

## Annex D

### Reflective Writing

Reflection is an essential component of wise decision-making and professional judgement. Many aspects of dental training cannot be pre-specified. Dentists need to be able to think on their feet, to improvise, to respond to the unpredictable.

Reflection is far more than just thinking about what happens during training. It refers to a systematic process of properly structured critical enquiry into your own practice which is used to examine and refine your practice

Evidence is beginning to accumulate that what you learn on your own initiative you learn more deeply and permanently than that which is learnt by being taught. Reflection is about analysing and learning from your experience, with the aim of integrating theory and practice, which should lead to changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes (Schon, 1983).

Reflecting on aspects of practice involves looking at something you have done in a detached way. It is an opportunity to improve your practice or training by critically analysing your actions. You should assume the perspective of an external observer.

Having managed a clinical or training situation, it is useful to reflect on:

- What went well
- What you might do differently next time
- What you learned from being in the situation
- What you are going to do as a result.

You should be honest about the strengths and weaknesses of your practice, and you should determine how the situation could have been improved.

- Describe the event. What did you discover from your involvement?
- Judge the overall quality of your practice/training. Did it turn out the way you planned? Did you accomplish your goals? Did you follow your timeline? Did you do enough planning?
- Describe how you might have done better.
- How would you advise another dentist who wants to do something similar?
- What would you do differently if you were involved in a similar situation again?

Reflective practice encourages you to reflect on and learn from experience with the aim of encouraging the integration of theory and practice, which should lead to changes in knowledge, skills, judgement and professionalism.



The capability of a dentist to reflect consciously on their own practice is important for the development of expertise. There is some indirect evidence that dentists who reflect regularly on their professional activities and try to learn from their practice may ultimately serve their patients better than those who do not. There is some debate about whether such skills can be learned. Several experts believe that reflection or critical thinking comprises a set of skills which can be developed in others.

Certainly, if one's peers demonstrate that they use reflection to improve their own practice, trainees are likely to make such behaviour a habit.

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