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# The use of reflective journals in the promotion of reflection and learning in post-registration nursing students.

Kathleen Dympna Chirema

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a degree of Doctor of Education awarded by the University of Huddersfield.

February 2003

## Abstract

Reflective journal writing has frequently been used in nursing and other health care fields as an educational strategy to promote reflection and learning. Although reflective journal writing is recognised as a valuable tool to promote students' learning, very little research has been undertaken to evaluate its use. The overall aim of this study is to examine the use of reflective journals in the promotion of reflection and learning in post-registration nursing students. In order to achieve that aim a qualitative descriptive case study design was utilised to examine four objectives. The first was to analyse reflective journals completed by students during a period of learning in order to determine the extent and level of reflection achieved. The second, to examine the use of reflective journals as an educational strategy for facilitating learning in the practice setting. Thirdly, there was the intention to examine the nature and content of guidelines given to students with regard to the use of a reflective journal, and fourthly, to examine the support given to students by preceptors in relation to completing a reflective journal during their practice experience.

A purposive homogenous sample of eighty one part-time post-registration nursing students undertaking one of four modules, either as part of the Diploma in Professional Studies in Palliative Care Nursing or the Diploma in Breast Care Nursing during one semester constituted the total sample. Forty- two students agreed to participate in the research.

Data were collected from reflective journals completed during one module and by interviews with fifteen students, two teachers and three preceptors.

Forty-two journals were analysed to determine the extent and level of reflection using a model devised by Boud et al. [1985] and adapted by Wong et al. [1995]. A model devised by Mezirow [1990] was used to identify the non-reflectors, reflectors, and critical reflectors.

The findings suggest that student writing can be used as evidence for the presence or absence of reflective thinking. Allocating students to the three categories of non-reflector, reflector and critical reflector was possible. However, identifying textual elements within the journals and allocating them to the finer levels of reflection was more difficult and less reliable. Evidence suggests overall that journals are a useful tool for promoting reflection and learning. However, some students appear to benefit more from journals than others. Approximately two thirds of the respondents were able to demonstrate varying levels of reflection and were classified as either reflectors or critical reflectors. The remaining one third of the respondents were unable to demonstrate any levels of reflection. Overall respondents expressed positive views, regarding the use of reflective journals. However, a small number found writing challenging and some questioned their use. Some respondents preferred to talk about their reflections rather than write them in a journal. The importance of receiving clear guidance on the purpose of journal writing from teachers, and the need for non-judgemental feedback were highlighted as important factors in promoting the effective use of journals. Some concern was expressed regarding the disclosure of confidential information, and also who would have access to journals when used for assessment purposes. The issue of the time required for reflection and writing a journal was a major concern for some respondents. Students valued the role of preceptors in supporting their journal writing during the practice experience. Preceptors considered that the preparation they received for their role was adequate. However, they did request debriefing sessions following their support of students who had experienced difficult situations.

This study has presented further evidence that overall, reflective journals may be used as a tool to promote reflection and learning in post-registration nursing students.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks go to Paul Oliver, my supervisor, for all his help, direction and support throughout the duration of this study.

Thanks to the students, teachers and preceptors who gave their time so willingly and allowed me to share in their world, and for their thoughts and insights.

Thanks to a fellow researcher for giving time to act as a rater as part of the process of analysis and for the encouragement given throughout the study.

The study is dedicated to my late husband Israel who encouraged me to undertake this research and gave me so much support in the early stages. Sadly, he was not around to see the study completed.

Thanks to Heather Ball for assisting me with the presentation of the thesis.

Also thanks to my daughter Anne-Marie and my son Rory for all their support.



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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the early 1980's there has been an increasing interest in the nursing profession on encouraging nurses to reflect in and on their practice. This has been influenced by the publication of Schön's seminal book on reflective practice in 1983 [Schön 1983]. Reflective learning is of particular relevance to the education of professionals as it encourages students to integrate theory and practice and turns every experience into a new potential learning experience [Wong et al. 1995]. The nursing literature highlights the need to promote the concept of reflective practice and to assist students in reflection [Clarke 1986, Powell 1989, Emden 1991, Lumby 1991, Street 1991, Durgahee 1996/98, Pierson 1998, Foster and Greenwood 1998, Johns 2000, Rolfe, Freshwater and Jasper 2001, Rolfe 2002]. A range of teaching strategies, which promote reflection-on-action, are being used. These strategies include the use of reflective diaries or journals [Burnard 1988b, Durgahee 1998, Cameron and Mitchell 1993, Bleakley 2000] and the use of reflection within group discussion [Burnard 1988a]. Most of the literature describing these approaches however is anecdotal in nature. The requirement to become increasingly self-aware or self-reflective is being encouraged. One may wish to question why there is such an emphasis within professional education and more specifically nurse education. The context in which nurses practice increasingly reflects instability and constant change. The health care scene may be driven by a number of competing and conflicting pressures and ideologies which range from the effects of market forces, through to government-led social and health care measures to

improve health outcomes. There is an acknowledgement that constant change is now a permanent feature of health care delivery. Usher, Tollefson and Francis [2001] state that with this in mind major changes in attitudes and practices are required in order to work effectively and to maintain growth and development. Nurses, as well as other healthcare professionals are expected to be able to respond with flexibility as well as be innovative practitioners. It is believed that the focus on learning from reflective processes has the potential to enhance and illuminate the realities of the context in which practice takes place, and to help the students and practitioners to describe and understand their feelings and influence in the situation. There is the potential, through critical reflection and action, for the students and practitioners to challenge the 'existing order' through an understanding of the factors which are influenced beyond and outside their immediate situations [Mc Taggart 1993, Foster and Greenwood 1998].

Within nursing there has recently been a growing interest in how professionals learn. Practitioners face challenging situations within practice and need flexible ways of responding to and learning from these situations. The need for practice to be at the centre of professional learning has been acknowledged [Bines and Watson 1992, Rolfe et al. 2001, Rolfe 2002]. Without this focus on practice it is unlikely that the skills required for competent practice will be developed. It is therefore essential that approaches that facilitate learning through practice be considered. The need for a tool, which practitioners can use to facilitate learning through practice, is crucial. One such tool, which may enable effective learning from practice, is reflection.

