

TAPP: Reflective Writing to Inform Teaching Practice

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Today's workshop, *Reflective Writing to Inform Teaching Practice*, focused on how reflective writing can enhance teaching and learning. Led by Patrick Hanlon, the session introduced several models and strategies for reflective writing and showed how these tools could help teachers, course designers, and students develop greater self-awareness and improve their practices. Reflective writing is often associated with personal reflection, but today we looked at its potential to make our work more intentional, adaptable, and connected to students' needs.

Patrick began by explaining that reflective writing is more than simply writing about our feelings or experiences. Instead, it involves stepping back to look at what happened, how we felt about it, and what we might do differently in the future. Patrick shared several popular models to structure this kind of reflection: the 4F model (facts, feelings, findings, and future), the CARL framework (context, action, result, and learning), Gibbs' reflective cycle, the integrated reflective cycle, and the 5R framework for reflection, which includes Reporting, Responding, Relating, Reasoning, and Reconstructing. He briefly reviewed each model's purpose and structure and then divided us into breakout rooms to discuss how we might use these models in our own work.

In our group discussions, we explored the strengths and challenges of each reflective model. For example, the CARL framework, with its focus on context, action, result, and learning, provides a clear and straightforward structure that may appeal to people who prefer a more task-oriented approach. However, some of us felt that CARL's rigid structure might overlook emotional insights and personal responses. On the other hand, the 4F model (facts, feelings, findings, future) encourages reflection on emotions and personal experiences, making it useful for understanding how our feelings impact our actions and future choices. We also looked at the 5R model, which we used to guide our reflection in the workshop, and found it a balanced approach that combines both practical and personal insights. Discussing these models helped me appreciate the diversity of approaches and understand how each could fit different reflection needs.

Reflecting on the session, I was struck by how valuable it is to have these different frameworks available. As an instructional designer, I often use reflection when designing and refining curricula. Having multiple models allow me to choose the one that best fits the situation or purpose. For instance, if I need to evaluate a specific lesson or project, I might use CARL or Gibbs' cycle because these models focus on analyzing specific actions and their results. However, if I want to explore the overall impact of a course or identify areas for improvement, the 5R or 4F models could be more effective, as they encourage a broader reflection on experience and future applications.

This approach aligns with the practices I use when designing courses, particularly those that aim to encourage reflective thinking in students. For example, in one of the medical interpretation courses I developed, we ask students to reflect on their initial experiences and expectations around interpretation and translation at the start of the course. By the end of the course, students revisit their reflections and compare their initial insights with what they've learned. This reflection helps students understand their progress, identify areas for continued growth, and set future goals, which enriches their learning

experience. Reflective writing at both the beginning and end of a course also allows students to see how much they've learned, fostering a sense of accomplishment and self-awareness.

Another insight I gained from the workshop is how reflective writing can foster inclusivity and equity in course design. When we reflect on curriculum and lesson plans from different perspectives, we can better understand whether we're meeting the needs of all students. Reflective writing encourages us to think about who our students are, what backgrounds they come from, and whether our materials respect and support these diverse experiences. This awareness can lead to designing more inclusive and accessible courses, where students from all backgrounds feel seen and valued. Reflective writing, therefore, becomes a tool for promoting equity by allowing us to consider students' unique needs and adjust our teaching practices accordingly.

One of the practical benefits of incorporating reflective writing into curriculum design is the opportunity for continuous improvement. By regularly reflecting on the courses I create, I can identify what is working and what isn't. This process lets me make adjustments as needed and adapt my teaching strategies over time. For example, in past courses, I've used reflection to see how students responded to different types of assessments and activities. Through reflection, I realized that certain activities were not as engaging as I'd hoped. As a result, I revised these assignments to include more interactive and relevant elements. Reflective writing allows me to stay responsive to students' needs and adapt to changes in the learning environment.

The session also emphasized that reflective writing is beneficial for students. When students engage in reflective activities, they develop skills in self-assessment, critical thinking, and goal-setting. Reflective assignments can encourage students to think about what they have learned, how they can apply it, and where they want to go next. This approach not only helps students understand their own learning process but also prepares them for continuous improvement beyond the classroom. In a world where adaptability and lifelong learning are increasingly valued, these reflective skills are essential.

Looking back at today's workshop, I feel that I gained a deeper understanding of how reflective writing can enhance both my work as an instructional designer and the learning experiences of students. The session reminded me of the importance of being thoughtful and intentional in my work, as well as the power of reflection to improve teaching practices over time. Moving forward, I plan to incorporate some of these models into my curriculum design process, using them to guide reflective activities for students and as tools for my own professional growth. By embedding reflection more intentionally into my courses, I hope to foster an environment where students and instructors alike can engage in meaningful, ongoing learning. This session has encouraged me to think of reflective writing not just as an end-of-course task but as an integral part of both teaching and learning that can benefit everyone involved.