Assignment #1 – Reflective Writing (1st Entry)

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Objective

The quote I have chosen is “learning from one’s experience involves not just reflection, but critical reflection” (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 117). This quote caught my eye as it made me wonder if my own differentiation of between *reflection* and *critical reflection* was the same as that of the authors of the course text.

Reflective

The notion of *reflection* (and *reflective practice*) are key concepts in nursing and nursing education. Nursing students are expected to reflect on their clinical experiences as soon as they begin in the practice environment. This reflection generally involves journaling about their experiences, may involve responding to reflective questions or making connections between the practice experience and course theory. For registered nurses practicing in British Columbia, the British Columbia College of Nursing Professionals (BCCNP) requires all nurses to complete an annual self assessment as well as formulate an annual professional development plan. This process involves reflecting on one’s individual practice and identifying areas for further development.

This process is consistent with Merriam & Bierema’s (2014) summary of the work of Donald Schon on the “reflective practictioner” (p. 115) which was introduced in education and social sciences in the mid-80s. However according to Merriam & Bierema, where reflection is intended to create an assessment of practice and a determination of whether a certain action should be repeated or not in the future, the idea of *critical reflection* moves reflective practice further. Later work by Brookfield in the early 1990s is cited by Merriam & Bierema, following the above quote. At this time Brookfield suggested three phases in critical reflection: (1) identification of assumptions which may influence our thoughts and actions; (2) scrutiny of these assumptions for accuracy, validity and basis in reality; and (3) the reconstitution of these assumptions to be “more inclusive and integrative” (Brookfield in Meriam & Bierema, p. 117). This was helpful, as it demonstrates that by utilizing critical reflection to go deeper, we are can identify and challenge our assumptions and reframe them as necessary. While this was helpful, I wanted to consider how this more specifically relates to myself as an educator.

Interpretive

I discovered that Brookfield (2015) more recently addressed critical reflection as necessary in order to be a “skillful teacher. He explains that this means actions which are based on assumptions are informed (by validating with students, peers and educational literature); critical reflection is modelled to students and teaching practices are energized through the use of critical reflection. I liked this explanation of critical reflection as it incorporates several ways to view and subsequently inform one’s assumptions, includes role modelling for students as well as identifying the importance of critical reflection for maintaining a passion for teaching. It does not, however include how to “teach” critical reflection to students, which is vital to nursing practice.

The Centre for Teaching Excellence at the University of Waterloo (nd) provides practical guidelines for integrating critical reflection into courses. Critical reflection is defined in this post as a “meaning-making process” which helps us ask questions, consider bias and cause, contrast theory with practice and ultimately impact knowledge transfer. Tips include:

* Create curiosity (which can motivate and engage students) e.g. question prompts, activities and problems/tasks which prompt curiosity.
* Make it continual (through giving and receiving feedback)
* Connect it (through role playing/simulations/group work)
* Give it context (by linking it to other courses as well as community/public issues)
* Consider class size (small classes: journals, logs, blogs; larger classes: small group discussions/brainstorming sessions with peer feedback
* Model the reflective process (by asking the type of questions used in the discipline and providing evidence-based responses)

Decisional

I found that not on only reflecting on this quotation but also delving further into the literature has provided me with a broader perspective on reflection and more specifically, critical reflection. Ultimately, critical reflection is about ensuring that we are basing our actions (either as a practitioner or as an educator) on information beyond ourselves and confronting possible biases. As an educator, this includes clarifying student understanding as well as perspective. In my current teaching position, my students are required to complete a log following each clinical shift, which chronicles their experience, however this is more a chronically of their shift activities and does not include a reflective component. I have been considering including a reflective component to this activity, however was unsure of what tact to take. I will now consider developing some reflective questions to help guide the students through various aspects of reflection throughout their practicum, which will assist them in identifying assumptions and possible biases in their practice. Some examples of reflective questions can be found in the Appendix, as identified by Fook (2015). I look forward to implementing this in my current practicum course.

# References

Brookfield, S. D. (2015). *The skillful teacher: On technique, trust and responsiveness in the classroom.* San Francisco:Jossey-Bass.

Fook, J. (2015) Reflective practice and critical reflection. In J. Lishman (Ed.) In J. Lishman (Ed.) *Handbook for practice learning in social work and social care (3rd ed.),* Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London, UK.

Merriam, S. B. & Bierema, L. L. (2014). *Adult learning: Linking theory to practice.* Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

University of Waterloo., (nd). *Critical Reflection, Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo.* Retrieved from <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/planning-courses-and-assignments/course-design/critical-reflection>

Appendix

What was I assuming?

What beliefs did I have about power (mine or that of others)?

What are my most important values coming across and how do these relate to power?

How did I influence the situation?

What preconceptions did I have and how might these have influences what I did or interpreted?

How did my presence make a difference?

What sort of power did I think I have, and how did I establish myself in the situation?

What were my beliefs about power and how did these affect what I did or chose to se?

What language/words/patterns have I used?

Have I used an binary opposites, and what is the basis for these?

What perspectives are missing?

What are my constructions of power?

What is the relationship between my beliefs about power and the mainstream or dominant view?

How have I constructed myself in relation to other people, or power?

How has my thinking changed, and what might I do differently now?

How do I see my own power?

Can I use my power differently?

Do I need to change my ideas about myself or the situations in which I work?

From Fook, 2015, p. 447.