

A Critical Reflection of reflective practice

The first quoted theory relating to reflective practice that caught my attention was the theory that “Education is the continual reorganization, reconstruction and transformation of experience” (*Dewey, 1916*). This, in my mind, covers all aspects of lifelong learning and is not merely appropriate to childhood school education..Throughout life one is subjected to this theory to gain experience, whether professional or personal. Of course, it is how you relate to this continuous process that will improve your life skills. So although you may be have an experience which you can reflect on and reorganise to improve, you may not choose to do so.

This is where the ideas of Donald Schon (*Schon 1987*) are also very similar. He quotes the theory that people learn from either reflection in practice or reflection after practice. Now as a dancer you will not improve your technique or your performance if you are not continually carrying out reflection in practice. You are immediately aware of issues that arise as you are attempting to perform to your best ability and you can make every effort to ensure that you are. As for reflection after practice this is also vital as a dancer. You will not only have opportunity to reflect yourself on your own performance and how to improve it, but will undoubtedly be given feedback from a third party, either by an examiner, a choreographer, a teacher which will enable you to reflect on your performance. Of course, if you chose not to reflect on that feedback then the chances are that you will not improve.

One of the theories that I endorse as a teacher is that of Twyla Tharp and muscle memory. (*Tharp and Reiter 2006*). If a dancer is learning something new and when trying to repeat the steps hesitates and questions it, the likelihood is that her body will not react as she has questioned her actions. The more practice and reflection undertaken the more the muscles will perform the moves without question as repetition creates the memory . I strongly advocate this theory and will often use it to reassure students when they are struggling to learn something.

Away from dancing, either professionally or as a teacher, I have heard of some of the other theories relating to reflective practice when participating in various training courses. Kolbs Learning Cycle reinforces the theory of continual education as it shows that our learning is cyclical and therefore continuous. Kolbs original theory shows four stages of the learning cycle and works on the theory that everyone will enter the cycle at one of these four stages dependant on their learning style. However other theorists ,and I would certainly agree with them, state that the entry point on the cycle is

dependant on the activity that is being undertaken. I particularly like the variation on the Kolb system produced by Honey and Mumford. They base their model on the theory that all learners fall into one of four categories which directly correlate with Kolbs four stages of learning.

Then you have the theories of Howard Gardner who looked further into the idea that people have different ways of engaging with understanding and learning. He introduced the theory of multiple intelligences (*Gardner 1983*)

His work was based on the theory that everyone has multiple areas of intelligence and that an individual would draw on any one or several of those areas when engaging in learning through reflection. This challenges the theories of what a learner looks like! In my mind I think this is a more in depth theory and would certainly seem to me to be the most relative to me and my learning..

The area of intelligence that I would use to reflect on a journal would depend on the particular entry that I am reading.

I could be using Inter-personal if looking at something relating to teaching, intra-personal if it was to do with personal feelings or emotions, musical, spatial and bodily or kinaesthetic if relating to demonstration or choreography. So this more in depth theory, which allows more categories of learning styles seems more logical and applicable to me.

Bibliography

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Websites

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