and, in particular, the learners themselves.

Assessment in reflective and/or experiential learning

We have shown in earlier chapters that in many situations, reflective learning is part of most experiential learning. However, an outcome of experiential learning may be the improved ability to do something and then the assessment task can be to ask learners to demonstrate the activity or provide evidence that something has been done (Brown, 1999). The assessment criteria will concern the quality of the evidenced activity or the activity itself and this is a relatively straightforward process. Often it is not possible to assess activity of individuals and, then, the assessment process may concern the reflective activity that links the initial learning and subsequent activity. This is usually expressed as reflective writing, though it may be demonstrated orally (Watton *et al.*, 2002). The focus of the remainder of this chapter is on the assessment of reflective activity within the context of reflective or experiential learning situations – and there are immediate issues of what to assess.

On knowing what to assess

Some experiential learning situations are set up in order that there can be learning about a specific subject matter. Often, however, they are set up as ‘experiences’ with only vague statements about what it is that should be learnt. This is often the case in work experience and other placement learning. We have said that we assess the learning outcome statements but that does not solve the problem of what to write into learning outcomes. There are, for example, many different forms of learning that can result from work experience (see list on p. 164). There is also much incidental learning, which may be assessed (Marsick and Watkins, 1990; Tomlinson, 1999) and it is important to recognize that assessment may be formative or summative. Formative assessment indicates to the learners how they are progressing (George and Cowan, 1999) while summative assessment is the end result of the process.

Without mediation in reflective and experiential learning, it is the learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria and task that tend to shape learners’ deliberate learning. In a sense, these take the place of the curriculum in providing a guide to learning. It is particularly important, therefore, that much

consideration is given to the kinds of learning assessed and how it relates to what it is anticipated that learners 'get out of' the whole experience.

There may be difficulty encountered in setting assessment criteria for some forms of experiential learning where different placements are used, since all learners need similar opportunities to learn what is to be assessed. This does not mean to say that all situations must be 'good' in the sense of being demonstrations of good practice. Given appropriate support and guidance, learners can also learn usefully from seeing poor practice; it is a matter of the guidance and identification of the learning outcomes.

When the learning activity is focused on reflective learning (for example, a learning journal), there is an early and important decision to be made that will be written into the learning outcomes – whether the concern is for the product or the process of the learning. The product of the learning is 'content' – what the learner can do or what she now knows or understands as a result of the reflective learning. In this case, the journal (or method chosen) is the means of developing the knowledge. However, increasingly it is being seen as important that learners, particularly those involved in professional learning, are able to engage in reflection on their practice (or progress). In this case, a learning journal may be used primarily as a means of developing the learner's capacity in reflective learning and it is the process that is important. Process and product would be expressed in separate learning outcomes, and would require separate assessment criteria. In fact, in many cases, reflective writing is used to engender learning of process and product at the same time but it is important that learners are clear about this. There are also implications for the kind of assessment method that is adopted.

Issues in the assessment of reflective learning

When the concern in reflective learning situations is the product of the learning, the role of the reflective learning (e.g., the journal – Moon, 1999b) is as a means of learning, and the assessment method can be any of the conventional means – essays, reports, presentations – even possibly examinations. The importance is that the assessment criteria are appropriate, and relate to the aim, level and learning outcomes.

The more interesting issues arise when the purpose of reflective work is that learners improve their ability to learn from reflection. The question now concerns the nature of assessment criteria that will demonstrate that the learner is able to reflect effectively. A difficulty here is that, as we have indicated, different people have different conceptions of reflection. In the development of learner work on reflection where the process is the prime concern, it is vital that tutors develop a common conception of reflection, and from that, seek common agreement about the criteria to be used.

Discussion of criteria for the process of reflection takes us back to Chapter 7 in which the depth dimension of reflection was discussed and Chapter 10 where the depth dimension of reflection is operationalized in the two-stage introduction of reflective activity to learners. The two-stage introduction is based on observations that superficial reflection does not seem to be as effective as a means of learning as deep reflection and that it is difficult to get learners to reflect at any depth. This two-stage approach, therefore, in itself, provides a basis for the development of assessment criteria. Materials from which assessment criteria can be developed more directly are the Map of Reflective Writing (Resource 1) and the Framework for Reflective Writing (Resource 9).

The usual method of assessing reflective learning using assessment criteria for process (see above) is to mark the actual reflective writing of learners. Typically they might be asked to write a learning journal or 'reflective pieces', and it is this actual work that is considered by the tutor. It is worth thinking about this. The reflective writing in a learning journal may be considered as an assessment method but often it is really more of an aid to learning. For example, often when it is used, reflective writing is the 'raw material' of learning. It can be at the equivalent stage to the notes that are taken before an essay is written, or lecture notes. You could almost say that the reflective writing of some learners is their 'personal curriculum' in a written form. We do not expect to assess learners' notes. We ask them to reprocess their notes into an essay or report or we test their learning from the notes in an examination. In this sense, if we assess the reflective writing directly, we are assessing only the relatively unprocessed (raw) material.

A convenient way of assessing reflective writing is, therefore, to ask learners to write a report or an essay or to use some other method (see below) that draws and quotes material from their reflective writing. They should be required to use this material either to support an argument or to respond to a question in a given title. A title might require students, for example, to assess the value of their reflective learning as evidenced in their learning journals, using evidence quoted the journals. Again, given a title, learning outcomes and agreed assessment criteria, there should not be too much difficulty in most tutors marking such material since it is a relatively conventional format. It may be useful to ask students to hand in their reflective writing as evidence that it has been completed in an appropriate manner and sometimes it is helpful to attribute a (very) few marks to the reflective writing itself. It is, however, the use of the 'reprocessed' (and therefore more valuable) material that is assessed in the essay/report. The requirement that learners reflect on their primary reflections is likely to yield deeper levels of reflection with improved learning. This is an important principle.

Other assessment methods for experiential and reflective learning (e.g., in a work experience placement)

We should encourage creativity and the use of imagination in the development of assessment methods. So long as process/product issues have been considered and assessment criteria have been developed from learning outcomes, any appropriate method of assessing the criteria can be used. As Henry said, 'Assessment methods used in experiential learning are as diverse as the activities' (1989, p. 34). There are many methods for assessing, for example, a work experience placement. They may test both process and product of learning or one or the other and most involve reflection (see list on p. 166).

Recognizing the experience of assessment

An important final point is that assessment is an experience in itself (Thorpe, 2000). It is a life experience and in particular, an experience that is part of being in a formal education situation. An effective manner of capitalizing on the learning that can occur in assessment situations can be in the use of peer assessment or self-assessment. Peer assessment and self-assessment are not assessment methods. An assessment method is chosen to be subjected to peer and self-assessment, with the selection of appropriate assessment criteria. More information about peer assessment and self-assessment are provided in Boud and Falchikov (1989), Boud (1995), Cowan (1998), Brown and Glasner (1999), and Mutch (2003).

Chapter 12

Enhancing reflective and experiential learning

Introduction

This chapter is a collection of further exercises, activities, ideas and suggested applications for the enhancement of reflective and experiential learning. The chapter adds to the collection of materials that were presented in a deliberate order in Chapter 10 but, of course, any of the Chapter 10 exercises can be used out of that context. Some of the exercises in this chapter are for individual use and some are for group or whole class work. Some of the material here is for the guidance of staff. As in Chapter 10, there is no attempt to distinguish between reflective and experiential learning. Any activity or exercise that enhances reflective learning will be useful to support experiential learning and any exercise given here that is more directly concerned with experiential learning will involve reflective learning anyway. In most of these activities, reflection is the means by which awareness of experience is recognized as knowledge and is made explicit and generalizable to other situations.

The sections in this chapter that relate to experiences do not have real boundaries, indeed, creative development of opportunities to practise reflective and experiential learning should be the aim. The use of the headings is a tidying-up device rather than any indication of how or where material *should* be used. As with earlier chapters, some of the actual material is presented in the Resources section.

The first section in this chapter covers the more common methods of supporting reflective and experiential learning. This section is deliberately brief. To use this chapter only to reiterate material already well explored elsewhere would be a waste of the opportunity to expand the range of ideas. There is much guidance in texts and on the Internet and the author has presented material of this type in previous books (see below).

The following section deals with the enhancement of reflective and experiential learning activities directly within the teaching situation. The next considers learning from current experience. This section is divided into two parts, the first of which covers work experience (and to some extent applies to other field and placement experiences). The other half of the section deals with the learning from other current experience. Corresponding to that there is a further section on learning from previous or past experiences.

There is a growing appreciation of the value of creativity and the use of imagination in formal education (Jackson, 2003). Perhaps it has been lost in the current attempts to document everything to be learnt – the next section considers the interaction between reflective and experiential learning and creative activities. Again, this is in two parts. The first relates to more general activities, the second to the use of story. To some extent the last section of the chapter also provides a means of enhancing creativity. It suggests a method of setting up a personal learning journal which incorporates a range of ways of working in order to draw past, present and creative experiences together.

The various exercises and activities included in this book focus on different aspects of the process of learning from reflective and experiential learning. All the exercises present the learner with aspects of external experience that she is expected to meet with her internal experience and thus develop further learning. The material of learning may be subject matter or it may concern the process of reflective learning itself. Some exercises present simple material, some present microcosms of the complexity of everyday existence. Some present pictures of 'reality' and some work in the world of imagination, though past, present and possible future all come to be processed by the learner's present internal experience. Some relate to the ordinary experiences that a professional might meet any time, and some exploit creative means whereby the deeper or less predictable experience can be brought to the fore for examination. The use of story or the deep journal is an example of the latter.

More usual means of supporting reflective and experiential learning

The activities in this section may overlap considerably. Hinett (2002) is a source of information about websites that discuss many of the topics below.

Learning journals, diaries, logs, notebooks, etc.

There are many names for the activity of recording reflective thought in a structured or unstructured but ongoing manner. There are also many ways of doing it, different purposes that can be fulfilled and different activities that will enhance the learning (Rainer, 1978; Young and Fulwiler, 1986;

Fulwiler, 1987; Holly, 1991; Moon, 1999b). The last section of this chapter is one illustration of a journal design.

Portfolios

The term 'portfolio' can be used for anything from a collection of work (e.g., drawings) to a learning journal with the odd article or set of lecture notes included. There is a great deal of literature on portfolios but it is important to bear in mind that there is no one thing called a portfolio and no one way of managing the activity of compiling one. For the same reason, no one reference will give a complete picture of the method but Jasper's work in nursing is well developed (Jasper, 1995, 1998).

Action learning sets

The aim of an action learning set is to enhance and support an individual's project through work with a set of others who will listen in order to support the action of the individual. Generally, in turn, each member of the set will have the opportunity for such support. The set would meet for an agreed number of sessions, and the expectation is that the project is achieved. The project could be a change in practice, or a particular activity. The technique is documented in McGill and Beaty (1992) and Brockbank and McGill (1998).

Human inquiry groups

Like action learning sets, these are groups that come together for a limited period to explore and research aspects of human behaviour or the condition of being human (Reason and Rowan, 1981).

Action research

This is a similar process to the techniques described above. The subject matter may be staff development or an issue in the workplace that affects the person who is engaged in the research. It involves a process of linking experience and the potential for change through reflection (Winter, 1989).

APEL – the accreditation of prior experiential learning

This is a means of awarding credit for prior experiential (non-certificated) learning. The learner is usually expected to demonstrate the learning from experience in a variety of manners. APEL as a process is often akin to learning from concurrent experience (see below) (Evans, 2000).

Personal development planning (PDP)

Professional development planning or profiling is a self-appraisal system being introduced in undergraduate programmes in the UK as a means of supporting the development of learning, employability skills and self-awareness. It usually consists of organized collection of evidence and reflection on the experiences of the programme and is often connected to the pastoral care system in an institution (Fullerton, 2002; or LTSN website www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre and follow the links for PDP).

Peer and self-assessment

When learners assess their own or others' work they tend to become constructively critical about the processes of the work and the assessment of it. They learn from and about the experience of learning (Boud, 1995 and Cowan, 1998).

Problem-based learning (PBL)

Learners are given a problem to solve in a topic area, rather than the content knowledge about a topic. They have to seek the information sources required, and integrate the knowledge in order to solve the problem. PBL mimics the processes of naturalistic learning from experience. The approach is more common in professional development subjects (Savin-Baden, 2000), but forms of it can be used with any learners (Matthews *et al.*, 2002).

Enhancing reflective and experiential learning through teaching processes

There are different ways in which to learn from a lecture. One way is to listen and write notes that capture the structure of what is being said in a mechanical manner, without really thinking about what is being said. This is a surface approach to learning (see Chapter 1). Another way is to write the lecture notes while taking note of what is being said and perhaps getting as far as thinking about how the current material relates to what was said last week. Another way is to find the mind spinning into other related material, reflecting, wondering, questioning, putting asterisks into the notes to remind oneself to check or think more about an idea. This is starry-eyed, excited learning. It is not only the state of the learner and the nature of the material that determine a learner's reaction but the style of the teacher. Some teachers promote interest and questioning and some do not. It is not all a matter of personality – there are techniques to be learnt and it is important to remember that reflection is intimately connected with a deep approach

to learning. Reading a book is a similar situation (Usher, 2000b). Some techniques that promote reflective learning are:

- ‘Wait time’ – wait time is the pauses between sentences, the moments after posing a rhetorical question; the pacing of phrases – it is time that allows a listener’s brain to reflect or question during speech or a lecture. Tobin (1987) found that lecturers who used wait time well enabled better learning.
- Confronting learners with their misconceptions. The early chapters of this book indicate that we learn by distinguishing figure from ground – by making comparisons. Learners who are always taught the ‘right’ answer, or given the right techniques do not learn to make judgements (Fazey and Marton, 2002). They are helped if their misconceptions are pursued to the end, and not just corrected.
- A method of finding how learners see a topic is to ask them to draw concept maps. The maps of the teacher and peers may demonstrate differences in thinking and therefore material on which to reflect (Desler, 1990; Hadwin and Winne, 1996; Moon, 1999b).
- Explaining something and possibly then applying the idea to something else is an activity that distinguishes the learner who has taken a surface approach from one who has taken a deep approach. If learners know that they will be required to explain something, they are likely to adopt a deep approach to the learning of it. The requirement to explain calls on the ability to reflect and check the soundness of ideas (Chi *et al.*, 1989; Chi *et al.*, 1994).
- Styles of questioning in class and in assessment tasks can elicit reflection if they are open and set as problems to be considered. Often the simplest questions are the most difficult to answer and demand the most thought (Morgan and Saxon, 1991).
- Encourage reflection during problem solving. Selfe and Arbabi (1986) found that learners who had accompanied problem-solving activities in engineering with reflective accounts of their progress were more successful at solving subsequent problems.
- Use a notice-board with two sections – one for notices and one for reflective comment by staff or learners.