Mezirow [1990] has identified that much of adult learning involves the scrutiny of previously held views or perspectives by reflecting back on prior learning in order to examine its validity in the new situation. He defined critical reflection as 'challenging the validity of presuppositions in prior learning' [p.12]. Schön [1983/1987] has argued that professionals must change their practice to become more reflective so that they can better meet the needs of their patients. He maintains that the rules or theories that professionals use to guide their practice may be ineffective at times, given that each patient or situation is unique. There are no pre-set solutions to real-life problems. Practitioners need to see the world on their own behalf and come up with their own interpretation of reality [Schön 1987]. The challenge for educators therefore is to help individual learners to deal with everyday clinical situations in a competent manner. This concern is particularly relevant to the education of professional nurses who are required to exercise autonomous and expert judgement. Reflection is increasingly being identified as an effective learning strategy that can achieve this aim [Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985, Schön 1987, Jarvis 1987/1992, Powell 1989, Mezirow 1990, Murphy and Atkins 1994, Durgahee 1996, Rolfe et al. 2001].

Schön [1987] has challenged the traditional professional schools for not preparing students for competence in real life situations. He asserts that the educational preparation of professionals should be centred on enhancing the practitioner's ability to reflect as it can facilitate the integration of theory and practice [Leino-Kilpi 1990, McCaugherty 1992, Snowball et al. 1994].

A number of recent empirical studies by Wong et al. [1995], Durgahee [1996/1998], Johns [1996], Mountford and Rogers [1996], Wong et al. [1997]



and Jasper [1999] demonstrate that the nursing profession has embraced reflection as a teaching and learning method.

In nurse education reflection is used as a teaching and learning tool to improve nursing practice through the development of the intellectual capacity to contextualize knowledge with flexibility to meet patients' needs. This requires the nurse to be able to think clearly, be able to reason and to use effective problem-solving approaches in the practical situation. Problem solving demands that the nurse thinks critically about the knowledge needed in practice to provide quality care. The complexity of the nursing situation is assessed critically and intuitively and situational knowledge grounded in practical experience is accessed to solve context-bound situations. This is what is known as professional practice. James [1995] explains that professionals are in continual conversation with context, grasping it, reviewing it, analysing it, interacting with it, reviewing their intentions and refining their actions. He points out that nurses have a depth of personal knowledge and insights that may not be demanded of other occupations. Nursing actions are refined and polished when nursing experiences are examined through reflection so that the nurse becomes aware of the various components of this experience and how they integrate to form professional practice. The elements in professional nursing situations have to be reflectively and critically differentiated, integrated and then directed to achieve nursing goals. Clarke et al. [1994] suggest that the use of reflection-on-action can provide support for individuals particularly when used in preparation for or during programmes of professional development. She describes reflection as an empowering process that can enhance an individual's autonomy. However, potential hazards in encouraging students to

reflect on experiences have also been highlighted. For example, Lister [1989] suggests that reflection requires a degree of self-awareness and openness which the student may be unable or unwilling to afford. Cameron and Mitchell [1993] highlight the need for clear guidelines on the use and purpose of reflection and warn of the danger that students may end up reflecting the teacher's agenda [rather than the learner's] with the student feeling compelled to write what they think the teacher wants to hear.

The writing of a journal as a means of promoting reflection and learning in educational settings has been advocated [Boud et al. 1985, Callister 1993, Cameron and Mitchell 1993, Landeen et al. 1992 /1995, Button and Davies 1996, Williams and Wilkins 1999, Williams, Wessel, Gemus and Foster-Seargeant 2002]. The association between the skills required for journal writing and that for reflection has led writers to advocate its use as a tool to aid reflection and for the development of the qualities and skills required for reflection. These skills include open-mindedness, motivation, self-awareness, description, observation, critical analysis, problem solving, synthesis and evaluation [Atkins and Murphy 1993].

Reflective journal writing was introduced into Continuing Education Programmes for nurses in the institution where the researcher is employed, as a tool to promote reflection in learning and as a form of self-evaluation of students' learning. The researcher has been using reflective journals as a tool for promoting reflection for the past eight years, mainly with post-registration nursing students on two Continuing Education Programmes. Students' comments on the evaluation of their usefulness have been variable. Some students appear to be able to make recordings related to their experiences and associated learning and find the process beneficial, while

others make an attempt to record events but find the process extremely challenging. A number of students fail to make recordings and question the value of a reflective journal. The researcher has therefore become increasingly interested in the role of journals in promoting reflection and learning. There is some evidence to suggest that they can be used as an effective tool to promote reflection; however, there is scope for further evaluation of their role in relation to their effectiveness [Wong et al. 1995, Richardson and Maltby 1995].

This study involved part-time students who are registered nurses undertaking two specialist Continuing Education Programmes and have used a reflective journal as a tool to promote reflection during a fifteen-week semester. The students involved are undertaking the Diploma in Palliative Care or the Diploma in Breast Care Nursing. While undertaking a number of the modules as part of these programmes as core or optional modules, the students benefit from a shared learning experience, as a number of modules are common to both pathways. The students have variable years of experience and attend the education setting one day each week in order to undertake their studies. They are employed as registered practitioners mainly within local National Health Service Trusts and are based in hospital and community settings or employed within a local Hospice Care setting. During the early stages of this study students attended education centres linked to National Health Service Trusts which were previously Schools of Nursing. Due to integration in the late 1980's and early 1990's nationally these schools became either Colleges of Nursing or Colleges of Health. Full integration into the university concerned took place in 1996. The students however remained on twelve satellite sites while waiting the commissioning of a new School of

Human and Health Sciences. The new building was completed early in 1999, which has enhanced the opportunity for shared learning in health and social care programmes. However, due to the specialist nature of delivery related to Palliative Care education and the availability of an education centre at the local Hospice, students on these programmes were able to access their education at this specialist centre. The students therefore had access to specialist learning resources locally, however, they are also able to utilise a wide range of learning facilities on the main university campus site situated three miles away.

