
Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development: 3rd Edition

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London: Sage (2010) pp. 279 Pbk. £22.99

ISBN 978848602120

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Earlier editions of Gillie Bolton's book have rightly earned their place on reading lists for students on professional and vocational training courses as well as on the shelves of anybody interested in continuous professional development. The third edition is a more than worthy successor. Indeed, the changes are so extensive that this is close to being a new book rather than just a revision of the earlier edition, in that it takes the best elements from her previous work and supplements them with much new material.

The largely new first section focuses on the key theoretical and conceptual ideas that underpin the process of reflection and explores in greater detail than earlier editions the difference between reflection and reflexivity. This will be of particular interest to anybody who has struggled to help students appreciate the difference between the two, especially in the context of journal writing for both professional and research purposes. The second section moves on from the 'whats and whys' of the opening chapters and explores in depth the 'hows' of reflective writing with each chapter ending with some suggested writing exercises designed to help the reader expand their repertoire of reflective writing skills as well as deepen their powers of reflective and reflexive thinking. This section of the book makes great use of, and reference to, examples of reflective recording for discussion and illustrative purposes. Thus, readers are able to gain a much more detailed idea of what constitutes good reflective writing for emulation. The final section of the book returns to a broader, almost philosophical discussion of the power of narratives, metaphors, autobiography and

other creative writing styles to enable the reader to engage reflexively with their experiences.

The book is not only a very useful and practical handbook designed to enable both students and practitioners to develop and use reflective writing for the purposes of professional development (each chapter finishes with very helpful signposts to further reading as well as practical writing exercises to undertake) but it also acts a valuable source text on the underlying key principles, concepts and theories which underpin that practical application of reflective and reflexive processes. However, its usefulness extends beyond its target market of students and practitioners seeking to improve their professional practice. The greater emphasis, in this edition, on reflexivity and the exploration of how experiences are constructed, and not just recorded, via the writing process makes it highly relevant and useful to others who need to consider how and why they are not disinterested observers but an integral part of what they are recording. It would thus be of great use to researchers who use observational or ethnographic methodologies as well as the broad spectrum of action research and collaborative methodologies. I will, therefore, not only be updating the reading lists for professional development courses with this new edition but adding it to the reading lists for the research methods courses that I teach too.