One of the most helpful ways of enabling learners in higher education levels to reflect and to learn from experience is to enable them to progress in their conception of the structure of knowledge (see Chapter 2). While they tend to see knowledge in terms of ‘right or wrong’, viewing the teacher as the expert who will pass on knowledge while they absorb it (i.e., in Baxter Magolda’s (1992) absolutist stage, it is harder for them to recognize the need to reflect. Enabling them to progress in their understanding of learning will bring them to stages in which they will recognize that there are alternative interpretations that require reflection. The use of examples that are not initially in their

discipline can be helpful in enabling them to begin to recognize that knowledge is constructed. Maps are a valuable material by which to demonstrate constructed knowledge. A map of an area is shown and learners are asked if it is a true representation of the area and to write down their response ('To what extent is this a true map of this area?'). They are then shown other maps of the same area that demonstrate that maps are constructed to show what the map-maker wants to show. They can be distorted, ignore features or can be constructed in a manner to make a point to those they want to influence. The ideas developed are then translated to the learner's own discipline with the aim of engendering a more questioning and reflective mode of working.

When encouraging the development of reflective learners, it is worth considering the conditions under which reflection is fostered. There are a number of qualities that have emerged from previous chapters in this book and from common experience that would seem to enhance the qualities of reflective and experiential learning. Some are:

- the willingness to engage in cognitive housekeeping (p. 27) – the reordering of one's conceptions on a topic;
- clarity of purpose – having an idea of what the end point of the exercise might be;
- self-management skills – the knowledge of how one best functions alone/with others and the ability to make good use of that knowledge (Chapter 3);
- linked to the above, an appropriate understanding of the role of emotion in reflective learning (Chapter 3);
- appropriate conceptions of knowledge and willingness to work with others' conceptions that may differ (Chapter 2);
- an awareness of the 'rules' of the relevant discipline or mode of operation;
- open-mindedness – a willingness to accommodate to new ways of thinking (Chapter 1);
- 'voice' – a willingness to reason for oneself and to express the results of the reasoning.

Learning from work experience and other current experience: 1 Work experience

It is important first to clarify terms. Work experience and work-based learning can be seen as the poles of a continuum of work-related learning. In work experience learners engage in placements that do not necessarily have anything to do with their discipline. The learner usually arranges the placement which may be paid or unpaid or voluntary and the focus of the experience is being at work or in the workplace and reflective activity is involved (Harvey

et al., 1998; Watton *et al.*, 2002). In contrast, work-based learning describes situations in which the work activity is the curriculum (Portwood and Costley, 2000). Aspects of both types can be variously combined in a placement with, for example, projects that are related to the learner's discipline (Marshall and Cooper, 2001).

With increasing consciousness of employability skills and the advent of Foundation degrees (two-year degrees) in UK higher education with a mandatory element of work-related learning, work experience initiatives are increasing. However, full opportunities for the experience are not always taken. Miller *et al.* comment that too easily, 'work experience programmes . . . [come to] resemble old hotels that have undergone periodic refurbishment of an unsympathetic kind' (1991, p. 233). In this brief section, the aim is to point out some of the issues – the thinking points – that are usefully considered in setting up such situations for learners. Some of the principles are applicable to the learning in other placement situations within formal education.

A work experience module in a higher education programme involves learners in experiences that may not be unfamiliar, but that are very different from most academic modules. A learner might set up and work a placement in a newsagent shop for a short period of time (or it might be her normal workplace to support her finances). She is likely to have undergone an induction or briefing phase with a tutor, which will have provided topics and tasks to explore at work and write up. These will usually involve reflective writing in some form. There is also likely to be a final phase, with some sort of debriefing and sometimes a presentation on what she has learnt. Such modules are more likely to be at undergraduate levels, but may also be at Master's level (Watton and Collings, 2002).

The existence of work experience modules on programmes is usually justified in terms of employability skills but the potential for learning is far greater than the most generous definition of employability (Caley and Hendry, 2000). Whatever is the underlying intent for the work experience placement or for other placement experiences, an underpinning principle is that a process of reflection focuses the learning and enables it to be generalized to other situations. Some of the areas of potential learning in a work experience placement are as follows. A considered selection of these should be made more explicit in learning outcomes and thence assessment criteria (see Chapter 11):

- learning about work and workplace practices;
- learn how organizations 'work';
- learning communication skills and about working with people;
- learning about personal work behaviour patterns;
- learn to evaluate own performance;
- learn to work with feedback from others;
- learn about own career aspirations;

- project work;
- learning to learn from experience;
- learning self-management (Reeders, 2000);
- learning to use reflection and reflective practice;
- to gain employability skills/'key skills' not easily gained elsewhere in the curriculum (Little, 1998);
- development of self-confidence and willingness to take initiatives (Postle, 2000);
- to enhance orientation towards lifelong learning;
- to enable students to learn skills not easily embedded in the rest of the curriculum.

The learning may be discipline-related either through the nature of the work or through the nature of tasks set (see below). Some of the differences from the conventional academic activity (and therefore potential areas for important learning) are as follows:

- the learner manages her own learning;
- there is a different teacher–learner relationship (Tennant, 2000);
- there is no curriculum as such – the required material of learning may not be clearly identified. The learner may be required to identify it for herself with relatively little guidance;
- there are no academic texts from which to learn;
- the context is different from an academic context;
- there is usually emphasis on reflection – that may be a new experience.

Learning from work experience mimics everyday learning. It is disrupted and non-routine (Marsick and Watkins, 1990; Tennant, 1999), emotion is involved, variously enhancing and confusing learning processes (see Chapter 3; Eraut *et al.*, 1998; Boud and Walker, 1991). Much of the learning is incidental or informal, with figures and grounds continually changing (see Chapter 1). More fundamentally, the learner needs to learn that in the 'real world' there are different points of view for virtually any issue. She needs to learn to make judgements (Hager, 1999) by 'bringing alternative frames of reference to bear on the frames of reference with which one is presented' – learners engage with 'supercomplexity' in work (Barnett, 1999). Beckett sums the situation up: 'Humour, negotiation, anecdote and spontaneity are hallmarks of this kind of learning . . . Putting out spotfires, seizing the moment, catching the nuance and making something unique out of human sensibilities . . . are all part of this too (1999, p. 73).

Making something of this chaotic learning situation is confusing for a learner who is used to being 'fed' information in lectures. To enable her to make sense of specific parts of it, it is important that she is made aware of what the focus of the learning is to be or the placement becomes simply an

opportunity for awareness-raising, rather than actual learning (Davies and Easterby-Smith, 1984, Ways in which the learning can be focused are:

- through the learning outcomes;
- through guidance at the induction/briefing session or within handouts;
- through focused opportunities for reflective learning (e.g., in discussion with tutors or other mentors);
- through the kinds of tasks provided to the learner (e.g., critical incidents on which to reflect);
- by implication from the assessment criteria in any assessment tasks given to the learner;
- by giving the learner tasks that directly apply what has been learnt from the placement (Mumford *et al.*, undated).

A useful concept for this process is that in these ways, there is a 'management' or 'shaping of subjectivity' (Usher and Solomon 1999, pp. 155, 157). The potential for choice of focus of the learning from experience that is indicated in this section demonstrates the need for careful focus on the kinds of learning that learners are expected to achieve.

It is not unusual, however, for a learner simply to take a work placement without much guidance as to the focus of learning, and be asked to write a report with vague learning outcomes and the indication that it will be marked like any other essay. Such a task is far too imprecise to focus reflection which, as we have indicated above, enables learning to be recognized and more easily applied elsewhere. Some of the unhelpful situations in work experience arise because there is not a clear understanding of how work experience differs from work-based learning (WBL). In WBL the focus is on the enhancement of disciplinary learning because the nature of the work is the curriculum.

There are a variety of ways in which learners can be asked to focus their learning in order that reflection on the experience may occur. It is useful that at least in some of these tasks, the idea of reflection is overt:

- the maintenance of a learning journal or a portfolio;
- reflection on critical incidents;
- a presentation on what has been learnt;
- analysis of strengths and weaknesses and related action planning (Watton and Collings, 2002);
- an essay or report on what has been learnt (preferably with references to excerpts from a learning journal or other reflective writing);
- self-awareness tools and exercises (e.g., questionnaires about learning patterns);
- a review of a book that relates the work experience to own discipline;
- short answer questions (half A4 sheet) of a 'why' or 'explain . . .' nature;
- a project that develops ideas further (group or individual);

- self-evaluation of a task performed (i.e., the task or the evaluation assessed);
- an article (e.g., for a newspaper) explaining something in the workplace;
- recommendation for improvement of some practice (a sensitive matter);
- an interview of the learner as a potential worker in the workplace;
- a story that involves thinking about learning in the placement (see later in this chapter);
- a request that students take a given theory and observe its application in the workplace;
- an oral examination;
- management of an informed discussion;
- a report on an event in the work situation (there may be ethical issues here);
- account of how discipline (i.e., subject) issues apply to the workplace;
- an identification of and rationale for projects that could be done in the workplace.

The need for reflection can be worked into most of these assessment tasks. As Chapter 11 makes clear, the tasks should test clear assessment criteria that are derived from the learning outcomes.

However, in using work experience within the context of a formal educational programme, there is a danger of 'trapping learners' understanding within their own work setting'. They may 'be unable to move beyond it. Their understandings and working knowledge become over-localized . . . and cannot transcend the present and the particular' (Boud, 2001, pp. 40–1). The lore of poor transfer of learning could be cited and questioned here (Tennant, 1999) but, as has been indicated (see Chapter 8) and Boud himself says, the experience of variation in learning enables learners to progress and apply learning to new situations (Fazey and Marton, 2002). In this sense the good practice is learning to learn but there are other ways in which work experience placements can be seen to relate, or more deliberately be related to the rest of the programme. For example:

- epistemological contrasts and similarities with the learner's own discipline can be drawn;
- learners can be asked deliberately to find ways in which the experience in work relates to their own discipline. There is chemistry in the burger bar, mathematics in the pub till, English in the work of the care assistant, etc. The relationship between home discipline and work experience might be explored in fiction (see later in this chapter);
- skills in the manipulation of knowledge are developed in the new context;
- there is useful emphasis on and development of reflective learning abilities that are now relevant to all programmes in personal development planning (see above).

This list can be seen as elements of a rationale for inclusion of work experience in an otherwise academic programme. They may be used to 'market' work experience to those academics who see it as irrelevant.

Finally, there are some practical matters about instituting work experience which need attention. Some are as follows:

- finding work placements;
- deciding how long the placement should be – it is the learning that emanates from the placement, not the placement length itself that relates to the credit attributed to it;
- sorting out health, safety and responsibility issues;
- helping learners to cope with a new learning environment;
- helping them to reflect (Chapter 10);
- getting the appropriate level of learning in the module and assessing appropriately (Moon, 2002a).

We can summarize by mentioning two important points here. The first is that reflective activities that focus on specific experiences in work are very important as a means of ensuring that the learning is 'captured'. Second, 'work experience' is not one thing. It is a mass of interweaving subjective experiences. To make good use of the situation requires careful guidance and directing of the anticipated learning those who plan the module.

Learning from current experience: 2 Other experience

Again, this section gives some brief notes about a diversity of ideas, most of which are new. There are other exercises of this kind in Moon (1999a, b). Most are individual but when a colleague can comment or ask further questions in a trusting environment, the reflection and learning can be more effective.

Methods for learning from informal and incidental experience (Resource 11)

This material is adapted from Marsick and Watkins (1990, pp. 226–7). The original version is presented at the end of their book as 'Strategies for Enhancing Informal and Incidental Learning'.

Scales and questionnaires

There are many scales and questionnaires presented in everything from weekly magazines to restricted-use psychological materials. Scales can be taken as

measures of what they purport to measure but often they provide very useful material for reflection and reflective learning whether or not their outcomes are believed (e.g., learning style materials). Examples are Honey and Mumford (1992) and Redman (2001).

Deliberate learning from a personal experience

This exercise treats a discrete event as an experience from which to learn – like, for example, work experience. The inspiration results from a personal experience (see Introduction). In the early stages of thinking about this book when I was deeply involved in a work experience module, and wondering what the students were really learning from it, I went on a camping trip with a friend, and we took kayaks. Camping was familiar, as was kayaking, but the friend and the location were new. I recognized that this two-week period had something in common with the work experience placements. Much was familiar, but there were also new elements to the situation. I decided to write about the experience reflectively, looking for what I might have learnt. It was a fascinating experience on many levels, particularly when I went back to the task on several subsequent days. I noticed, for example, that how I recalled what I learnt changed over subsequent days. Initially, when it was easy to ‘re-enter’ the experience of the holiday, it was not difficult to recognize what I had learnt. As days went by, it became more difficult and I seemed to be fishing around on the surface of the experience, without engaging with it. Perhaps the most interesting point to me is that the learning that I ‘pulled out’ and reflected upon in the first day or two and then remained accessible. I could think about it and generalize to other situations. It was as if that which was not pulled out from the whole experience early on became tied more tightly to its context and was and remained much less accessible. A similar observation has been made elsewhere and seems to be significant in the academic applications of learning from experience (Mason, 2000; Hoadley-Maidment, 2000).

Following the first experience, I repeated the exercise, this time choosing to work on an emotionally disturbing event. Again I learnt from doing the exercise, particularly from the writing on subsequent days. As the immediacy of the strong feelings subsided, I found that I construed the event in a different way. When we ask learners to write about an event only once, there is a loss of the richness of the real experience of reflection in which we turn events around and see them differently over a period of time. This observation demonstrated the need to be aware of levels of reflection, and the importance of the ability to engage with deeper levels where a learner reflects on the process of her own reflection. It raises many interesting issues about how we deal with learners’ understanding of ‘reality’ – or in other words, their conceptions of knowledge (see Chapter 2 and Pardoe, 2000).

There are some very interesting examples of personal reflective projects such as these in the literature. We have already mentioned the work of Marion Milner, *On Not Being Able to Paint* (1957).

Record on the hour

A variation on the exercise above is to explore the nature of experience or of learning from experience by recording on the hour in a notebook. The focus could be 'what I have experienced' or 'what I have learnt'. After a day or two, there will be some interesting data and probably some new insights into day-to-day experience and the learning from that experience. It is interesting to consider how much of the learning is generalizable to other contexts and the effects on it of the recording and inevitable subsequent reflective processes.

Ask questions

Different forms of question demand different respondent behaviour. Morgan and Saxon (1991) suggest that the following kinds of questions encourage reflection:

- the development of supposition or hypothesis, e.g., 'I wonder what you will learn from that experience';
- questions that focus on feelings, e.g., 'How do you feel about that teacher's behaviour?'
- those that project into the future, e.g., 'How do you think you will react in that situation?'
- those that encourage critical judgements to be made, e.g., 'How can we justify this war?'

Learning to ask helpful and probing questions is a valuable skill. Learners need the same skills as teachers in this and can help each other in peer learning situations.

Use a metaphor

Morrow Lindberg (1983) used shells to generate thought processes about her life and experiences as she took walks on a beach. Each shell did no more than initiate a reflective process – each, though, in a different way. Not only the writing of this kind of material, but also the reading of it generate reflective and experiential learning as one compares and contrasts one's own experiences with those described. Everyone will have their own favourite books that generate a reflective mode. Some personal favourites are Hesse (1972), Storr (1988).