The researcher has observed from the literature that there is considerable discussion regarding the concept of reflection and the extent of its use but there is little empirical research on the conceptualization of reflection and its role in learning [Scanlan, Care and Udod 2002]. As reflective learning is becoming increasingly emphasised in contemporary nursing curricula, educators are continuing to search for strategies to facilitate reflection. There is a need to establish a means of monitoring its effectiveness; otherwise the term reflection may be used imprecisely. Student journals have become a common method used to encourage and record reflection in learning [Hahnemann 1986, Wong et al. 1995/1997, Durgahee 1998, Spencer and Newell 1999]. Writing about experiences may enable practitioners to make explicit the knowledge that is implicit in their actions [Hahnemann 1986, Atkins and Murphy 1993]. Reflective journals can be a valid tool for assessing students' accomplishments of learning [Wong et al. 1995, Williams, Sundelin, Foster-Seargeant and Norman 2000]. The establishment of an approach to evaluate the level of reflection is essential to the successful implementation of reflective learning in the education of professional nurses.

Journals have been described as notebooks in which students write to their teachers about learning experiences and in which the teacher responds [Kreeft 1983/84, Osterman 1990]. Since the development of reflective journals three decades ago most of the research concerning their use has been conducted in the field of education. [Smyth 1989, Stevenson and Jenkins 1994, Beuhl 1996, Carter 1997]. The strategy of journal writing offers advantages to students. Hounsel [1976] and Hoffman [1983] have determined that the reflective awareness gained by university students in journal writing is associated with more success in higher education, more insight regarding academic difficulties, a more realistic perspective on past performance and increased responsibility for learning. The research regarding the purpose and effectiveness of journal writing in nursing is limited [Landeem et al. 1992/95, Richardson and Maltby 1995, Wong et al. 1995/1997, Button and Davies 1996].

The reflective journal in clinical education typically occurs as a written conversation that is initiated by the learner. It provides a student-centred communication between the teacher and student regarding significant experiences that have occurred in the clinical arena [Staton and Peyton 1986, Ashbury, Fletcher, Birtwhistle 1993, Wong et al. 1997, Scanlan et al. 2002]. Journals offer a means for the student to discover and record the development of practical knowledge of the profession as well as to articulate and assess their experiences as practitioners [Fishman and Raver 1989]. Journal writing has been demonstrated to assist students to be able to recognise changes in their performance over time, [Cassidy and Luxton 1992, Ashbury et al. 1993] to express their feelings in relation to clinical experiences [Dimino 1988], to develop critical metacognitive skills needed to

effectively analyse and integrate clinical concepts, [Hahnemann 1986], and to increase students' observational, analytical, and reporting skills [Callister 1993, Jasper 1999]. Callister states that journal writing affords nursing the opportunity to develop a personal conceptual framework of nursing practice. Schön [1987] suggests that it is sometimes possible through a process of reflection-on-action to illuminate the knowledge and theory used. He suggests that writing about experiences in the form of a diary or journal is a useful way of studying reflection because it may enable professionals to make explicit the knowledge that is implicit in their actions.

Despite the promise that journal writing will enhance students' ability to reflect on their learning experiences, not all students respond positively to journal writing as a learning tool [Fulwiler 1987, Carswell 1988, Cameron and Mitchell 1993]. Some students complain bitterly about the requirement of writing and submitting weekly journals to their teachers [Holland 1989]. Others begin by writing enthusiastically in their clinical journals however, after several weeks, become noticeably indifferent, or bored by the activity [Cassidy and Luxton 1992, Wong et al. 1997]. Some students regard journal writing as 'busy work', unworthy of the attention or effort usually reserved for examinations and academic work [Blough and Berman 1991]. Procrastination about writing journal entries is another common occurrence, resulting in inadequate or omitted entries [Cassidy and Luxton 1992]. Other problems in journal writing occur because not all students are equally proficient in reflection [Edwards 1992]. At the one extreme, some students never seem to understand what is expected in journal writing. These students produce mere itineraries of their day, void of reflective and personal insights [Holland 1989].

While there are numerous papers describing journals, there has been limited research undertaken into their effectiveness in promoting the self-reflection that Schön [1983] has identified as central to professional practice. While nurse educators have widely accepted the educational benefits of reflection, research into reflective learning is hampered by the lack of reliable and widely accepted methods for assessing whether reflection takes place and indeed the level of reflection [Wong et al. 1995]. A systematic examination of the content of students' journals and seeking their views on the use of journals in promoting reflection may assist in their evaluation as an educational tool. It is for this reason that the researcher wished to undertake this study in order to explore the use of reflective journals in promoting reflection and learning in post-registration nursing students. A case study design was utilised, which focused on post-registration nursing students undertaking Continuing Education Programmes in the Health Department in an Institute of Higher Education in the North of England where the researcher is a member of the academic staff.

## **THE STUDY**

The aims of the study are to:

1. Analyse the reflective journals completed during a period of learning in order to determine the extent and level of reflection achieved by the students using the model devised by Boud Keogh and Walker [1985] and adapted by Wong et al. [1995], and the model based on the work of Mezirow et al. [1990] and Mezirow [1991].
2. Examine the use of a reflective journal as an educational strategy for facilitating reflection and learning in the practice setting.

3. To examine the nature and content of guidelines given to students with regard to the use of a reflective journal.
4. To examine the support given to students by preceptors in the practice setting during a period of learning with regard to journal writing.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 LITERATURE SEARCH STRATEGY**

The literature search included two main areas

- The literature relevant to the topic under investigation.
- The literature related to the research methodology to be used.

Initially a preliminary search of a commonly used computer database related to health sciences was carried out to ascertain the availability of literature on the following areas; the key words used were reflection, reflective practice, reflective journals, diaries, logs and chronicles. A search was undertaken using the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature [CINAL] between 1980-1999. This provided eight hundred articles. The search was narrowed to highlight research articles only, which considerably reduced the articles located.

The process of searching available sources was undertaken in seven main stages as outlined below:

Stage 1: Computerised database search.

Stage 2: Acquisition of relevant articles.

Stage 3: Application of criteria to aid the search of relevant literature.

Stage 4: Manual search of reference lists.

Stage 5: Access other sources.

Stage 6: Application of criteria to aid the selection of appropriate research and non-research studies.

