**REFLECTIVE LEARNING** Hackney Trainers’ Workshop 20.9.11

**INTRODUCTION**

**Why study this topic?**

The value of reflective learning is a dominant educational orthodoxy in postgrad teaching and learning. Its value is asserted everywhere we look: our own appraisals, reflective forms at every CPD event, our teaching and training practice, the eportfolio.

**Background: Donald Schon**

Seminal work in 1980s – see attached paper by Mark Waters.

Concept of the ‘swampy lowlands’ of complex messy indeterminate real-life problems, in which professionals learn by *doing*, invoking tacit knowledge, constructing professional knowledge as they go along. In contrast to traditional educational approach of learning a fixed body of knowledge then going out to apply it to a predictable repertoire of situations.

**Key concepts of reflection in and on action**

Reflection in action: essential to good GP – flexible, able to think on feet in new ways about complex problems.

Reflection on action – we do it all the time – case discussions after surgery, clinical supervision, Balint groups, SDLGs, chats with friends, lying awake at night etc etc.

**Documentation: help or tyranny?**

Huge contemporary emphasis on the documentation of our reflection on action.

Controversial. ? Effective. ? Evidence based.

**The Eportfolio -** Embodies tension between competency model and reflective learning.

Hostile takeover!

**Competency** **Reflective**

**Model** **Learning**

(Technical rationalism) (Social constructivism)

The danger may be that the value of reflective learning is reduced or lost, as the focus shifts to completing certain numbers of log entries.

**PAIR EXERCISE: CONSIDER YOUR OWN REFLECTIVE LEARNING**

What do you understand by reflective learning in your own clinical practice?

What conditions are necessary for your own reflective learning?

What are the pros and cons of this as an approach to your own CPD?

**Themes emerging from group discussion following pair exercise:**

* Importance of making time to reflect
  + Dedicated meetings
  + Informal chats over lunch or in corridor
  + Case discussions
* Triggers to reflection
  + Clinical errors
  + Significant events
* Importance of including positive triggers too
  + Examples of good practice
  + Surprises
  + Positive feedback from patients
* Importance of safe reflection
  + Role of supportive trainer-trainee relationship
  + Role of modelling by trainer
* Danger of reflection inducing excessive anxiety and self-criticism
* The role of the learner’s personality in shaping reflective capacity
* The role of reflection in learning to follow hunches
* Role of reflective learning in identifying unknown unknowns
* Tensions around documentation of reflective learning

**SMALL GROUP EXERCISE ON EPORTFOLIO REFLECTIVE LOG ENTRIES**

Examples of reflective log entries considered in small groups.

How can we spot satisfactory and unsatisfactory reflective log entries?

How might we feed back to trainees about their reflective entries?

How can we foster reflective learning in our trainees?

How can we avoid the death of reflection through over-documentation?

**Themes emerging from group discussion following eportfolio exercise:**

Descriptive entries – always scope to look for the surprise!

Log entries demonstrated different levels of reflection.

Group members generally agreed about the depth of reflection demonstrated by a particular log entry.

Log entries may be useful for identifying learning needs.

Log entries were widely agreed to be a useful starting point for further educational discussion with the trainee, and some trainers make a point of viewing log entries with the trainee during tutorials, for this purpose. Many felt that while further discussion would be beneficial, real life practical constraints often preclude the possibility.

Use of trainer’s written comments to ask questions that may provoke further thought and deeper reflection.

Benefits of encouraging trainees to focus on one aspect of a case, to foster deeper reflection, rather than trying to superficially cover all aspects of a complex case.

Scope to write up CbDs as reflective log entries.

**MODELS OF REFLECTIVE LEARNING**

See accompanying powerpoint presentation for summary of

* Kolb’s learning cycle
* Gibb’s cycle
* The 4 Rs
* Borton’s What? So What? Now What?