Construct exercises that challenge judgement and conceptions of knowledge

Exercises can be constructed in order to stimulate reflective judgement (King and Kitchener, 1994). Resource 12 is one such exercise. Use of material such as this in a group means that those making differing judgements will be exposed to each other and there can be some recognition that people are at different stages in their conceptions of the nature of knowledge (see Chapter 2). There will also be a recognition that, in real life, there may be no clear-cut solutions to problems. Reflective processes are involved in the identification of a 'best-in-the-circumstances' solution. In the exercise, group members are asked, individually, to rank the behaviour of each of the characters in the story from best to worst (Victoria, Albert, Fred, Archibald and George). They are asked to decide which of the characters is most responsible for the outcome of the story and which least responsible. Individuals are then asked to collaborate in small groups to create a joint response.

Dialogues techniques (Resource 8)

A major reason why activities such as those listed in this chapter can have a useful outcome is that they cause the learner to shift from one frame of reference to others – to recognize that there are 'two sides' to most arguments, for example. This is one of the reasons that so much learning is done in new relationships where there is a considerable effort to understand the other's frames of reference (Taylor, 1997). One of the most direct means of enabling this recognition on paper is by the use of dialogue techniques. Ira Progoff's work best exemplifies this, though others have used similar techniques, sometimes based on his work (Progoff, 1975; Rainer, 1978). A dialogue is like a play with two actors – the writer and another chosen because she is involved in a situation, or has insight into it. The writer introduces the issue under consideration in a short paragraph, and then writes words that would prompt dialogue (e.g., 'What do you think I should do . . .?'). The writer then 'listens' to the imagined voice of the other, writing the words, then responding, and so on. Dialogues can travel over remarkable and unexpected territory and yield useful learning.

The most obvious 'other' in a dialogue is a known 'other' who is involved in a situation – though the 'other' may have a different point of view. However, the 'other' may be a figure of wisdom such as a philosopher or a religious figure.

Learning from past experience

In a sense, past experience becomes 'current' as soon as it is brought into the present because its nature is interpreted within the current context. Many of

the techniques in the previous section can focus on the past but it is useful to note a few techniques that more specifically focus on past situations.

Dialogues (Resource 8)

Dialogues (see above) have the advantage that the imagined 'other' can be completely flexible in time and space and they therefore are a way of exploring past events as much as present events. The 'other' might be a real person who was 'there' or an (at the time, unseen) observer watching the past event. The 'other' could be an esteemed historical or religious figure.

Footprints (Resource 13)

This is a modification of Proffoff's 'Stepping stones' exercise (Proffoff, 1975). Since it may be useful to copy the details of it for learners, it is described in the Resources section. Footprints can be run as an individual exercise, but much is gained from a group approach as described.

Learning shifts

The different aspects of learning that have unfolded in the process of writing this book have engendered memories of occasions when I have had insights into aspects of my learning process. This has come about particularly since I have become interested in the development of conceptions of knowledge. An example is when, in a Philosophy of Education module I found my own reasoning valued! The identification of these 'learning shifts' is an exercise that is of use in itself as reflective learning, but also can yield valuable information about personal learning processes that can underpin further learning activity. It can be done on one occasion, perhaps using the 'footprints' techniques described in Resource 13, or it can be an ongoing exercise over a period of time. The incorporation of opportunities to share memories and insights increases the benefits of the exercise. It may also be helpful to introduce Baxter Magolda's framework as an initial exercise (Baxter Magolda, 1992, see Chapter 2).

Learning from creative activity: 1 General techniques

As this book is coming towards completion, there is a growing concern to encourage a more creative and imaginative approach to higher education (Dewulf and Baillie, 1999; Jackson, 2003). Representation of creative and imaginative activity is often based on reflective and experiential learning and in essence, a creative activity involves working with imagination, and

imagination can be free from already known time and space. In this section we identify some activities that would be construed as creative, and demonstrate how they exploit, depend on and develop further the activities of reflective and experiential learning. One reason why such activities might not be used more commonly is because of the difficulty of assessment. As Chapter 11 points out, all assessment methods come down to a few simple rules that concern the recognition of assessment criteria.

An important point with which to begin this section is that we are not discussing expert work in poetry, art, drama and story writing and telling but the use of these forms of activity as a medium with which to make sense, or better or broader sense, of experiences.

Poetry (Resource 14)

There are many quotations about the nature of poetry. Essentially a poem is a capturing of an experience either to make greater sense of the experience for herself, or to communicate aspects of it to another. The poem in Resource 14 does exactly that. Writing a poem is an activity of experiential learning for the writer and the reader (Skelton, 1971). Ted Hughes illustrates the manner in which poetry writing entails the learning of something new. He describes the process as a 'special kind of excitement, the slightly mesmerised and quite involuntary concentration with which you make out the stirrings of a new poem in your mind, then the outline, then the mass and colour . . . the poem is a new species of creature, a new specimen of the life outside your own' (Hughes, 1967, p. 17). There are many exercises that enable the 'not-usually-poetic' to write and experience the reflective and learning processes involved (e.g., Hughes, 1967; Brownjohn 1981, 1982).

The use of the absurd

An absurd idea is an idea that is subject to mockery because it is outside the usual frames of reference. To work with the absurd is also to work freely with ideas, unconstrained by logic and reasoning. Since we have suggested that deeper reflective learning relies on being able to understand that there are different frames of reference for any subject matter and a sense of freedom to shift around ideas, it would seem that the absurd might have a use. One way of making use of the absurd in reflective and experiential learning is in action learning sets where a group of individuals have arranged to support each other in turn in dealing with a real-life issue (p. 160) (McGill and Beaty, 1992). When an individual's issue has been described, a 'mind-freeing' experience can be introduced in which there is a collection of two or three absurd solutions to the issue from each person before going on to the 'proper' processes. It will not be at all unusual to find that the best solution resides in the absurd.

Drama

There are many forms of drama and theatre that are designed to inspire reflective and experiential learning in the audience by the use of action and language in somewhat the same manner as poetry or the absurd (see above). In the most conventional form, participants watch and then respond to the presentation of an issue that is anticipated by the actors to stimulate thought, clarify, disturb and generally promote learning of a kind that could not just be 'told' (Beard and Wilson, 2002). In a more sophisticated form, the issue is taken from the audience present, and the actors improvise, creating an 'imaginary mirror'. The audience participates in directing the actors as they see the work unfold (Boal, 1995). In this theatre there is a conscious mixing of subject and objective representations (Jackson, 1995).

In other uses of drama to elucidate experience, the roles of audience, actors, observers and learners elide and the total involvement in the depiction of a situation is designed to be a learning and/or therapeutic experience. Sometimes the actors create a immobile 'scene' and sometimes they move through events. In this kind of work, it would be usual to have a facilitator.

Graphic depiction – cartoons and other forms of art

A cartoon is a graphic depiction of an experience, using elements of the absurd to push ideas towards extremes and thereby make points more clearly. A good cartoonist can throw back to a group of people images that epitomize their behaviour or events under discussion. In turn the cartoon leads to further learning or the generation of further reflection. Beard and Wilson (2002) describe the use of cartoons in work with companies.

Other forms of drawing enable learning. This is the basis of art therapy. Milner's work on 'not being able to paint' represents a detailed description of a learning process through and about art (Milner, 1957). Doodling might sometimes also have a related role.

Learning from creative activity: 2 Working with story

More clearly than some of the other creative activities mentioned above, stories have the ability to lift aspects of external experience from their context. Stories can be subjected to closer examination, experiment (imbued with different meanings in new contexts) and further development in fantasy. They can also act as mirrors, reflecting back to a person another's conception of what is perceived to be the first person's internal experience or a modification of it. Sometimes in a therapeutic situation, the subject is asked to tell her

story and then, with support and reflective comment from the therapist, is encouraged to re-experience the imagined external experience in a different manner. The notion of reflecting back a perceived story in a clarified or modified form is similar to Boal's work with drama and this kind of work is in the tool box of many therapies (e.g., narrative and hypnotherapy) and many aspects of counselling (Egan, 1990)).

Work with story is very flexible and there is no one way to use it in facilitating the learning from reflection or experience. There are some excellent texts on working with story in the context of education or professional development. Examples are Bolton (1999), Winter *et al.* (1999) and McDrury and Alterio (2002). The first of these largely focuses on the use of stories in therapeutic contexts and the latter two on professional development. Story work is also being used in business and management (Beard and Wilson, 2002; Snowden, 2003).

Probably the barrier to story work in formal education is that it is seen as flippant and 'made up', and 'not real' unless it is located in formal literature, creative writing or some cultural studies. There are assumptions here that need to be discussed. Connelly and Clandinin said that 'study of narrative . . . is the study of the ways humans experience the world' and Bruner suggests that humans seem to actually have a 'readiness or predisposition to organise experience into a narrative form, into plot structures' (1990, p. 45). On this basis, any work with story is a common human means of working with experience and learning from it. In terms of learning (see Chapter 1), a story is an organized representation of the internal experience of the writer, and there are both recognized and freely created forms for the representation. There is apparently a hard division between what we call 'fact' and fiction, with only fact acceptable in formal education outside the studies mentioned above. Before turning to the fact/fiction 'divide', we can reiterate the point about the manner in which story relates to learning from experience. We have already suggested different forms of representation to provide the learner with different learning opportunities (Eisner, 1991). This idea can be applied in two ways. The first is to the form being represented in storywork (oral, written or in mime). Also it can be applied to the manner of organization – whether the story is presented as myth, fable, play short story, a true account, and so on.

When we approach story from the point of view of learning, the divide between fact and fiction – or 'non'-fact – decreases. Memory is a reconstruction in the light of current experience because it is selective. In other words, what we recall can be 'doubly' constructed. It is first constructed in the process of learning it in the first place, and then constructed again when we recall it in a particular context (Bruner, 1990). Bruner talks about the human capacity to 'alter the past in the light of the present' as well as our capacity to 'turn around on the past and alter the present in its light . . . Neither the past nor the present stays fixed in the light of this reflexivity' (*ibid.*, p. 109).

Newman (1999) illustrates the point further when he talks about the experience of recalling an event and reconstructing it in several ways, each time investing it with a different interpretation. We are suggesting here, therefore, that what is presented as 'fact' is partly fiction only because it is selectively presented and reconstructed.

We can also say, like Winter *et al.*, that 'fiction is only partly "invented"' (1999, p. 21), because any 'fiction' is made up of the experienced experiences of the story maker (teller/writer). A number of writers more overtly mix 'made up' and 'lived through' experiences. The authors cite Ashton-Warner (1985a, b). The work of Henry Williamson (e.g., *The Pathway*, 1933) is a similar example. Winter *et al.* have exploited this notion of mixing overt 'fact' and 'fiction' in their design of a technique of exploring professional experience in the 'patchwork' method which recognizes the learning that can emerge from processes of selection and interpretation of experience. The use of fiction and therefore imagination broadens people's ranges of perspective on a particular topic. Bolton makes a related point in suggesting that fiction takes people into 'different and deeper territories' and enables exploration of a 'wider range of material' (1999, pp. 215, 216). Similarly useful is her suggestion that the deliberate treatment of 'factual' stories as fiction can free the story-teller in her depiction of the story (Bolton, 1994).

A further and different view of the fact/fiction divide emerges in collaborative story-telling work (McDrury and Alterio, 2002), where a story-teller presents a story that is then expanded and reinterpreted by a group of listeners. In such cases, it could be said that the 'fact'/fiction divide is relevant only to the 'teller', and then only at the time of the first 'telling'. The original story will have been fictionalized by progressive representations and interpretations of it by the teller and the listeners. The final task is to fictionalize it in a manner that is useful for the teller and the listeners. So long as the story is plausible, for most participants it would matter little if the original story was fact or fiction. Sometimes more could be learnt from fiction because it can be entirely manipulated and designed to illustrate any point that is chosen, and can facilitate any relevant learning, depending on the skill of the presenter and the work of interpretation. Because fiction can relate to anything, and because people learn from hearing stories told, there is no limit to the learning that can emerge from story work. It is a matter of how the activity is defined and how then it is facilitated in order that the planned learning is achieved.

The task of the facilitator in using story could be characterized as a matter of finding the balance between suitable precision and encouragement of broad imagination, either of which will have different management implications. Such activity also confronts people's beliefs about what they can and cannot do ('I can't tell stories') and so it requires thoughtful introduction with due attention to the context. An early decision is whether the story activity is through the written or spoken word. This may depend on the context (e.g., class size). It is important in creative activities such as those described

below, for the facilitator to be clear for herself and the learners about the aim and the learning outcomes of the session(s). It is not helpful if learners do not feel that the activity has proper purpose.

Learning that can form the focus of story work can concern:

- the subject matter of professional practice;
- personal functioning;
- different perspectives of viewing a situation;
- learning about conceptions of knowledge, e.g., through seeing the operation of differing perspectives and ill-structured situations;
- emotional learning and the role of emotion in different situations;
- the exploration of alternative actions;
- the passing on of cultural history (e.g., in a business or profession);
- the thinking through of a difficult issue;
- group or team work (when used as a collaborative exercise);
- preparation for and practice in advance of a difficult situation.

The writers mentioned at the beginning of this section provide a broad range of methods of using story. However, we present a few methods below, both as a general illustration and, in some cases, to illustrate particular purposes.

Developing one's own story

Being asked to write a story can be a difficult and often threatening activity for learners. There are, however, many ways of helping them to get started through structured exercises (McDrury and Alterio, 2002) and free writing (Bolton, 1994, 1999). A number of the exercises given in this chapter would also serve to lead learners towards their own stories. 'Footprints' is particularly effective as a means of generating story material, particularly since, by its nature, the subject matter is controlled by the facilitator (Resource 13). It can lead to oral or written stories and the first stories are 'told' in the process of the exercise without being identified as stories as such.

Person, time and place

This is another useful starter exercise which can be developed to fit a professional or workplace topic or can be 'free'. The group of learners is asked to write for two minutes on a person (known or unknown), then they are asked to write for two minutes about a place and, finally, they are asked to identify a time (time can be in historical terms, time of the day, season, etc.). The facilitator, at random, picks one learner's person, another learner's place and another person's time. Learners are asked to write about or develop a story about how the person comes to be in that place at that time, preferably with some kind of conclusion. The exercise can involve written or oral stories that are then written or developed. The stories can be developed by groups or

individuals and the 'pick' of person, time and place can be focused on a topic or discipline.

Different perspectives

A story relevant to the material of learning is selected. It may be one that has been written by members of the group, or it may be story already published. Learners are asked to re-write the story in the voice of different character from the original. A typical pattern would be the choice of a story in the third person originally, rewritten as a first person story by one of the characters.

Writing in different roles

This is a development of the previous exercise but probably used to fulfil a different learning purpose. It has the advantage that it can be adapted to any discipline at all and it may have some its principal value in the sciences or maths where it might be more difficult to apply story work. A reaction or event of any kind at all is explained to the learners. Examples are a form of chemical reaction, a mathematical equation, a biological theory, a pattern in particle physics. One element of the event is identified and its story is told from its point of view. Thus, a chemical reaction is 'told' from the point of view of the molecule. 'x' tells its tale in the mathematical equation, and so on. No longer are the learners learning about the event from the outside, but now from the inside. There is some evidence that this kind of approach facilitates learning (Selfe and Arbarbi, 1986).