Stage 7: Data reduction, storage of information and analysis of the literature.

## **Stage 1: Computerised database search**

This involved a search of CINAL using the terms reflection, reflective practice, reflective journals, diaries, logs and chronicles. Although the term reflective journal was used in this study other terms were used in the literature. The databases detailed below were initially searched between 1980-1999.

Searches were undertaken at approximately two monthly intervals between 1999-2003 in order to keep the literature up-to-date.

<b>DATABASES</b>	CINAL  Educational Resources Information centre [ERIC] [British, Australian and American literature was accessed].  Journal @ OVID Full Text
<b>INDEXES</b>	British Education Indexes [BEI]  ISL Web of Science citation indexes

CINAL was searched because of its focus on nursing. It has a North American bias; however, the material retrieved was most relevant as it reported the world wide perspective related to reflection and reflective journals. The ERIC and BEI databases were searched using the same research terms and dates, in order to identify specific educational literature that may not be included in the databases focusing on health. The OVID full text journals database was searched in the more recent searches to ascertain whether any articles found through searching the other databases would be readily available, perhaps saving time. The Web of Science was also used and a small number of articles were identified.

## **Stage 2: Acquisition of relevant articles.**

In the early stages of literature searching there were fewer journals available electronically, so journals had to be accessed manually through the University

Library. Where journals were not available locally articles had to be obtained from the British Library. This process took about two weeks. I kept an accurate record of the articles ordered and successfully retrieved. This proved to be time consuming but advantageous as the study progressed.

**Stage 3: Application of criteria to aid the search of relevant literature.**

- Publications in English.
- Journals related to nursing, medicine and allied health professions were used.
- Date of publication 1980-2003.
- Type of literature – Research studies where possible but extended to other literature that informed the debate.
- Focus on continuing education of nurses, other allied professionals, and students undertaking education programmes.

**Stage 4: Manual search of reference lists**

The reference lists of each of the articles were searched in order to look for other relevant articles related to the topic areas of reflection and reflective journals by authors whose names appeared repeatedly in the computer searches and might be considered to be experts in the field. I was constantly checking for other authors that may have been missed using the initial computerised search, whose work might inform the debate.

**Stage 5: Access other sources**

During the literature searching process I aimed to identify and retrieve, where possible, primary literature source; however, I also accessed secondary sources and the grey literature, to ensure that I was exploring, as widely as possible, the range of areas required. I also accessed relevant books related

to the topics under exploration and related to the research methodology mainly from the University Library and the British Library. I used dictionaries mainly for definitions of terms. I regularly checked journals for book reviews on relevant topics and was able to identify new texts becoming available. I attended a number of national conferences and became involved with participants who were researching similar topic areas. This gave me an opportunity to access further references in the field. I contacted two researchers, one in Hong King and one in the U.S.A. to seek further information regarding the development of their research on reflective journals that was ongoing and not yet published.

**Stage 6: Application of criteria to aid the selection of appropriate research and non-research studies.**

I devised criteria that were appropriate to ensure the inclusion of high quality studies.

Criteria applied to research studies:

- Research questions clearly stated.
- Sampling described adequately.
- Data collection strategies described including piloting where appropriate.
- Data Analysis methods described.
- Findings clearly discussed.
- Ethical issues considered.
- Issues related to the trustworthiness of the methods used were discussed.

I found it necessary to devise separate criteria to evaluate non-research items for potential inclusion.

The questions devised for the evaluation of non-research sources were as follows:

- What level of knowledge is presented?
- Was the work presented clearly, unambiguously and consistently?
- Is the purpose of the work stated?
- Has an evaluation of ideas been undertaken?
- How are the debates, ideas, trends stated in the work?
- How are the results discussed and presented?

Both these approaches assisted in the evaluation process of the literature. A fellow researcher reviewed a number of the research and non-research articles using the same criteria. Discussion took place subsequently which aided the inclusion of appropriate literature.

#### **Stage 7: Data reduction, storage of information and analysis of the literature**

Following the application of the inclusion criteria a large number of articles required management, both for ease of reference and to be able to identify relationships, similarities and differences [Hart 2001]. I devised a system of organising the references to aid utilisation. I created a manual system by using card indexes. A summary of each reference was recorded on separate cards. I recorded the details of the reference source on one side of the card and a summary of whether the criteria for inclusion were met on the other. I identified each card numerically and by colour coding for ease of utilisation. I filed the cards numerically and kept a master list of all the references and recorded the number and colour code detail on A4 sheets for constant reference. The colour coding related to key concepts devised as important areas to explore in the literature on reflection and reflective journals. I was able, finally, to bring the cards together under specific heading when writing up the study, which aided

the process. I had to constantly review my coding system and make minor modifications as necessary. The manual system, though time consuming, worked well. It is now possible to use computer systems to manage elements of literature searching.

## **2.2 INTRODUCTION**

In this review the literature that is relevant firstly to reflection and then to reflective journals, will be evaluated and analysed.

It is widely recognised that reflection and reflective practice have become popular in nursing education in recent years [Powell 1989, Wong et al. 1995/1997, Burton 2000, Rolfe 2002]. Despite the fact that reflection as a concept, so far, has not been rigorously tested in nursing, it is gathering momentum throughout the United Kingdom as a process for examining practitioners' actions [Palmer et al. 1994 Burns and Bulman 2000, Rolfe, Freshwater and Jasper 2001]. There is evidence that reflection is now encompassed within models of faculty practice [Cox 1994], clinical supervision, [Butterworth and Faugier 1992, Kohner 1994, Johns 2000], personal and professional profiles, accredited prior experiential learning [APEL] [Teasdale 1993], and curricular models with integrated theory and practice assessments at pre and post-registration levels [Palmer et al. 1994, Burns and Bulman 2000].

Gobbi, [1995] suggests several explanations as to why there is a developing enthusiasm for reflection. She proposes that the publication of Schön's work [1983, 1987] was timely. This was because nurses as a group were actively seeking enhanced professional standing and required a viewpoint from which to act. Therefore, Schön's work that has been approved by the educational

sector provided an authentic tool which could promote the reflective process [Platzer et al. 1997]. Secondly, Gobbi implies that the change within nurse education to a more 'student centred pedagogy' [Gobbi, 1995 p.69] meant that nurses were required to develop a critical thinking ability [UKCC 1986]. One way of helping them to achieve this was to encourage the student to reflect on past and present experiences [Burnard 1988a]. Lastly, Gobbi argues that the professional nursing bodies have added their support to the use of reflection as a learning tool. The English National Board [1994] advocated the importance of preparing 'reflective practitioners' who are able to use reflection in order to learn from their experiences. Therefore, in order to ensure that this objective is achieved reflection in and on practice is now an essential component of pre and post-registration programmes. The United Kingdom Central Council for Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors adopted reflective practice as a requirement to be evidenced in professional portfolios to enable nurses to maintain their professional practice [UKCC 1992, 1997].

Perhaps one of the most influential forces in the drive towards reflective practice is the desire to find a theory for professional practice, as well as a groundswell of resistance to such schools of thought on technical rationality. This has arisen from the positivist movement and their perceived view that the only legitimate way of knowing is through empirical enquiry. Practitioners of science-based professions are usually seen as technical problem solvers. This model of technical rationality suggests that basic and applied research dictate all the necessary procedures. However, Schön argued that a rational technical problem-solving description of what professionals do is incomplete. A competent nurse must master not only physiological or pharmacological knowledge and procedural skills but also other processes, often tacit, which

rarely appear in a formal curriculum [Saylor 1990]. For example, clinical decision-making usually does not head a specific course syllabus, but develops slowly during the professional education. Similarly, the ability to reflect upon one's repertoire of knowledge and experience is essential for competency but is also rarely mentioned in a curriculum.

Reflection utilises the 'soft' approaches to knowledge and legitimises work on different ways of knowing [Polyanj 1967, Carper 1978], where aesthetic, personal, ethical and tacit knowledge take their place alongside empirical knowledge. Reflection may be a powerful tool or, alternatively, we may, as Jarvis [1992] suggests, have become over enthused with reflective practice, because it is claimed that it provides a rationale for practice, a view supported by [Rich and Parker 1995].

According to Boud et al. [1985] the notion of reflective learning is not a new one. It can be traced back to Aristotle's discussions of practical judgement and moral action in his work on *Ethics* [Grundy 1982]. Educational theorists such as Van Manen [1977], Boud et al. [1985], Mezirow [1981], Mezirow 1990/91 and Schön [1991] analyse the process of reflection and suggest its use as a learning tool. They, in turn, appear to have been influenced by the work of philosophers such as Freire [1972], who discusses the relationship between reflection and action, and Habermas [1974] who argues that reflection is a form of science. Schotter [1974] postulates that we can extract from our everyday practice a theory of those practices, and that this theory may be reflectively applied to subsequent actions. Dewey in his early work referred to reflection as a form of thought growing from puzzlement and felt in a directly experienced situation. This activated a purposeful inquiry demanding 'active persistent and careful consideration of any belief or



supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it' [Dewey, 1933 p.9]. Dewey's concept of puzzlement demanded that immediate, direct action be suspended so that observations and possible courses of action could be tested by purposeful mental elaboration and a search for what is absent in the given situation. Three key ideas of the modern rhetoric can be identified here: direct experience; careful consideration of beliefs, values, or existing knowledge; and the suspension of immediate action to permit systematic contemplation [Francis 1995].

The origins of interest in reflection and reflective practice are therefore rooted in education [Dewey 1933, Smyth 1989]. So one may wish to question what makes the present interest in reflection and reflective practice so important for health care professionals. In order to answer this question one has to examine carefully the social, economic and political period in which we live, and the way in which emphasis on reflective approaches represents something of a graded response to the prevailing views about the nature of practice and knowledge [Andrews 1996]. Smyth [1989] states that

***The reflective approach represents an interesting and challenging counter discourse to the ensconced technicist views. At the same time that we are being increasingly counted and urged by technologically minded policy-makers and educational reformers into believing that all our faith in their capacity is to get the mix of techniques right, significant questions are being asked as to whether the applied science mentality that lie behind their thinking and strategies has the efficacy to resolve the complex issues in the ways suggested. [p.2]***

Edwards [1993] supports the view that the process of reflecting on and analysing unique circumstances gives rise to the concept of the reflective practitioner; someone able to cope with and shape change and uncertainty by interpreting and responding to clinical situations as they find them. It has been suggested that there is a need for flexible and multi-skilled individuals in the workplace and that there should be an emphasis on the development of core

and transferable skills. It is therefore not surprising that the notion of the reflective practitioner has grown in popularity in a period of increasing change. He argued that the role of the reflective practitioner conceptually encompasses the role of a change agent in organisations. Smyth [1989] highlights the importance of Schön's work that gave us a ready focus by which to reinforce and keep alive the tradition of experiential knowledge. In the face of widespread and continuing demands for technocratic ways of doing our work, Schön argued that the proposals for stricter forms of accountability based on research evidence are flawed [Smyth 1989]. He further argued that the problem has more to do with a deep-seated 'crisis of confidence' as opposed to 'competence' that adds up to a significant failure of practitioners to produce answers on the pressing environmental, economic and social problems of our times [Schön 1987]. His claims are embedded in the argument that clinical practice should be evidence-based, and ignores the extent to which clinical or practice-based knowledge is, in fact, trustworthy and relevant in and of itself [Smyth 1987a]. By choosing to focus exclusively on the products of other people's research, at the expense of the process by which understandings are reached, proponents of such views actually misconstrue the value of research, which lies not in its being definitive, but rather in the tentativeness of discipline-based research as something to be explored, confirmed, or rejected in the light of experience [Smyth 1989]. Continuing to seize upon the instrumental applicability of other people's research findings about professional practice is arguably tantamount to placing a level of certainty on research that social scientists would deny. Schön argues that across a range of professional areas, the nature of professional practice seems to have shifted from 'problem-solving' to 'problem-setting'; that is to say, from rational processes of choosing