Creating scenarios

This exercise is developed from the idea of three exercises in the Resource section (Resources 5, 6 and 10) that illustrate the deepening of reflection (see Chapter 7). In this case, however, the learners write the initial scenario and then the subsequent two or three developments that represent increasing depths of reflection. They use the Generic Framework for Reflective Writing (Resource 9) as a guide. The purpose of the exercise is to enable learners to understand the factors that are involved in reflecting at deeper levels. It would be a useful exercise to use with learners who have been using a learning journal for a little while and who need to develop, improve and broaden their ability to reflect. The exercise could be done individually or in a group.

Collaborative story work

McDrury and Alterio (2002) provide extensive support for this kind of work. They suggest that there are generally three phases in a collaborative story situation. In the first stage, a suitable story with suitable subject matter is identified and told or written. A transcript is provided for other learners

(or an audio-taped copy). They reflect individually on the story in the second stage and in the third stage, the group reconvenes and there is a pooling of individual reflections, and discussion on the perceptions of the story. There could, obviously, be further developments from this stage, such as 'different perspectives' activities (above).

Patchwork

Winter *et al.* (1999) present the patchwork approach which involves the integration of creative imagination; factual material and story. The different contents of the patchwork mean that experience (e.g., in a professional area) is shaped, but there is no attempt to conclude it. It is coherent but without conclusion, which is actually the nature of real experience if we recognize that we construct knowledge. Winter *et al.* describe the patchwork 'text' in the following way: 'The texts usually consist of five or six pieces of writing, each about a page or two long, sometimes with short linking commentaries' (*ibid.*, p. 11) or sometimes including longer pieces.

Setting up a personal learning journal

The use of learning journals is the subject matter of Moon, 1999b and although journals have become much more common since the late 1990s in educational situations, not a great deal has changed. Indeed, this book is intended to deal with specifically identified issues that have emerged from the wider use of journals. These mainly concern a generation of greater understanding about helping learners to start to reflect (see Chapter 10) and the making of judgements about the quality of reflection. This is developed throughout this book, and in particular Chapter 7 on the deepening of reflection and in the development of the Generic Framework for Reflective Writing (Resource 9).

While the earlier work on learning journals provided many ideas and ways of structuring journals, it did not recommend a format that could support ongoing learning as well as the integration of learning from past experiences. Most journals are really only concerned with learning from present experience. The work of Progoff (1975) epitomizes the form of journal to which we refer, however, the format of the Intensive Journal is just too cumbersome for most people with busy lives. We therefore suggest a format of journal that draws on the work of Progoff and others, allows for the integration of learning from past experiences but which is easier to maintain.

In this deep learning journal there are three sections: Everyday Experience; Timespells and Workings. There are several important features of the journal apart from its structure.

- The journal needs to use loose-leaf paper so that pages can be or shifted at any point. This makes the use of the journal potentially more flexible. The size and design are personal choices (discussed in Moon, 1999b).
- While we refer to writing in the journal, drawing, doodling, typing and any other form of depiction is to be encouraged if it is meaningful. If the material is not in a format that fits a paper journal, there will need to be a reference to it (see below).
- Cross-referencing: this is an important feature of the journal and its use will become evident in the description of the sections below. Most cross-referencing will be done from the Workings section into Everyday Experience. For this reason, it is helpful if work in 'Workings' is dated and given a title (e.g., Dec 23rd Dream: no-one gives me a Christmas present). When a reference is made to this in Everyday Experiences, use a symbol to show that it is a reference to writing elsewhere. This might be an asterisk.
- Where there is something that is newly learnt – a 'learning', mark it. Again this can be a matter of choice. It might be mildly symbolic such as a light bulb, or the writing might be underlined or circled. Some journal writers might want to develop a theme for these 'learnings'. Joanna Field wrote notes on 'What makes me happy' (Field, 1952).

Everyday experience

This is the everyday writing – reflections on the day, mood, events – the material of most diaries although there is a greater orientation to the drawing of provisional 'learnings'. There is no need to write in it slavishly every day but unless it is completed fairly often, there will be no 'flow' to the journal.

Timespells

This section is inspired by Proffoff's 'Period Log', though again it is simplified. It is based on the observation that the feeling of our lives does not usually run in a completely steady state. To use the metaphor of travel, we travel over a rocky period of time and then reach a flat and easy route where there is relaxation and peace. There is a sudden change and the pace speeds up, and so on. Life occurs in chunks. Within each 'chunk' we feel and experience broadly the same. The chunks might be a day or two, or a week or two or even months, but most people would experience changes within months. The characteristics of each spell are decided by the journal writer in retrospect.

We write in Timespells when there is a sense that there is a period of time to describe and the writing is more about the feelings and sense of the period than the events, even though events may have defined it. The writing might take place after some reflection on what that period has meant in our lives. Depicting it in cartoon or sketch – abstract or 'real' may help to make sense of the period alongside straightforward reflective writing.

When there are insights or 'learnings' that emerge from the writing in Timespells, these are cross-referenced in the Everyday Experience.

Workings

Workings is a section for any writing that is neither daily or period recording (which then fits in the first two sections described above). It will often be exercises such as those described earlier in this chapter – dialogues, the results of Footprints exercises, writing that occurs from asking questions, using metaphor, and so on. On the other hand, it may be a piece of reflection about a particular person or situation, or the description and work on a dream (Shohet, 1985; Reed, 1985). There are many more such exercises in Moon (1999b). These are cross-referenced to Everyday Experiences. This links the experience of a day with the decision to write in Workings, and what is written in Workings may relate to the experience of the day.

Conclusion, a hint and a recipe . . .

We conclude this work on the personal learning journal, this chapter on ways of enhancing reflective and experiential learning, and this whole book first of all with a hint given by a participant at a workshop: 'Sometimes there is a struggle to make time to reflect and to learn from experience. Make an appointment with yourself in your diary.'

The recipe stirs ideas of reflection, of learning from experience, of the value of story and metaphor, and personal development – indeed, the professional development of a wizard:

Harry stared at the stone basin. The contents had returned to their original silvery white state, swirling and rippling beneath his gaze.

'What is it?' Harry asked shakily.

'This? It is called a pensieve', said Dumbledore. 'I sometimes find, and I am sure that you know the feeling, that I simply have too many thoughts and memories crammed into my mind.'

'Er,' said Harry, who couldn't truthfully say that he had ever felt anything of the sort.

'At these times,' said Dumbledore, indicating the stone basin, 'I use the pensieve. One simply siphons the excess thoughts from one's mind, pours them into the basin, and examines them at one's leisure. It becomes easier to spot patterns and links, you understand, when they are in this form.'

(Rowling, 2000, pp. 518–19)

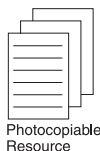
Resources

Introduction

On these pages are exercises, material for handouts and examples that are designed to support the introduction and use of reflective and experiential learning. Instructions for the use of these materials is given in the text, mainly in Chapter 10, with some further references in Chapter 12. Copyright restrictions have been waived, so these may be copied freely for use with learners.

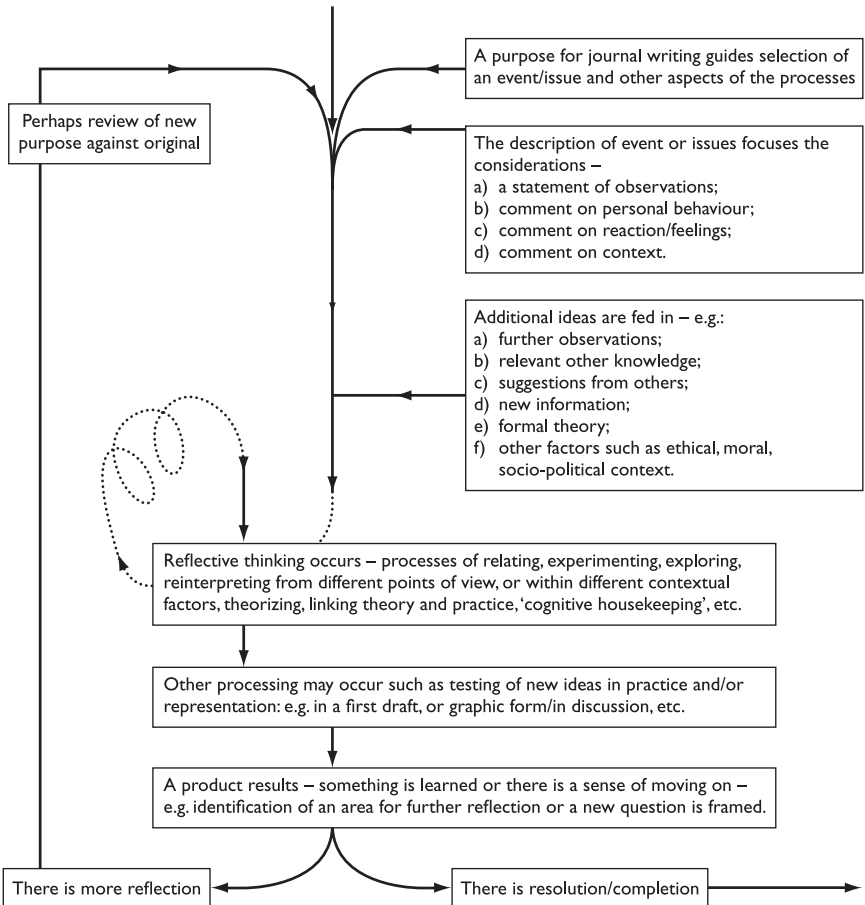
Below the resources and their subject matter are listed with the page number that is their main reference in the text of the book.

Resource 1 The processes of writing reflectively: a map of reflective writing	p. 184
Resource 2 Reflective writing: some initial guidance for students	p. 186
Resource 3 A comparison of reflective writing and report or essay writing	p. 190
Resource 4 Samples of reflective writing	p. 192
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Resource 7 Questions to support reflective writing	p. 210
Resource 8 Dialogues: an exercise to develop reflective thinking and writing	p. 212
Resource 9 A Generic Framework for Reflective Writing	p. 214
Resource 10 The Dance Lesson: an exercise in reflective writing	p. 217
Resource 11 Strategies for enhancing learning from everyday experience	p. 223
Resource 12 An exercise on judgement	p. 226
Resource 13 Footprints	p. 227
Resource 14 Poetry as a form of capturing experience	p. 230

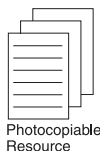


Resource 1

The processes of writing reflectively: a map of reflective writing



Source: Moon (1999b)



Resource 2

Reflective writing: some initial guidance for students

Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Introduction: reflection and reflective writing

Reflection lies somewhere involved with the notion of learning and thinking. We reflect in order to learn something, or we learn as a result of reflecting. Reflective writing is the expression on paper/the screen of some of the mental processes of reflection. Other forms of expressing reflection are in speech, in film, in graphic portrayal, music, etc. The expression of reflection is not, however, a direct mirror of what happens in the head. It is a representation of that process within the chosen medium and reflection represented in writing, for example, will be different to that encompassed in a drawing. In other words, in making a representation of reflection, we shape and model the content of our reflection according to many influences. Factors that could shape your reflection into reflective writing might include:

- the reason why you are writing reflectively (personal reasons, e.g., in a diary or for academic purposes, etc.);
- whether others are going to see what you have written and who they are (e.g., no-one else; a tutor who will mark it; a tutor who will not mark it, friends, etc.);
- your emotional state at the time of writing, and your emotional reaction to what you are writing (e.g., a disturbing event that you do not want to think about or something you did well and want to enjoy in the rethinking process);

- related to the above, how safe you feel about the material and anyone seeing it;
- what you know about reflective writing and how able you are to engage in it (see below).

It is also worth noting that you will learn not only from the 'in the head' reflection but from the process of representing the reflection itself. Also, you will learn different things according to the manner in which you represent your reflection. For example, what you would learn from drawing a picture to represent reflections will differ from what you will learn in writing about the same content. It is a part of the process of writing reflectively to be as aware as possible of the influences that are shaping the writing that you actually do.

What is reflective writing?

We will start from what reflective writing is not. It is NOT:

- conveyance of information, instruction or argument in a report, essay or 'recipe';
- straightforward description, though there may be descriptive elements;
- a straightforward decision, e.g., about whether something is right or wrong, good or bad, etc.;
- simple problem solving like recalling how to get to the nearest station.

In the context of your higher education programme, reflective writing will usually have a purpose (e.g., you will be writing reflectively about something that you have to do or have done). It will usually involve the sorting out of bits of knowledge, ideas, feelings, awareness of how you are behaving and so on. It could be seen as a melting pot into which you put a number of thoughts, feelings, other forms of awareness, and perhaps new information. In the process of sorting it out in your head, and representing the sortings out on paper, you may either recognize that you have learnt something new or that you need to reflect more with, perhaps, further input. Your reflections need to come to some sort of end point, even if that is a statement of what you need to consider next.

It is also worth recognizing that reflective writing may be a means of becoming clearer about something. For example, you might use reflective writing to consider the kind of career direction that you might take. Into the 'melting pot' you might then 'put' ideas, information, feelings, other people's perspectives and advice. A metaphor for reflection or its expression

in reflective writing in this context is ‘cognitive housekeeping’ to imply its nature as a sorting out, clarifying process.

From what has been said above, it will be obvious that reflection is not a straightforward and ‘tidy’ process itself. When you have to represent the process for someone else to read, you will inevitably tidy it up – but if a tutor is expecting reflective writing, she will not be looking for a dry ‘single-track’ account, or just a conclusion. It is also all right to use the first person – ‘I’ – in reflective writing.

Let us assume that you are reflecting on a presentation that you have just done in class. We said above that reflective writing is not a ‘straightforward’ description. You will probably have to describe what you are about to reflect on and perhaps relate it to the purpose for which you are reflecting. But reflection is more than that. You might want to evaluate your performance in the presentation, for example. This may be represented by you questioning yourself, perhaps challenging yourself. You may consider your reactions, and even the manner in which you have initially viewed the situation and written about it. Your writing may recognize that others may have different views of the same event. So with regard to the presentation, you might think about the performances of others, and so on.

Some subject matter for reflective writing

Reflective writing may apply to anything that is relatively complex. You might reflect on:

- how to go about your dissertation topic;
- how well you wrote an assignment;
- experiences gained in your part-time work;
- what your essay title means and how to go about writing it;
- how to present some project work;
- how you want to behave differently in some context;
- the way in which your non-work activities relate to the programme that you are on;
- the quality of a relationship with someone (to do with your programme or home or family, etc.);
- how well you got on in your programme last semester;
- your process in solving a difficult problem (e.g., in academic work);
- what you need to do to improve your study processes.

You will often find there to be unexpected rewards in working in this manner. You will find out things that you had not considered, you even find that your

academic writing becomes more fluent; you may find that you can solve problems more easily when you have reflected on your processing of similar problems.

The quality of reflective writing

It is worth thinking about the quality of reflective writing as being on a continuum from rather superficial writings that are largely descriptive, to much deeper writings in which the questioning is more profound. Neither is necessarily right or wrong – they are just different. Reflective writing will need be ‘pitched’ according to the purpose for which the task is done. Those who are learning to become counsellors and need to question their motives for the way they work will require to take a much more profound approach, for example, than most others in higher education programmes. The challenge is at least to ‘go beyond’ descriptive writing.

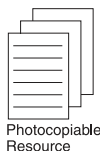
A final note

‘Reflection’ is a word in everyday language but note that in some contexts it is a subject of academic study, with many books and papers devoted to it. The material in this paper is derived from three books (Moon, 1999a, 1999b, 2004), which provide an introduction to the literature for those who are interested in taking this further.

Moon, J. (1999a) *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development*, London: Kogan Page.

Moon, J. (1999b) *Learning Journals: A Handbook for Academics, Students and Professional Development*, London: Kogan Page.

Moon, J. (2004) *A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning*, London, Routledge.



Resource 3

A comparison of reflective writing and report or essay writing

Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Undergraduate report/essay writing

The subject matter is likely to be clearly defined

The subject matter is not likely to be personal

The subject matter is likely to be given

The purpose of this kind of writing is set in advance, usually fairly precisely in a title/topic

Most of the ideas drawn into an essay/a report will be predictable and will be determined by the subject matter

Reflective writing

The subject matter may be diffuse and ill-structured

The subject matter may be personal

The subject matter may be determined by the writer

There may be purpose, but it is more of the nature of a 'container' or direction, not a precise title that predicts the outcome

Ideas will be drawn into reflective writing from anywhere that the writer believes to be relevant. What is drawn in will be determined by the sense being forged by the writer

There will be a conclusion

There may be a conclusion in that something has been learnt, or there may be a recognition of further areas for reflection

Essays/reports are more likely to be 'one off' – finished and handed in

Reflective writing may be part of a process that takes place over a period of time

There is likely to be a clear structure of introduction, discussion and conclusion

There is not necessarily a clear structure other than some description at the beginning and some identification of progress made. Structures, such as questions to prompt reflective activity may be given

The writing style is likely to be relatively objective – probably without use of the first person

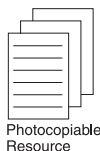
The writing style is likely to be relatively subjective, using the first person

An essay or report is usually intended to be a representation of learning

The intention underlying reflective writing is likely to be for the purpose of learning

An essay/a report is likely to be the product of a thinking process, tidily ordered

Reflective writing usually involves the process of thinking and learning, and it is therefore not necessarily 'tidy' in its ordering



Resource 4

Samples of reflective writing

Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

An experience in a work experience placement on a Business and Management programme (Level HE1): reasonably reflective writing

The placement is in the Black Bull in Grentown. The student, Barry, has been at the placement for only a few days. He has been asked to wait on the tables at lunchtime.

Today the pub was full and many people wanted lunch. I think that Mr Freddings (the manager) was a bit caught out because it had been very quiet the last few days and he had told two of the regular lunchtime staff not to bother to come in until later. I helped out in the kitchen this morning – washing up and doing some cleaning up. Jan, the cook, said that I would be needed to wait at the tables. I was a bit shocked because I had not done this before. I was embarrassed when she took me out and told me what to do in front of some of the customers, but I suppose I did need to know. I was left in a situation in which some customers knew that I am new to this, and others did not. On the whole, I decided to pretend that I had been doing it all my life. Jan told me how to write down what people order very quickly, and told me her type of shorthand which I have been trying

to use. On the whole it seems to work – I did make one or two mistakes when I had to go back to the customers and ask again what they wanted. One customer was really nice when this happened because she had seen me being taught what to do. Another, a bit later, was quite abrupt. I guess that I had become a little over-confident by then. I backed off and realized that I have a lot to learn even in this simple matter of taking orders and bringing out the food.

A bit later there was a difficult incident that I got involved in. There was a party of three women – I think that they work at the big company that makes furniture up the road. They had booked but were a bit late and, because it was quite busy by then, we had to tell them that they would have to wait for their meal for a bit. They grumbled and then ordered. Then it got really busy and cook could really hardly cope so it made it even longer that they had to wait. She asked me to go and tell them they would have to wait even longer. She told me what to say – to be polite but firm and not to get drawn into stuff about how they had booked – because, as she said, it was their fault because they were late. Anyway, the women treated me as if it was my fault. I fell apart a bit, not sure what to say apart from sorry lots of times. I got away and went back to the kitchen. By then Mr Freddings had come in and he and Jan had decided to offer the women some food that could be served up straight away. I wished they could have thought of it earlier. Again, I had to take out the message. The women were cross and made a huge fuss about not wanting the food on offer, and said how the pub had gone downhill and it used not to be like that. I just had to stand and listen and wished I had not pretended to have been there all my life. It all made me feel upset especially when, at last, grudgingly they said they would have the food.

I brought out their meals and now they were all smiles because they thought they had got a bargain because what they had been given was more expensive. They were nice to me then and left quite a tip. I think I learnt quite a bit about waiting all in a short time.

These are some of the things that I learnt from today [she lists 6 topics].

Reflection on study habits over the last semester: reasonably reflective writing

The student, Kerry, is in Level HE2 on a Biology programme. She has been asked to reflect on her progress in study in the previous semester by her tutor and to bring the piece she has written to the tutorial. This is part of the personal professional planning initiative in the university.

In the summer at the end of my first year of uni, I travelled all around Europe. I had always wanted to do that and felt that I had to come back before I was ready. I got back to uni two days late and I felt unsettled for a while after because it seemed that everyone had got into ruts of studying before I could. I missed a few lectures in the first two weeks – none of it seemed to have any meaning. I thought about leaving but my parents were wild when I said that so I thought I had better try to settle down.

We had lots of work to do at that stage for the first genetics module. You can't afford to get behind in that and I was behind. I had to go to Dr Spolan and tell him I couldn't do it. He was really helpful which made me feel a lot better. He said he knew several of us would have difficulty and set up a surgery with some of the postgraduate students. Mostly they were good, though sometimes they did not have much idea of just how hard I found it. Somehow they could not always explain. Anyway, I seem to have caught up now and passed the exam.

I think I have difficulty writing essays. I can't seem to organize my ideas in the way that tutors want. I think I have done it correctly and then get comments about there not being proper discussions and conclusions to what I write. I am not sure that anyone has ever told me how to write an essay – you just have to guess. I did buy a study skills book for science students and that helped me because it had examples, even from biology. It also helped me with referencing. I have always been confused about how much you can put down of someone else's work without it being plagiarism. I know we had some rules about plagiarism in the course handbook, but when you are in the middle of an essay, with a really relevant book in front of you, it seems difficult to see how to apply the rules. Can you, for example, put down quite a big chunk of someone else's work if it says exactly what you want to say yourself? It would have a reference put after it, of course. I think I need some help on this.

We have multiple choice questions for the first biology methods module. I was not sure how to revise for an exam like that. We ended up making up questions and testing each other on the answers. I did find that I did not seem to need to understand the ideas that were put over in the questions – I thought I could just guess at the kinds of questions and make sure that I had the answers. I did not do all that well in the exam so maybe I need to prepare differently – but I really don't know how to do it. I will need to ask.

Anyway, I think that deciding to stay on at uni was a good idea and as the term goes on, I feel more settled.

Reflection on a skills module: not very reflective writing

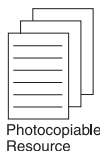
Jackie is on a Level HE1 Skills module. She has just given a presentation as part of that module and has been asked to assess how she got on in a reflective manner as part of the assessment of the module.

I have just done a presentation to our group. We were asked to choose any subject this time but next time we will be giving a presentation on a topic associated with our subject. I chose to talk about my adventure sailing holiday in Scotland. I was third to go. I was nervous because the last time I gave a presentation was at school and then I knew everyone well. This is a new module so I do not yet know people. There were fifteen of us, and the tutor.

I talked about the journey up to Scotland – and how we missed the train and then could not find the boat we were going on. People seemed to be listening. I talked about the first day of sailing. It was windy and I told them how I was a bit scared – then there were two days when we did not go anywhere because it was so rough. We then did get some sailing and went to several islands. There were adders on the islands so we had to wear boots if we walked on the heather. It made me very nervous about going onto the land.

I talked for the six minutes that was required. I fitted in most of what I had to say. I then had to ask if anyone had any questions. There were three questions. Sam asked how old the boat was and I told him that it was built in 1910. Beckie asked where we sailed from and Dr Smythe asked if we had to be the crew and pull ropes. I told him that we were the crew and that over the week I began to learn which ropes did what to the boat.

Then it was over. I think I did the presentation well and people listened. I do not think that I would do anything differently next time.



Resource 5

The Park: **an exercise in reflective writing**

Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Introduction

This is an account of an incident in a park. It is recounted by ‘Annie’ who was involved in the incident herself. It is written in different versions that demonstrate different levels of reflective writing. At the end of the accounts, there are notes on the criteria for the levels of reflection that each account portrays. You may not be given the notes until you have discussed your responses to the material.

The Park (I)

I went through the park the other day. The sun shone sometimes but large clouds floated across the sky in a breeze. It reminded me of a time that I was walking on St David’s Head in Wales – when there was a hard and bright light and anything I looked at was bright. It was really quite hot – so much nicer than the day before, which was rainy. I went over to the children’s playing field. I had not been there for a while and wanted to see the improvements. There were several children there and one, in particular, I noticed, was in too many clothes for the heat. The children were running about and this child became red in the face and began to slow down and then he sat. He must have been about 10. Some of the others called him

up again and he got to his feet. He stumbled into the game for a few moments, tripping once or twice. It seemed to me that he had just not got the energy to lift his feet. Eventually he stumbled down and did not get up but he was still moving and he shuffled into a half-sitting and half-lying position watching the other children and I think he was calling out to them. I don't know.

Anyway, I had to get on to get to the shop to buy some meat for the chilli that my children had asked me to make for their party. The twins had invited many friends round for an end-of-term celebration of the beginning of the summer holidays. They might think that they have cause to celebrate but it makes a lot more work for me when they are home. I find that their holiday time makes a lot more work.

It was the next day when the paper came through the door – in it there was a report of a child who had been taken seriously ill in the park the previous day. He was fighting for his life in hospital and they said that the seriousness of the situation was due to the delay before he was taken to hospital. The report commented on the fact that he had been lying unattended for half an hour before someone saw him. By then the other children had gone. It said that several passers-by might have seen him looking ill and even on the ground and the report went on to ask why passers-by do not take action when they see that something is wrong. The article was headed 'Why do they "Walk on by"?' I have been terribly upset since then. James says I should not worry – it is just a headline.

The Park (2)

I went to the park the other day. I was going to the supermarket to get some meat to make the chilli that I had promised the children. They were having one of their end-of-term celebrations with friends. I wonder what drew me to the playground and why I ended up standing and watching those children playing with a rough old football? I am not sure as I don't usually look at other people's children – I just did. Anyway there were a number of kids there. I noticed, in particular, one child who seemed to be very over-dressed for the weather. I try now to recall what he looked like – his face was red. He was a boy of around 10 – not unlike Charlie was at that age – maybe that is why I noticed him to start with when he was running around with the others. But then he was beginning to look distressed. I felt uneasy about him – sort of maternal but I did not do anything. What could I have done? I remember thinking, I had little time and the supermarket would get crowded. What a strange way of thinking, in the circumstances!

In retrospect, I wish I had acted. I ask myself what stopped me – but I don't know what I might have done at that point. Anyway he sat down, looking absolutely exhausted and as if he had no energy to do anything. A few moments later, the other children called him up to run about again. I felt more uneasy and watched as he got up and tried to run, then fell, ran again and fell and half-sat and half-lay. Still I did nothing more than look – what was going on with me?

Eventually I went on I tell myself now that it was really important to get to the shops. It was the next day when the paper came through the door that I had a real shock. In the paper there was a report of a child who had been taken seriously ill in the park the previous day. He was fighting for his life in the hospital and the situation was much more serious because there had been such a delay in getting help. The report commented on the fact that he had been lying, unattended, for half an hour or more. At first, I wondered why the other children had not been more responsible. The article went on to say that several passers-by might have seen him playing and looking ill and the report questioned why passers-by do not take action when they see that something is wrong.

The incident has affected me for some days but I do not know where to go or whom to tell. I do want to own up to my part in it to someone though.

The Park (3)

The incident happened in Ingle Park and it is very much still on my mind. There was a child playing with others. He looked hot and unfit and kept sitting down but the other children kept on getting him back up and making him play with them. I was on my way to the shop and only watched the children for a while before I walked on. Next day it was reported in the paper that the child had been taken to hospital seriously ill – very seriously ill. The report said that there were several passers-by in the park who had seen the child looking ill and who had done nothing. It was a scathing report about those who do not take action in such situations.

Reading the report, I felt dreadful and it has been very difficult to shift the feelings. I did not stop to see to the child because I told myself that I was on my way to the shops to buy food for a meal that I had to cook for the children's party – what do I mean that *I had to* cook it? Though I saw that the child was ill, I didn't do anything. It is hard to say what I was really thinking at the time – to what degree I was determined to go on with my day in the way I had planned it (the party really was not that important, was it?). Or did I genuinely not think that the boy was ill – but just over-dressed and a bit tired? To what extent did I try to make convenient excuses and to what

extent was my action based on an attempt to really understand the situation? Looking back, I could have cut through my excuses at the time – rather than now.

I did not go over to the child and ask what was wrong but I should have done. I could have talked to the other children – and even got one of the other children to call for help. I am not sure if the help would have been ambulance or doctor at that stage – but it does not matter now. If he had been given help then, he might not be fighting for his life now.

It would be helpful to me if I could work out what I was really thinking and why I acted as I did. This event has really shaken me to my roots – more than I would have expected. It made me feel really guilty. I do not usually do wrong, in fact, I think of myself as a good person. This event is also making me think about actions in all sorts of areas of my life. It reminds me of some things in the past, as when my uncle died – but then again I don't really think that that is relevant – he was going to die anyway. My bad feelings then were due to sheer sadness and some irrational regrets that I did not visit him on the day before. Strangely it also reminds me of how bad I felt when Charlie was ill while we went on that anniversary weekend away. As I think more about Charlie being ill, I recognize that there are commonalities in the situations. I also keep wondering if I knew that boy . . .

The Park (4)

It happened in Ingle Park and this event is very much still on my mind. It feels significant. There was a child playing with others. He looked hot and unfit and kept sitting down but the other children kept on getting him back up and making him play with them. I was on my way to the shop and only watched the children for a while before I walked on. Next day it was reported in the paper that the child had been taken to hospital seriously ill – very seriously ill. The report said that there were several passers-by in the park who had seen the child looking ill and who had done nothing. It was a scathing report about those who do not take action in such a situation.

It was the report initially that made me think more deeply. It kept coming back into my mind and over the next few days I began to think of the situation in lots of different ways. Initially I considered my urge to get to the shop – regardless of the state of the boy. That was an easy way of excusing myself – to say that I had to get to the shop. Then I began to go through all of the agonizing as to whether I could have mis-read the situation and really thought that the boy was simply over-dressed or perhaps play-acting or trying to gain sympathy from me or the others. Could I have believed that

the situation was all right? All of that thinking, I now notice, would also have let me off the hook – made it not my fault that I did not act at the time.