from among possibilities that best suit agreed-upon ends, to a situation that opens up for contestation and debate the nature of those decisions, and the ends to which they are directed, and the means by which they are achievable [Schön 1983]. What this amounts to is quite a dramatic shift from the position where scientifically derived knowledge was deemed superior, to a circumstance in which artistic and intuitive knowledge may have a claim to being equally appropriate. What Schön [1983] proposes is a fundamental reorganisation of the way we think about professional practice, and the relationship between theory and practice. He reconstructs the epistemology of practice removing it from its inferior status in relation to theory. Schön [1983] states that within the concept of technical rationality we see the familiar hierarchy in which practice is guided by principles of the applied sciences; the applied sciences are guided in turn by the basic sciences. Practice is assigned the lowest value in the hierarchy, and the highest status is assigned to theory and to those who conduct theory-building research. Nurses and nurse educators alike are familiar with the awkward assumption that their practice should be guided by the 'more scientific' disciplines such as psychology. Schön [1983] believes that whereas in the past, professionals laid claim to 'extraordinary knowledge in matters of great social importance' [p.4] and in return were granted unique rights and privileges. A number of factors have indeed occurred to change those circumstances. In addition to the media exposure of the extensive misuse and abuse of the privileges for personal gain Schön [1983] points to a more important public loss of confidence in and questioning by the claims of a society of professionals to extraordinary knowledge. Increasingly professionals are being confronted by situations in which the tasks they are required to perform no longer bear any relationship to

the tasks for which they were educated. Actual problems do not often fit the theories taught in the classroom, which are frequently presented as ideal cases. As Schön [1983] so aptly stated

***The situations of practice are not to be solved but problematic situations characterised by uncertainty, discord and indeterminacy. Practitioners are therefore becoming increasingly engulfed in wrangles over conflicting and competing values and purposes. [p.15-16]***

There is therefore a call for a reflective approach to professional education that would enable practitioners to be prepared to translate theory into practice.

## **2.3 DEFINITIONS OF REFLECTION**

The lack of definition and clarity of the concept of reflection is evident within the literature [Mezirow 1981, Goodman 1984, Powell 1989, Schön 1991]. This raises the questions of whether the authors share a common understanding of the term 'reflection' and the extent to which the reader can make comparisons between these works. The key authors identified who offer a definition of reflection are Dewey [1933] Boyd and Fales [1983] and Boud et al. [1985]. The definitions share some common features and are worth considering in more detail. Dewey [1933] defined reflective thought as

***active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further evidence by which the reliability and worth of a belief can be established so as to justify its acceptance [p.9]***

Boyd and Fales [1983] suggest that reflective learning is

***the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by and experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed perspective. [p.100]***

while Boud et al. [1985] consider that reflection in the context of learning is a

***generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences on order to lead to new understanding and appreciations. [p.19]***

It is evident from the two later definitions that both authors see the processes of reflection as involving the self, and the outcome of reflection as a changed conceptual perspective. A number of other author's definitions are less clear. Most acknowledge an active element to reflection [Kemmis 1985, Saylor 1990]. Emden [1991] also sees the promise of reflective practice founded in action as bringing about emancipation and empowerment initially for the self, but also influencing the practice of others, in terms of nurse-patient interaction, clinical decision-making and ethical debate. Jarvis [1992] acknowledged this lack of definition and attempts to define reflective practice. However, unlike the other authors reviewed, his definition does not include the self, and while he states that reflective practice is a potential learning situation he does not indicate that it necessarily results in a changed conceptual perspective. What all these authors have in common, however, is that they discuss the processes of reflection.

Schön [1987] defines reflection in terms of action, both as reflection-in-action, where a practitioner 'thinks on his or her feet' by devising and testing solutions when they encounter problems in practice, and reflection-on-action, where a practitioner looks back at what has been done and, through reflecting on it learns lessons from what did or did not work. This reflection-on-action is similar to what Dewey [1933] believes to be the kind of activity that enables effective problem solving to take place and he also suggests that it improves the effectiveness of learning. He describes it as a learning loop, continually feeding back and forth between the experience and relationships being inferred. Dewey [1933] differentiated action that is routine:

***guided primarily by impulse, tradition and authority***

from action which is reflective:

*that which involves active, persistent and careful consideration.*  
[p.100]

Kolb and Fry [1975] describe the experiential learning cycle which begins with a concrete experience followed by observation and reflection. The reflective observations are translated into a theory for use in future experience. Kolb and Fry [1975] seek to show that learning is both an experiential and a reflective process, in which observations and reflections are interpreted and integrated into cognitive processes to become new, or expanded, wholes.

## **2.4 TYPES OF REFLECTION**

There are three major authors who have written extensively on the different types of reflection, namely Mezirow [1981/1990/1991], Schön [1983/1987], and Kolb [1984]. Schön [1983, 1987] differentiates between two types of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.

Reflection-in-action is deemed to be the process whereby a clinician becomes aware of a new situation or problem and thinks about it while still doing their job [Andrews 1996]. It is usually stimulated by surprise or by something, which puzzles the practitioner concerned. Thus they reflect on their understandings that have been implicit in their actions, their feelings which led to the adoption of this particular course of action and the way they structured the problems initially. They bring all three to the surface, criticise them and restructure them and embody them in further action. Although the problems may be different from previous experiences, the skilled clinician is able to choose and remit responses from previous experiences, when deciding on a course of action to resolve the problem. This is undertaken whilst doing the job and therefore influences the decisions made and the care given at the time [De Groot 1978,

Benner and Tanner 1987, Andrews 1996]. It may be argued that it is reflection-in-action which has the potential for promoting the skilled and flexible response of the expert clinician identified by Benner [1984]. Burnard [1991] noted, however, that nurses do not always think about what they do. Thus reflection-in-action is not automatic and nurses may need to practice the necessary skills. Schön [1987] viewed practice as having two dimensions. Firstly, that which requires problem-solving ability of a technical nature and referred to as 'the high ground'. Secondly, those which are more complex individual situations which have no ready made solutions and is referred to as the 'swampy lowlands'. Many of the problems nurses meet with in practice settings are complex and of the 'swampy lowland' nature. For these situations reflection-in-action appears more appropriate as it encourages nurses to think on their feet and use this knowledge to inform future practice [Andrews 1996]. Reflection-on-action involves a cognitive post mortem or reviewing what has happened following an incident. The action cannot be changed but the clinician can learn from this experience [Brook and Champion 1991, Foster and Greenwood 1998]. The main reason for reflection-on-action is to think about why certain actions were taken, decide whether these were appropriate and identify ways in which performance could have been improved [Atkins and Murphy 1993, Andrews 1996].