I talked with Tom about my reflections on the event – on the incident, on my thinking about it at the time and then immediately after. He observed that my sense of myself as a ‘good person who always lends a helping hand when others need help’ was put in some jeopardy by it all. At the time and immediately after, it might have been easier to avoid shaking my view of myself than to admit that I had avoided facing up to the situation and admitting that I had not acted as ‘a good person’. With this hindsight, I notice that I can probably find it easier to admit that I am not always ‘a good person’ and that I made a mistake in retrospect rather than immediately after the event. I suspect that this may apply to other situations.

As I think about the situation now, I recall some more of the thoughts – or were they feelings mixed up with thoughts? I remember a sense at the time that this boy looked quite scruffy and reminded me of a child who used to play with Charlie. We did not feel happy during the brief period of their friendship because this boy was known as a bully and we were uneasy either that Charlie would end up being bullied, or that Charlie would learn to bully. Funnily enough, we were talking about this boy – I now remember – at the dinner table the night before. The conversation had reminded me of all of the agonizing about the children’s friends at the time. The fleeting thought/feeling was possibly something like this – if this boy is like one I did not feel comfortable with – then maybe he deserves to get left in this way. Maybe he was a brother of the original child. I remember social psychology research along the lines of attributing blame to victims to justify their plight. Then, it might not have been anything to do with Charlie’s friend.

So I can see how I looked at that event and perhaps interpreted it in a manner that was consistent with my emotional frame of mind at the time. Seeing the same events without that dinner-time conversation might have led me to see the whole thing in an entirely different manner and I might have acted differently. The significance of this whole event is chilling when I realize that my lack of action nearly resulted in his death – and it might have been because of an attitude that was formed years ago in relation to a different situation.

This has all made me think about how we view things. The way I saw this event at the time was quite different to the way I see it now – even these few days later. Writing an account at the time would have been different to the account, or several accounts, that I would write now. I cannot know what ‘story’ is ‘true’. The bullying story may be one that I have constructed retrospectively – fabricated. Interestingly, I can believe that story completely.

The Park: comments on the quality of reflection in the accounts

See also Resource 9, which is a generic framework for reflective writing.

The Park (1)

This piece tells the story. Sometimes it mentions past experiences, sometimes anticipates the future but all in the context of the account of the story:

- There might be references to emotional state, but the role of the emotions on action is not explored.
- Ideas of others are mentioned but not elaborated or used to investigate the meaning of the events.
- The account is written only from one point of view – that of Annie.
- Generally ideas are presented in a sequence and are only linked by the story. They are not all relevant or focused.

In fact, you could hardly deem this to be reflective at all. It is very descriptive. It could be a reasonably written account of an event that could serve as a basis on which reflection might start, though it hardly signals any material for reflection – other than the last few words.

The Park (2)

In this account there is a description of the same events. There is very little addition of ideas from outside the event – reference to attitudes of others, or comments.

The account is more than a story though. It is focused on the event as if there is a big question to be asked and answered. In the questioning there is recognition of the worth of exploring the motives for behaviour but it does not go very far. In other words, asking the questions makes it more than a descriptive account, but the lack of attempt to respond to the questions means that there is little actual analysis of the events.

Annie is critical of her actions and, in her questions, signals this. The questioning of action does mean that Annie is standing back from the event to a small extent. There is a sense that she recognizes that this is a significant incident, with learning to be gained but the reflection does not go sufficiently deep to enable the learning to begin to occur.

The Park (3)

The description is succinct – just sufficient to raise the issues. Extraneous information is not added. It is not a story. The focus is on the attempt to reflect on the event and to learn from it. There is more of a sense of Annie standing back from the event in order to reflect better on her actions and in order to be more effectively critical.

There is more analysis of the situation and an evident understanding that it was not a simple situation – that there might be alternative explanations or actions that could be justified equally effectively.

The description could be said to be slightly narrow (see *The Park (4)*) as Annie is not acknowledging that there might be other ways of perceiving the situation – other points of view. She does not seem to recognize that her reflection is affected by her frame of reference at the time or now. It is possible, for example, that her experience with Charlie (last paragraph) – or her question about knowing the boy have influenced the manner in which she reacted. It might not just be a matter of linking up other events, but of going beyond and checking out the possibility that her frame of reference might have been affected by the prior experiences.

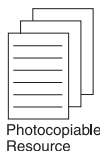
The Park (4)

(You may not have been given the fourth part of *The Park*.)

The account is succinct and to the point. There is some deep reflection here that is self-critical and questions the basis of the beliefs and values on which the behaviour was based.

- There is evidence of standing back from the event, of Annie treating herself as an object acting within the context.
- There is also an internal dialogue – a conversation with herself in which she proposes and further reflects on alternative explanations.
- She shows evidence of looking at the views of others (Tom) and of considering the alternative point of view, and learning from it.
- She recognizes the significance of the effect of passage of time on her reflection, e.g., that her personal frame of reference at the time may have influenced her actions and that a different frame of reference might have led to different results.
- She notices that the proximity of other, possibly unrelated events (the dinner-time conversation) has an effect either on her actual behaviour and her subsequent reflection or possibly on her reflective processes only. She notices that she can be said to be reconstructing the event in retrospect – creating a story around it that may not be ‘true’.

- She recognizes that there may be no conclusion to this situation but that there are still things to be learnt from it.
- She has also been able to reflect on her own process of reflecting (acting metacognitively), recognizing that her process influenced the outcome.



Resource 6

The Presentation:

an exercise in reflective writing

Developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Introduction

This is an account of the experience of giving a presentation. It is written by Marianne who is in her first job after graduating. It is written in three different versions that demonstrate different levels of reflective writing. At the end of the accounts, there are notes on the criteria for the levels of reflection that each account portrays.

The Presentation (I)

I had to take an agenda item to the weekly team meeting in my third week of working at PIGG PLC. I had to talk about the project that I am on (creating a new database for the management information system). I had done a presentation before and then I relied on my acting skills. Despite the acting, I spent quite a bit of time preparing it in the way that I have seen others make similar presentations.

The presentation at the last team meeting, given by my colleague, went well – she used PowerPoint and I decided to use it too. I decided that a good presentation comes from good planning and having all the figures that anyone might request so I spent a long time in the preparation and I went in feeling confident.

However, I became nervous when I realized they were all waiting for me to speak and my nerves made my voice wobble. I did not know how to stop it. Early on, I noticed that people seemed not to understand what I was saying despite the PowerPoint. Using PowerPoint meant that people received my presentation both through what I was saying and what I had prepared on the slides. In a way that meant they got it twice but I noticed that Mrs Shaw (my boss) repeated bits of what I had said several times and once or twice answered questions for me. This made me feel uncomfortable. I felt it was quite patronising and I was upset. Later my colleagues said that she always does that. I was disappointed that my presentation did not seem to have gone well.

I thought about the presentation for several days and then talked with Mrs Shaw about the presentation (there was no-one else). She gave me a list of points for improvement next time. They included:

- putting less on PowerPoint;
- talking more slowly;
- calming myself down in some way.

I also have to write down the figures in a different way so that they can be understood better. She suggested that I should do a presentation to several of the team sometime next week so that I can improve my performance.

The Presentation (2)

I had to take an agenda item to the weekly team meeting in my third week of working at PIGG PLC. I had to talk about the project that I am on. I am creating a new database for the management information system. I had given a presentation before and that time I relied on my acting skills. I did realize that there were considerable differences between then and now, particularly in the situation (it was only fellow students and my tutor before). I was confident but I did spend quite a bit of time preparing. Because everyone else here uses PowerPoint, I felt I had better use it – though I realized that it was not for the best reasons. I also prepared lots of figures so that I could answer questions. I thought, at that stage, that any questions would involve requests for data. When I think back on the preparation that I did, I realize that I was desperately trying to prove that I could make a presentation as well as my colleague, who did the last one. I wanted to impress everyone. I had not realized there was so much to learn about presenting, and how much I needed to know about PowerPoint to use it properly.

When I set up the presentation in the meeting I tried to be calm but it did not work out. Early on PowerPoint went wrong and I began to panic. Trying to pretend that I was cool and confident made the situation worse because I did not admit my difficulties and ask for help. The more I spoke, the more my voice went wobbly. I realized, from the kinds of questions that the others asked, that they did not understand what I was saying. They were asking for clarification – not the figures. I felt worse when Mrs Shaw, my boss, started to answer questions for me. I felt flustered and even less able to cope.

As a result of this poor presentation, my self-esteem is low at work now. I had thought I was doing all right in the company. After a few days, I went to see Mrs Shaw and we talked it over. I still feel that her interventions did not help me. Interestingly, several of my colleagues commented that she always does that. It was probably her behaviour, more than anything else, that damaged my poise. Partly through talking over the presentation and the things that went wrong (but not, of course, her interventions), I can see several areas that I could improve. I need to know more about using PowerPoint – and to practise with it. I recognize, also, that my old acting skills might have given me initial confidence, but I needed more than a clear voice, especially when I lost my way with PowerPoint. Relying on a mass of figures was not right either. It was not figures they wanted. In retrospect, I could have put the figures on a handout. I am hoping to have a chance to try with a presentation, practising with some of the team.

The Presentation (3)

I am writing this back in my office. It all happened two days ago.

Three weeks after I started at PIGG PLC I had to take an agenda item to the team meeting. I was required to report on my progress on the project on which I am working. I am developing a new database for the management information system of the company. I was immediately worried. I was scared about not saying the right things and not being able to answer questions properly. I did a presentation in my course at university and felt the same about it initially. I was thinking then, like this time, I could use my acting skills. Both times that was helpful in maintaining my confidence at first, at least. Though the fact that I was all right last time throughout the whole presentation may not have helped me this time!

I decided to use PowerPoint. I was not very happy about its use because I have seen it go wrong so often. However, I have not seen anyone else give a presentation here without using it – and learning to use PowerPoint would be valuable. I was not sure, when it came to the session, whether I really knew

enough about running PowerPoint. (How do you know when you know enough about something? – dummy runs, I suppose, but I couldn't get the laptop when I wanted it.)

When it came to the presentation, I really wanted to do it well – as well as the presentations had been done the week before. Maybe I wanted too much to do well. Previous presentations have been interesting, informative and clear and I thought the handouts from them were good (I noticed that the best gave enough but not too much information).

In the event, the session was a disaster and has left me feeling uncomfortable in my work and I even worry about it at home. I need to think about why a simple presentation could have such an effect on me. The PowerPoint went wrong (I think I clicked on the wrong thing). My efforts to be calm and 'cool' failed and my voice went wobbly – that was, anyway, how it felt to me. My colleague actually said afterwards that I looked quite calm despite what I was feeling (I am not sure whether she meant it or was just trying to help me). When I think back to that moment, if I had thought that I still looked calm (despite what I felt), I could have regained the situation. As it was, it went from bad to worse and I know that my state became obvious because Mrs Shaw, my boss, began to answer the questions that people were asking for me.

I am thinking about the awful presentation again – it was this time last week. I am reading what I wrote earlier about it. Now I return to it, I do have a slightly different perspective. I think that it was not as bad as it felt at the time. Several of my colleagues told me afterwards that Mrs Shaw always steps in to answer questions like that and they commented that I handled her intrusion well. That is interesting. I need to do some thinking about how to act next time to prevent this interruption from happening or to deal with the situation when she starts*. I might look in the library for that book on assertiveness.

I have talked to Mrs Shaw now too. I notice that my confidence in her is not all that great while I am still feeling a bit cross. However, I am feeling more positive generally and I can begin to analyse what I could do better in the presentation. It is interesting to see the change in my attitude after a week. I need to think from the beginning about the process of giving a good presentation. I am not sure how helpful was my reliance on my acting skills*. Acting helped my voice to be stronger and better paced, but I was not just trying to put over someone else's lines but my own and I needed to be able to discuss matters in greater depth rather than just give the line*.

I probably will use PowerPoint again. I have had a look at the manual and it suggests that you treat it as a tool – not let it dominate and not use it as a means of presenting myself. That is what I think I was doing. I need to not only know how to use it, but I need to feel sufficiently confident in its

use so I can retrieve the situation when things go wrong. That means understanding more than just the sequence of actions*.

As I write this, I am noticing how useful it is to go back over things I have written about before. I seem to be able to see the situation differently. The first time I wrote this, I felt that the presentation was dreadful and that I could not have done it differently. Then later I realized that there were things I did not know at the time (e.g., about Mrs Shaw and her habit of interrupting). I also recognize some of the areas in which I went wrong. At the time I could not see that. It was as if my low self-esteem got in the way. Knowing where I went wrong, and admitting the errors to myself give me a chance to improve next time – and perhaps to help Mrs Shaw to improve in her behaviour towards us!

*I have asterisked the points that I need to address in order to improve.

The Presentation: comments on the quality of reflection in the accounts

See also Resource 9, which is a generic framework for reflective writing.

The Presentation (1)

This account is descriptive and it contains little reflection:

- The account describes what happened, sometimes mentioning past experiences, sometimes anticipating the future but all in the context of an account of the event.
- There are some references to Marianne's emotional reactions, but she has not explored how the reactions relate to her behaviour.
- Ideas are taken up without questioning them or considering them in depth.
- The account is written only from Marianne's point of view.
- External information is mentioned but its impact on behaviour is not subject to consideration.
- Generally one point is made at a time and ideas are not linked.

The Presentation (2)

An account showing evidence of some reflection:

- There is description of the event, but where there are external ideas or information, the material is subjected to consideration and deliberation.

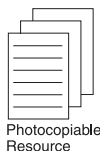
- The account shows some analysis.
- There is recognition of the worth of exploring motives for behaviour.
- There is willingness to be critical of action.
- Relevant and helpful detail is explored where it has value.
- There is recognition of the overall effect of the event on self – in other words, there is some ‘standing back’ from the event.

The account is written at one point in time. It does not, therefore, demonstrate the recognition that views can change with time and more reflection. In other words the account does not indicate a recognition that frames of reference affect the manner in which we reflect at a given time.

The Presentation (3)

This account shows quite deep reflection, and it does incorporate a recognition that the frame of reference with which an event is viewed can change:

- Self-questioning is evident (an ‘internal dialogue’ is set up at times) deliberating between different views of her own behaviour (different views of her own and others).
- Marianne takes into account the views and motives of others and considers these against her own.
- She recognizes how prior experience, thoughts (her own and other’s) can interact with the production of her own behaviour.
- There is clear evidence of standing back from the event.
- She helps herself to learn from the experience by splitting off the reflective processes from the points she wants to learn (by an asterisk system).
- There is recognition that the personal frame of reference can change according to the emotional state in which it is written, the acquisition of new information, the review of ideas and the effect of time passing.



Resource 7

Questions to support reflective writing

Developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

It can be useful to prompt the description of the subject matter of reflection in terms of a question such as:

What is the issue/event/topic/plan/project/task/period of time, etc. that is to be the subject matter of the reflection?