Reflecting in this way tends to be automatic if something out of the ordinary takes place, for example, when clinicians make errors they examine the sequence of events that may have led up to them. The emphasis is on what could have been done differently. It is vital to emphasise that effective responses also provide a basis for learning and should therefore be

acknowledged in the reflective period. However, human nature dictates that we are less inclined to explore uneventful events.

Reflection-on-action is similar to evaluation in that both are purposeful active processes that form a basis for appraisal. However, reflection-on-action often depends on memory whereas evaluation may also encompass other forms of data [Andrews 1996]. Reflection-on-action takes place after the incident and therefore adds to the ongoing development of skills, knowledge and future practice [Schön 1983, 1991, Atkins and Murphy 1993, Andrews 1996]. Considering the processes of reflection may assist forming a conceptualisation of reflective practice.

## **2.5 PROCESSES OF REFLECTION**

In discussing the processes of reflection, stages or levels of reflection are identified by most authors [Van Manen 1977, Mezirow 1981/1991, Boyd and Fales 1983, Goodman 1984, Boud et al. 1985, and Schön 1991]. A few authors argue that intuition plays a central role [Goodman 1984 and Schön 1991]. Mezirow [1981] identifies seven levels of reflectivity in a hierarchy ranging from an awareness of thoughts and feelings to theoretical reflectivity which involves challenging one's underlying assumptions resulting in a changed perspective [Appendix One]. In his more recent work Mezirow [1991] proceeds to divide reflection into categories of content, process and premise reflection. Premise reflection is seen as a higher or more critical level of reflection as it opens the possibility of transforming meaning frameworks. He views this more critical level of reflection as,

*becoming aware of why we perceive, think, feel or act as we do [p.108]*



Development of critical reflection is important as many of our actions are governed by a set of beliefs and values which have been almost unconsciously assimilated [Kember et al. 1996].

In contrast Schön [1991] only identifies three stages, those of conscious reflection, criticism and action. An analysis of the literature revealed that the differences between the author's accounts of the reflective processes are largely those of terminological detail and the extent to which the processes are arranged in a hierarchy. It is possible therefore to identify from the literature three key stages in the reflective process shared by a number of authors.

The first stage of the reflective processes is triggered by an awareness of uncomfortable feelings and thoughts. This arises from a realisation that in a situation, the knowledge one is applying is not sufficient in itself to explain what was happening in that unique situation. Schön [1991] refers to this as the experience of surprise, whereas Boyd and Fales [1983] describe this stage as a sense of inner discomfort.

The second stage involves a critical analysis of the situation, which is constructive and involves an examination of feelings and knowledge. It may be that when a person initially analyses his or her existing knowledge and applies other knowledge, an explanation of that unique situation may be possible. However, the analysis may also involve the examination or generation of new knowledge. Boud et al. [1985] describe in detail the analysis of feelings and knowledge, emphasising the importance of utilising positive feelings and removing obstructive feelings. Their reflective learning model involves three levels that are interrelated and cyclic in nature [Appendix Two]. Besides an explanation of their model Boud et al. [1985]

provide suggestions during each stage on how to promote the skills required for reflection. During the first phase termed 'returning to experience' they propose that the student is given a set period of time in which to record the sequence of events that happened during the experience, either in a journal or diary or by talking to another person. This enables the student to return to the experience and give a descriptive account of the thoughts and feelings provoked during the initial event. Similarly, in the second stage termed 'attending to feelings' Boud et al. [1985 p. 26] suggest that cathartic interventions or meditative techniques can be used to help work through these negative emotions which can create a barrier to learning [Platzer et al. 1997].

The third level, termed 're-evaluating the experience', is more complex than the previous two steps and consists of four stages: association, integration, validation and appropriation [Boud et al 1985].

**Association** is the connecting of ideas and feelings, which are part of the original experience, and those, which have happened during reflection with the existing knowledge and attitudes [p 31].

**Integration** is about seeking relationships between pieces of information. If associations are meaningful, this new knowledge can be integrated into new patterns of ideas and attitudes [p 32].

**Validation** is the testing of consistency between new appreciations and existing knowledge and beliefs to determine the authenticity of the idea and feelings that are the outcomes [p 32].

***Appropriation*** is making knowledge one's own. Some learning can become so related to the self that it enters our sense of identity, and can become highly significant in our value systems [p 33].

These four stages represent the process of reflection. Therefore the skills required to reconstruct the events that occurred during the experiential phase in order to make sense of them, are more complicated and abstract than during the first two levels. Boud et al. [1985] mention several techniques that may be utilised to facilitate progress through the association phase. This includes writing and drawing which are methods that will help to link ideas and feelings with existing knowledge and attitudes. In the integration phase the methods suggested are brain patterns, Buzan [1982], and concept maps Novak [1977], so that thoughts and feelings can be related in order to gain new insights. In the third phase or validation stage, rehearsal of how to put the plan into action, or guided imagery is proposed so that experimentation and modification of new ideas and feelings become authentic. However, during the last or appropriation phase that involves creating a personal understanding of the experience, no specific methods are proposed.

Mezirow [1981] however, uses the terms conceptual, psychic and theoretical reflectivity to describe these processes of analysis.

The third stage of the reflective processes involves the development of a new perspective on the situation. The outcome of reflection, therefore, is learning. Mezirow [1981] describes this stage as perspective transformation. Boud et al. [1985] discuss in some detail the outcomes of reflection, suggesting that there are both affective and cognitive changes which may or may not lead to behavioural changes.

While identifying the processes involved in reflection as important in order to use reflection as a learning tool it is necessary to identify the skills required to be reflective. However, Goodman [1984] and Boud et al. [1985] emphasise the importance of being open minded and motivated. Wong et al. [1997] emphasise the importance of readiness to engage in the reflective process as being important. While these in themselves are not skills they are prerequisites to reflection, which need to be encouraged.