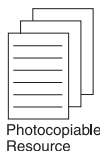
Questions to facilitate reflection

- From the description above, what is the issue/are the issues that could be addressed in reflective writing? These issues can be raised within the description or separately.
- Is there anything else you need to consider at the moment in terms of the context?
- What is the nature of the significance of this issue to you?
- How do you feel about it?
- How do your feelings relate to any action?
- Was it good/bad – and what are the implications?
- What do you need to do?
- What other information do you need (ideas, knowledge, opinion, etc.)?

- Are there previous instances of this event, issue arising that will help you to think more or differently about it?
- Are there others, or the views of others, who are relevant to this matter – and in what way?

Questions that are likely to be helpful in prompting more profound reflection

- Has the nature of your description of the issue/event etc. influenced the manner in which you have gone about the reflective writing?
- Is there relevant formal theory that you need to apply?
- How do your motives for and the context of the reflective writing affect the manner in which you have gone about the task?
- In what way might have you tackled the task differently if the context was not one of formal education (perhaps with assessment)?
- Is there another point of view that you could explore – are there alternative interpretations to consider?
- Are others seeing this issue from different points of view that may be helpful to you to explore?
- Does this issue relate to other contexts – reflection on which may be helpful?
- If you 'step back' from this issue, how does it look different?
- How do you judge your ability to reflect on this matter?
- Do you notice that your feelings about it have changed over time – or in the course of writing this – suggesting that your own frame of reference has changed?
- Are there ethical/moral/political wider social issues that you would want to explore?



Resource 8

Dialogue: an exercise to develop reflective thinking and writing

Developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

This is an imagined dialogue between Toni and a teacher, Mr Jaques, who inspired her and was helpful at school. Toni is using this exercise in the context of a learning journal in a Careers and Personal Development Planning module in her biology degree programme. She is trying to make up her mind what group of modules to choose for her final year studies. She 'seeks advice' from a teacher whom she remembers as being very helpful at school. She writes what she would ask and then 'listens' (in her imagination) for the response and the continuation of the conversation.

TONI Hello, Mr Jaques, I haven't seen you for a long time – since I left school. You were really helpful to me at school. You always seemed to give me good advice, and I remember when you went through that essay and showed me how I could make it a lot better. I was always better at writing essays after that time. I seemed to understand what to do.

MR JAQUES Hello, Toni, how are you getting on – is it some more help that you want? How can I help?

TONI Yes, I need some help. I don't know what modules to take next year. I have to make a choice very soon. I am getting quite worried about it. I don't know how to make a choice.

MR JAQUES OK, what are the choices?

TONI I have a choice between going down the road of molecular biology modules with lots of lab work and the modules of ecology and the kind of field work types of modules.

MR JAKUES Yes, I can see that there is quite a choice to make. I suppose the important question now is what you want to do when you have left university. You may want to make a career in biology and in that case the kinds of experience you have at this stage of your degree may be pretty influential in what you do.

TONI That's what they said at careers a while ago. I have to say that I have been mainly thinking about what I want to do while I am here. It's quite hard to think about the future – though everyone keeps saying we should. I feel I have only just really settled here!

MR JAKUES So what is the bigger picture? What do you see yourself doing?

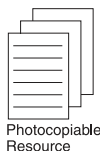
TONI Well, I don't know really – I did think that I might teach – and then I felt that I did not want to be shut in with lots of kids all day and wanted to work more with adults. I suppose I do like being outside quite a bit.

MR JAKUES Do you see yourself in a lab?

TONI Well, I like it sometimes – that is why the choice is so hard. I like being precise and working towards a measured result in an experiment – but that is only sometimes.

MR JAKUES There are jobs where you might spend quite a bit of time in the field, but still need lab skills. Do you really have to go in one way or the other? Could you do some ecology modules and some that would equip you with lab skills? Then you might look for a job that combined the two, for example, agriculture or some aspects of ecology where lab work is relevant. It seems like a hard choice to make to go purely in one direction or the other at present.

TONI Well, yes. You make me think that I should get some more information on careers and see what is possible that combines the two areas. I think you are right that I should be able to use both skills.



Resource 9

A Generic Framework for Reflective Writing

Developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Descriptive writing

This account is descriptive and it contains little reflection. It may tell a story but from one point of view at a time and generally one point at a time is made. Ideas tend to be linked by the sequence of the account/story rather than by meaning. The account describes what happened, sometimes mentioning past experiences, sometimes anticipating the future but all in the context of an account of the event:

- There may be references to emotional reactions but they are not explored and not related to behaviour.
- The account may relate to ideas or external information, but these are not considered or questioned and the possible impact on behaviour or the meaning of events is not mentioned.
- There is little attempt to focus on particular issues. Most points are made with similar weight.
- The writing could hardly be deemed to be reflective at all. It could be a reasonably written account of an event that would serve as a basis on which reflection might start, though a good description that precedes reflective accounts will tend to be more focused and to signal points and issues for further reflection.

Descriptive account with some reflection

This is a descriptive account that signals points for reflection while not actually showing much reflection:

- The basic account is descriptive in the manner of description above. There is little addition of ideas from outside the event, reference to alternative viewpoints or attitudes to others, comment and so on. However, the account is more than just a story. It is focused on the event as if there is a big question or there are questions to be asked and answered. Points on which reflection could occur are signalled.
- The account may mention emotional reactions or be influenced by emotion. Any influence may be noted and possibly questioned.
- There is recognition of the worth of further exploring but it does not go very far. In other words, asking the questions makes it more than a descriptive account, but the lack of attempt to respond to the questions means that there is little actual analysis of the events.
- The questioning does begin to suggest a 'standing back from the event' in (usually) isolated areas of the account.
- There is a sense of recognition this is an incident from which learning can be gained, but the reflection does not go sufficiently deep to enable the learning to begin to occur.

Reflective writing (I)

- There is description but it is focused with particular aspects accentuated for reflective comment. There may be a sense that the material is being mulled around. It is no longer a straightforward account of an event, but it is definitely reflective.
- There is evidence of external ideas or information and where this occurs, the material is subjected to reflection.
- The account shows some analysis and there is recognition of the worth of exploring motives or reasons for behaviour.
- There is recognition of any emotional content, a questioning of its role and influence and an attempt to consider its significance in shaping the views presented.
- Where relevant, there is willingness to be critical of the action of self or others. There is likely to be some self-questioning and willingness also to recognize the overall effect of the event on self. In other words, there is some 'standing back' from the event.

- There may be recognition that things might look different from other perspectives, that views can change with time or the emotional state. The existence of several alternative points of view may be acknowledged but not analysed.
- In other words, in a relatively limited way the account may recognize that frames of reference affect the manner in which we reflect at a given time but it does not deal with this in a way that links it effectively to issues about the quality of personal judgement.

Reflective writing (2)

- Description now only serves the process of reflection, covering the issues for reflection and noting their context. There is clear evidence of standing back from an event and there is mulling over and internal dialogue.
- The account shows deep reflection, and it incorporates a recognition that the frame of reference with which an event is viewed can change.
- A metacognitive stance is taken (i.e., critical awareness of one's own processes of mental functioning – including reflection).
- The account probably recognizes that events exist in a historical or social context that may be influential on a person's reaction to them. In other words, multiple perspectives are noted.
- Self-questioning is evident (an 'internal dialogue' is set up at times) deliberating between different views of personal behaviour and that of others.
- The view and motives of others are taken into account and considered against those of the writer.
- There is recognition that prior experience and thoughts (one's own and other's) can interact with the production of current behaviour.
- There is recognition of the role of emotion in shaping the ideas and recognition of the manner in which different emotional influences can frame the account in different ways.
- There is observation that there is learning to be gained from the experience and points for learning are noted.
- There is recognition that the personal frame of reference can change according to the emotional state in which it is written, the acquisition of new information, the review of ideas and the effect of time passing.



Resource 10

The Dance Lesson:

an exercise in reflective writing

Developed by Jenny Moon, University of Exeter

Introduction

These reflective accounts concern a lesson in dance. The teacher, Hanna, is working with Year 8 pupils in the first lesson of the day. The lesson is the fourth in a five-lesson unit of work based on street dance style. She has found that the children have been quite slow to learn. There are two state-mented children in the class, Ben and Jade. She has written other notes about her concerns about working with mixed ability groups and enabling the learning of all the children in the class. Jade and Ben have given rise to some difficulties in her teaching in previous classes, and the situation bothers her.

A dance lesson (I)

When I took the register today, I saw that there were several absences. This would cause difficulties since the pupils had been creating their dance in pairs. This would mean that those on their own would need to pair up and create a new duet, rapidly learning to co-operate with each other. Generally they were not a group of quick learners, and some had shown that they had particular difficulties in working together. I realized then that I could be in for some difficulties myself and wished I had planned better.

The two statemented pupils – Ben and Jade – worried me a bit as I could see that they were both distracted and lively this morning. As we started to warm up, a learning support assistant (LSA) came in. She acknowledged me briefly and then turned her attention to Jade.

I had decided to do simple fun activities for the warm-up – based on walking and travelling at different speeds. It meant that the pupils had to concentrate in order to vary the direction and speed of travel in response to my instructions. It all went well with everyone involved.

I developed the warm-up, repeating exercises and phrases that we had performed in previous lessons. Most pupils joined in and seemed to enjoy the simple repetitive patterns of movement but I noticed that Ben and Jade were already having problems, though a few moments later, to my relief, I noticed that Jade was beginning to settle down and had started to fall in with the patterns of the movements quite nicely. Ben, however, could not copy the movements and his concentration began to wander. Then he started to distract others. I focused my attention on him and praised him when he did things well. The LSA moved across to Ben, leaving Jade. She talked to him and gave him some encouragement but I could see that he was not able to listen to her.

By now, the rest of the class had picked up the repetitive movements. The lesson was, on the whole, going quite well at this stage. I introduced a more challenging phase by adding two new actions to the sequence and they danced in time to the music. By now Ben had really lost concentration and was running around in the space among the dancers. It was only 10 minutes into the lesson and his very public display of off-task behaviour could potentially throw everything off course again. Eventually, after just catching my eye, the LSA removed Ben from the room. I was not completely easy with this, but I do not know what else I might have done. I learnt afterwards from another colleague that he had been given sanctions which included a letter home to inform his parents of his poor behaviour. I felt guilty but it was a very difficult situation. I have been trying to think how it could have been different.

A dance lesson (2)

I want to consider a situation that arose in a potentially unsettled mixed ability class where I was teaching dance. The focus of the situation was Ben, one of two statemented pupils. The situation left me feeling guilty and inadequate as a teacher.

I began the lesson with slightly uneasy feelings. I noticed that there were several absences. The pupils had been creating their dance in pairs and with

some of the partners absent, they would have to co-operate in new pairings. Co-operation was a problem for some. The children are mixed in their abilities and I had already been thinking that I need to develop strategies both to help individuals when they work outside their friendship groups and also where they need to create new material quickly. I began the lesson with these concerns and thoughts in mind.

I had started the warm-up when the learning support assistant came in to work with Jade, the other statemented pupil. It might have been helpful if she had come in just a few minutes before. Generally, however, things went well in the warm-up. I felt that I had got that right with simple and fun activities and because the skill level was low, everyone could join in and enjoy it. It really engaged them and this good start probably helped later when things got distracting.

The next stage also went well for most of the class. It was a development of the warm-up using exercises and phrases that had been mastered in previous lessons. Although I was a bit anxious about the lesson, fortunately I was patient and at their own pace nearly all of the class joined in. This too was a useful strategy. It was Jade and Ben who were having problems, though with the help of the LSA, Jade was beginning to settle. Ben was not. He found it difficult to copy the movements, seemed briefly to get frustrated, and then began to distract others, eventually running around in the spaces between the other pupils. The LSA left Jade and went to help him, while I tried as well as I could to carry on the class, moving into more challenging work.

Ben's behaviour did not improve and the LSA removed him from the room. Later I was informed that he had been given sanctions, including a letter to his parents about his poor behaviour.

I felt I had failed with this situation. I wanted to manage the behaviour of all of the children. There are several things that might have contributed to the situation. I started the class with a sense that I was not on top of the situation because of the new pairings – though in the end, I felt that things might have actually gone better because of that (I could look at this matter another time). I certainly did not need to worry about it. Also, the LSA came in late. She probably would not have seen that as a problem but for me it was. There is something about the three-way relationship – Ben, the LSA and me – and, in this situation, the LSA's work with Jade. Perhaps the LSA should have worked more with Ben from the start. Who made the decisions there and who should make them?

There is also something about the situation of dance being public – it is so obvious when pupils are off-task. Then there is Ben and his behaviour. I wonder how he felt about it all? Did he want to distract others? Was he really behaving 'poorly' – was his action deliberate, warranting sanctions or maybe just an overflow of energy?

I know a bit about Ben and his inability to hold concentration for more than a few minutes, but dance could be of help to him as a means of using his energy in a productive manner – that is if he could be enabled to stay engaged with the activity. What could I have done better?

I want to involve all of the pupils.

A dance lesson (3)

I want to reflect on the dance lesson with Year 8, and in particular on the situation that arose with Ben, though I think that there are wider issues to be considered than just Ben. The situation left me feeling guilty and inadequate as a teacher.

The class were doing some work in pairs. I felt uneasy that day because a number of children were absent and some would have to learn to co-operate with new partners who were not necessarily their choice. It is a mixed ability class, not always quick to learn or necessarily to be able to co-operate. I had already recognized the need to develop strategies:

- to help individuals to work outside their friendship groups;
- to create new material quickly.

Jade and Ben are statemented. As we started to warm up, a learning support assistant came in, specifically to help Jade.

The warm-up of simple fun activities seemed to engage all of the class and I was pleased with that. Then I added some of the repetitive exercises that we had done in previous classes. This stage also went well for most of the class. Although I was a bit anxious about the lesson, I kept on top of the feelings. I was patient and at their own pace nearly all of the class joined in. This too was a useful strategy. Managing to get most of the class engaged and listening to the music is really important for this group and I must not lose this point in relation to what then happened. At this stage, Jade and Ben were having problems, though with the help of the LSA, Jade was beginning to settle.

Ben found it difficult to copy the movements, seemed to get frustrated, and then began to distract others. By the time we were 10 minutes into the class, he was running around in the spaces between the other pupils – totally off-task. The LSA left Jade and went to help Ben. I moved into more challenging work in order to keep the other children engaged and active.

Eventually, the LSA removed Ben from the room. I later learned that his parents were sent a note about his poor behaviour and there were other sanctions.

I see myself as having failed to prevent this situation and I suspect that none of us gained from it. I notice that my feelings were made worse by the fact that I felt I had failed in front of the LSA. She may have felt that she had failed in front of me. (These feelings would be better discussed.) The children in the class had had their learning disrupted.

I think about being in Ben's shoes. How would he have seen it? Dance – a chance to have some space and be creative – it started with a bit of fun – so he might have felt that he could enjoy the fun. Ben would find it hard to move from what he would construe as pure 'fun' to a more serious activity. It is possible that the 'fun' works well for children who can change their focus of attention easily but not for some like Ben who cannot quickly shift, especially in the direction of more serious work. Also the other children often laugh at him when he clowns and since he does not have many friends, such attention from the others is rewarding. They did not actually laugh this time, I think because the music and repetitive movement took up their attention but he may have thought that they would have done. I suppose that he might have been all right if he had been guided by the LSA from the start but it was Jade who got the attention this time and he has to learn to manage without one-to-one attention sometimes.

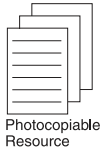
Should I see Ben as a problem on his own or as an issue in the class as a whole including the LSA? I realize that we are only an element in an even larger situation when I consider what happened to Ben when he was removed from the class. His behaviour was construed as poor behaviour and sanctions were levied. I don't imagine that his parents were helped by receiving another letter about his poor behaviour – they know about it only too well. The sanctions will probably mean that I will have even more difficulties with Ben next time. At least I should have been involved in discussions about his behaviour in my class. I must mention this to the LSA and raise it as a more general issue when we discuss the role of LSAs next time. It is something about getting everyone pulling in the same direction.

I did feel particularly uneasy that day. I wonder if it was because I was tired from the late night. Things like this certainly are more of a burden when I feel tired. It is worth remembering that things might have looked different if I had felt fresh.

Anyway, it is worth trying to learn something from this situation and having a strategy better developed for when it happens next time. If I go further with the theme of 'getting everyone pulling in the same direction' . . . how could this be achieved?

- It would have been helpful if I had shared my concerns about the group with the LSA to start with.

- It would have been helpful to me if she had come in at the beginning of the class, and we could have both been forearmed with some tactics to work with Ben and Jade.
- I need to include in my planning strategies to deal with partner work when one person is away.
- Praise motivates those who are working well, I must remember to use that as a teaching strategy.
- There is something about the need for me to be involved in the discussion about the repercussions of Ben's behaviour. They have consequences for my later dealings with Ben.
- I have concerns about the actual kinds of sanctions levied. I need to follow this up.



Resource 11

Strategies for enhancing learning from everyday experience

This is an elaborated and rewritten version of material presented in Marsick and Watkins (1990, pp. 36–7) as ‘Strategies for enhancing informal and incidental learning’.

1 Investigate metaphors and images

Our images and metaphors represent the theories on which we base our thinking and action. They act as an ordering and reference system. To understand how our processing of information works towards development of our personal systems of knowledge, we need to understand this system and the contents of it. Access to this understanding is either through reflection or by more direct observation of our actions and reactions in relation to events and objects. With greater understanding of the image/metaphor system that we use, we can reject it, modify it or retain it with greater understanding.

2 Recognize assumptions that we have made about people or situations

We have to make rapid assumptions about people and situations in order to manage in busy and everyday lives. These assumptions might not always be accurate but it is often easier to retain the original view despite evidence that it is not or is no longer appropriate. If, for example, a person is said to be difficult to get on with, to avoid cognitive dissonance, we may make assumptions about that person to justify the rumour, rather than judge her afresh. It is comfortable to have evidence that points in a consistent direction. These assumptions can be the subject of reflection. We thus reframe our view.

3 Question and challenge familiar situations

When a situation is new or unfamiliar, we are more able to question and challenge it in order to understand it. Familiar situations are apt to evoke automatic judgements and unconsidered responses. One means of reframing assumptions and reactions is to see situations as if they are unfamiliar and to problematize them, asking naïve questions. One method of doing this is to describe the situation as if one were seeing it for the first time. It may be helpful to write about it in the present tense. Leave the writing for a day or two and then return to it and write down as many questions about it as you can think of (brainstorm for questions), not trying to answer them straight away – leaving it again for a day or two more. Another method is to work with another person who acts as a facilitator. You describe the event while the other simply listens. The other then asks questions, particularly naïve and simple questions. These two methods may be combined so that the facilitator reads a written account and prepares questions that may be written or oral.

4 Create a situation for review and reflection

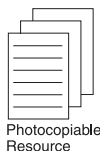
Counselling and therapy are means of reviewing and reflecting on present and past events and their relationship to the future. People tend only to ‘go into’ therapy and counselling from a state of being down or negative, rather than use such deliberate tactics in order to reconsider and rethink work or home events that are apparently normal. Mentoring, self-help groups or learning groups can be situations for the opportunities to learn to see things in a different and transformative manner.

5 Listen to the views of others

There is often a tendency to assume that others see events, people and organizations in the same way as we do. Engineering situations in which people can share attitudes enables the possibility of recognizing the range of view that can exist. Discussion of perceptions of an event that has been experienced by several people can be a helpful manner of eliciting such sharing. A start for this work can be that everyone develops a concept map (see Chapter 10).

6 Take a wider view

There is a tendency to focus on the day-to-day events. It is possible to view events at different levels of magnification. There is a tendency in thinking about an event to easily become caught up in the detail of small points. We could see this form of viewing as increased magnification. What we manage less well is to see events in longer-term contexts. Without this perspective, we cannot see the patterns and cycles of events, or monitor the flow of feelings. A method of working with this in reflective mode is to conceive of periods of time in which life (emotions/events/relationships – the personal aspects of life) have felt as if there is a common thread (e.g., a week, a month). Think back over that time and write/draw or in other ways, depict the characteristics of that period. Monitor every so often whether a period continues or if there is a new period (based on Progovoff, 1975).



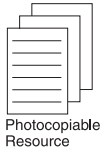
Resource 12

An exercise on judgement

***Developed as the basis of other work by Jenny Moon,
University of Exeter***

Two lovers lived in towns that were separated by a large hot desert. One was called Victoria and the other, Albert. Though they e-mailed each other passionately, it was really Victoria who wanted to cross the desert to Albert but the desert was too dry and hot for her to walk across it. One of her neighbours, Fred, had an ancient Land Rover and she asked him to take her over to Albert. He said he would do so if she gave him the gold bracelet that only recently had been sent to her by Albert. She refused because she knew Albert would be devastated if she was not wearing the bracelet and, besides, it had belonged to his mother who was now dead. It could not be replaced. So she went to her so-called friend Archibald and explained the situation but he said he could not or would not help. She was now desperate and went back to Fred and very sadly gave him her bracelet, which he took once he had driven her over the desert and delivered her to Albert's house.

Victoria then had to explain the loss of the bracelet to Albert. Albert responded furiously, telling her she could have no place in his life. In desperation, she called one of his friends, George, on her mobile. George was deeply saddened at the situation and marched straight round to Albert's house and beat him up. Victoria watched this process with delight.



Resource 13

Footprints

This exercise is devised by Jenny Moon, modified from an original idea in Progoff (1975).

Rationale

This exercise is modified from the 'Stepping stones' exercise of Progoff (1975). The principal aim of the exercise is to 'jog' or as Progoff says 'loosen' memory about a particular topic. Any topic at all can be the subject matter, for example, it can enable the exploration by individuals and groups of experiences such as 'being a learner' or the development of capacities such as 'skills', and so on.

The exercise is particularly valuable for:

- exploring experiences or experiences of something (such as 'learning', feeling 'cared for' or 'teaching'). The topic might be the subject of current or future work for example, in learning journals;
- expanding personal perspectives on some topic or issue;
- finding subject matter for story writing – for creative writing or for professional development or other academic purposes;
- the generation of subject matter for personal skills exercises such as the giving of presentations;
- enabling the sharing of ideas in a group about a specific topic;
- group development. For shy or uninvolved participants in a group it provides a situation in which everyone will have a turn to make an oral

contribution from written notes about familiar material in a light and usually creative atmosphere.

It is an enjoyable and usually enlightening exercise that tends to generate good feeling and energy. It can serve to energise a group after lunch, for example. It can be run many times even on the same topic because beyond the obvious first few memories that a person retrieves on a topic, different memories will emerge on different occasions. This is an interesting aspect of the exploration involved.

The equipment needed is a paper and pen each. To do this exercise properly takes around 40 minutes and it can be done with large numbers with space enough to form small (self-managed) groups and to be able to hear each other speak within those groups.

The exercise

After the introduction of the topic to be explored, the first part of the exercise is the individual writing of a number of lists, each of about seven items. Participants are asked to list around seven memories of the chosen topic in chronological order – so they are asked to start with the earliest memory and then to move forward towards their present age in sequence. They are asked to write a phrase, or a few words on the paper that will enable them to recall the memory later (e.g., ‘The time when I learnt to ride a bike’). They should be reassured that they will not be asked to reveal to anyone anything that they do not want to say.

While the lists are being written, it is likely that memories will occur that are previous in sequence to where participants have reached in their current list and they are told to hold onto that memory for the next list. In this way, over a period of 10 to 15 minutes, participants write a series of lists.

Sometimes people will begin to talk about their memories before or as they write them. They should be dissuaded from talking. A calm and meditative atmosphere works best. It is very rewarding at this stage of the exercise. The lively part of the exercise is for the second part of sharing memories.

The list-writing is stopped after what seems to be a reasonable period as judged from watching the behaviour of the participants. Nearly all should have written at least two lists. Participants are then asked to form into groups of around six. Within the group and in turn each participant briefly shares the details of one of her memories from the lists written. There is no need to be chronological – the memory can be drawn from any time. Depending on circumstances, it is wise to ask participants to limit their sharing to a set time such as 4 minutes each to start with. This guards against ‘long-

windedness'. Once each member of the group has shared one memory, there might be a second round – and more.

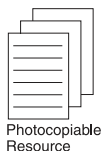
This stage of the exercise tends to involve good listening, and often merri-ment as diverse memories are shared. The rationale for this element of the exercise is that as the memories of others are unearthed, they will stimulate new memories in each individual, in this way, generating many more memories than would have been achieved in the first stage of the exercise. The new memories may be quite unexpected (and sometimes a quick private note may be made of them).

After a period of sharing memories, the group is asked to disperse again and individuals are asked to return to their lists and again put the new memories that have emerged as a result of the sharing, into lists, as before. Getting groups to break up at this stage can be difficult.

The outcome of this exercise for each individual will be a series of recollections about the topic chosen. Some may be memories that have not been considered for a long time. Depending on the purpose of the exercise, one of the memories may be developed into a story, presentation or an issue for further reflection in a learning journal (for example). Alternatively, the whole list may be taken as an expression of personal experience to be explored further in the same or other contexts.

Instructions to give at the beginning:

- The topic is given by the facilitator.
- The task is to write lists of around seven memories of the topic, in chronological order.
- When memories arise that do not fit into the current sequence, they are used to seed another list where they are put into the correct chronological order.
- No-one else will see the lists, and no-one will be asked to share anything that she does not wish to share.
- After a period of time, the list writing will stop and participants will be asked to share memories, in turn, in a group. The idea of this is that other people's memories will generate new memories for the individual.
- For vulnerable groups and/or some topics that might be explored, it may be useful to say that the exercise could give rise to uncomfortable memories, and in this case a member of staff is available afterwards for consultation. However, because the material shared is totally under the control of individuals, this is not a likely event.



Resource 14

Poetry as a form of capturing experience

The Pub Singer

He took the seat, fresh-faced, took to the spotlight.
He shuffled and settled – then with long fingers
And the work of strings, forged glittering streams of sound.

They looked. They listened. For one moment
He had them. For a moment, the fire held back its flicker.
It was a sensitive birth to which they gave those seconds.

He took them among byways and flowers of new love,
Drew ships sailing on cut glass seas. Words were threads
Of life that danced a fine line between delight and the dark.

And in the half-dark, the half-pissed resumed their chatter.
There was a rise of laughter, voices, a spill of coins
Across the bar; glass chinked in the beery air.

Now his ships roared by as powerboats. His words
Thundered on highways obliterating flowers.

Three claps went with him as he slipped from the light,
The ships sunk and words hanging off their lines.

(Jenny Moon, 2003)

Glossary

accommodation the process of modification of new material of learning or current cognitive structure (qv) in a learning process that results in change of conceptions (i.e., understanding or state of knowledge). Accommodation follows the process of assimilation (qv).

appresentation the process in which an element of an external experience stimulates a more complete or richer internal experience of the 'whole' of that thing on the basis of the prior experience of it. For example, seeing a familiar face triggers an internal experience of the whole person.

assimilation the processing of new material of learning such that learning occurs. The process of assimilation is guided by the current internal experience (prior experiences in current state of cognitive structure (qv)) of the object of learning, and any given current purposes for the learning. In meaningful learning, assimilation is accompanied by the process of accommodation (qv).

cognitive structure – the network of concepts, emotions, knowledge, experiences, beliefs, etc. that guides a person's functioning at a particular time.

conception of (structure of) knowledge this term relates to a suggested developmental sequence of increasing understanding of the nature of knowledge generally from the concept of there being only right and wrong ideas to the acceptance of the constructed nature of knowledge.

constructivism a theoretical position in education/psychology that holds that in the process of learning, an individual constructs a view of an object through the processes of accommodation (qv) and assimilation (qv) giving rise to a cognitive structure (qv) that is unique and that guides the processes of further learning. In this way, the individual has a unique view of the world based on her own processes of learning.

distinction of figure from the ground being able to discern the appropriate cues for learning for a particular purpose from other 'background' or non-relevant stimuli.

external experience the relevant experience of an object/idea (material of learning (qv)) that is to be learnt by the learner at a given moment. See also internal experience.

frame of reference the 'beam' of awareness or attention that is directed by the learner within a learning situation. Within that focus, the distinction of specific figures from ground (qv) is made. Frame of reference may concern the object of learning or the conceptions used by the learner to interpret the learning situation.

ill-structured ill-structured problems have no 'right or wrong' answer, but require reasoning and personal judgement. Ethical issues provide a good example.

internal experience the cognitive structure or sum of prior experiences relevant to an object within a particular context and at a particular time. Internal experience may be the material of learning for reflective learning.

learning and teaching These words have separate meanings. Learning refers solely to the action of a learner and concerns the processing of information both from outside the learner (external experience – qv) and a reprocessing of ideas already possessed by the learner (working with internal experience – qv). Learning may or may not imply action. Teaching, and other words such as instruction, indicate the action of another to make learning easier or more appropriate for the learner through guidance or through presentation of a simplified or helpfully sequenced version of the material of teaching (qv). Mediation of learning experience (qv) is a generic term used for this process in this book.

learning challenge the challenge that a learning task effects for the learner.

level descriptors these are guides to the level of learning expected to be attained by learners at a particular stage in formal education. The SEEC (qv) descriptors are commonly in use and cover post-16 levels in English, Welsh and Northern Irish education.

material of learning – material that is learnt (see learning and teaching) by a learner.

material of teaching material that is taught (see learning and teaching) by a teacher.

mediation of learning experience any form of secondary experience in which the material of teaching is simplified or recodified to create a more certain situation for a learner or to challenge the learner and thereby improve her learning.

relevance a concept that concerns the noticing and perception of the appropriate elements in current external experience for the current learning purposes.

representation of learning the manner in which learning is demonstrated or utilized in, for example, action, in written tasks, orally, etc. We assess the representation of learning, not learning itself.

SEEC Southern English Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer.

teaching See learning and teaching.

teaching challenge the challenge for the teacher in conveying the material clearly and appropriately to a learner, taking account of the current state of the learner's knowledge. The same material of teaching may pose more or less of a learning challenge to different learners. See 'learning challenge'.

variation the change in experience which can prompt new learning. Variation provides new material of learning – in order for there to be new learning, there needs to be variation in the experience. On this basis, learning is a process of experiencing variation and choosing to accommodate to that variation.

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