Some authors move from an examination of reflective processes to a discussion of skills required by educationalists to promote reflection in learners without explicitly identifying the skills required to be reflective [Boud et al. 1985 Saylor 1990, and Schön 1991]. The identification of key stages in the processes of reflection demonstrated that self-awareness, an analysis of feelings, and knowledge and the development of a new perspective were crucial to reflection. There is therefore implicit in the literature an assumption that certain cognitive and affective skills are necessary to engage in reflection. These skills are identified as self-awareness, description, critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation [Atkins & Murphy 1993].

Self-awareness enables a person to analyse feelings. This is an essential component of reflection. It involves an honest examination of how the individual has affected the situation. There may be a realisation that the knowledge one was applying was not sufficient in itself to explain what was happening in a unique situation [Schön 1991].

Description involves the ability to recognise and recollect accurately salient events and key features of the situation [Boud et al. 1985]. Following an awareness of uncomfortable feelings and thoughts or the experience of

surprise as described by Schön [1991] a person needs to be able to describe these verbally and/or in writing to enable learning through reflection.

Critical analysis involves examining the components of the situation, identifying existing knowledge, challenging assumptions, imaging and exploring alternatives [Bloom et al.1956, Burnard 1988a]. It may be that when a person initially analyses their existing knowledge and applies other knowledge, an explanation of that unique situation is possible. However, the analysis may also involve the examination or generation of new knowledge, emphasising the importance of utilising positive feelings and removing obstructive feelings. Mezirow [1981] uses terms such as conceptual psychic and theoretical reflectivity to describe processes of analysis.

Synthesis is the integration of new knowledge. Stephenson [1985] considers that synthesis involves using this knowledge in a creative way to solve problems and to predict likely consequences of actions. This is particularly important as the outcome of reflection involves the development of a new perspective.

Evaluation is defined by Bloom et al. [1956] as the making of judgements about the value of something. It involves the use of criteria and standards. Mezirow [1981] argues that both synthesis and evaluation are crucial to the development of a new perspective or 'perspective transformation.' He describes this stage as being synonymous with the Habermas theory of emancipatory action [Habermas 1971].

Hanson [1996] suggests that moving to a new perspective may require support in the process of transformation and in the capacity to sustain the change. Mezirow et al. [1978] and Mezirow [1981] who developed the theory of perspective transformation stated that it was central to adult learning. He

saw 'meanings perspective' as being important for adult learners as they help develop a critical awareness based on past experiences in a current context. A 'meanings perspective' refers to the structure of cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated to, and transformed by one's past experience. It is a personal paradigm for the understanding of ourselves and our relationships [Mezirow 1981 p.4].

Through our socialization we acquire the 'meaning perspective' of our culture. However, we have the propensity to become critically aware and in particular theoretical reflectivity is seen as a distinctly adult capacity. This is achieved through perspective transformation that becomes the guiding paradigm for practitioners with adults.

However, caution is necessary as different cultures and situations require different forms of socialisation and the question of cultural assumptions has to be deployed against the notion of perspective transformation and critical reflectivity itself. Individual autonomy and self-direction are themselves very 'Western' goals and may be gender specific, dominantly reflecting male approaches to learning and life. For some cultures and situations conformity to the group may be more important than critical autonomy. Self-reflection and critical thinking may be reputed to be universal 'goods' however, one needs to be aware of their cultural specificity and power [Hanson 1996].

The role of experience as a source of material for reflection has been explained by Kolb's influential model of experiential learning that is based on the work of Lewin [1951]. The process of experiential learning can be described as a four-stage cycle involving four adaptive learning modes, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation [Kolb 1984]. Immediate concrete experience is the

basis for observation and reflection. These observations are assimilated into a 'theory' from which new implications for action can be deduced. These implications or hypothesis then serve as guides in acting to concrete new experiences [Kolb 1984]. This framework reflects the stages of problem framing, factor naming, interpretation, analysis, synthesis and evaluation that Schön used to describe reflective practitioners [Sparks-Langer et al. 1990].

Kolb [1984] and Brookfield [1987] emphasise the centrality of reflection and critical thinking as processes rather than the outcomes of learning. Kolb [1984] highlights the importance of learning from experience and therefore Kolb's Cycle may be used to encourage students to reflect within reflective journals and has been utilised by respondents in this study [Appendix Three].

Johns [1994] devised a model of structured reflection that evolved as a natural sequence through which practitioners examine their experiences in supervision. He recommends that the model is used in combination with other techniques such as the use of a structured diary. The model involves a description of the experiences in which the practitioner identifies key points of the experience; reflection in which the nurse highlights what he/she was trying to achieve and gives reasons for, as well as an explanation of the consequences of his/her actions; influencing factors in which the practitioner identifies the source of knowledge and the differing facts involved in the decision making process; and current emotions relating to the experience, as well as viewing him/herself in the context of historical and social processes [Appendix Four].

Boud et al. [1985] highlight stages and it appears the stages refer to descriptive, affective and cognitive components involved in the reflective process. In addition these stages are not distinct and unrelated, but depict

the sequence of events through which the student proceeds when learning from reflection. One of the assumptions within Boud et al.'s model is that it is the student that directs the reflective activity and because of this it may be assumed that the student directs the type of situation to be reflected on, as well as influencing the way in which the experience is reflectively processed. Boud et al. [1985] emphasise the idea of critical intent highlighted by Habermas [1978] and Mezirow's [1981] devised differing forms of reflectivity, which together assume that the student with critical intent - that is, the disposition to investigate aspects of social and moral environment - will utilise differing forms of reflectivity in order to achieve enlightenment and emancipation; however, it is at this point that confusion arises because the model does not clarify the issue of levels of reflection and whether the student reflects at just one level or at different levels during the reflective process. In addition, the model does not show how these levels can be facilitated or address the connection between the cognitive processes and levels of reflection as illustrated by Mezirow. Boud et al. [1985] contend that often the student does not progress smoothly through each stage to the re-evaluation stage. This may be due to the fact that the student may have evaluated the experience at the time of the experience and may not see the need to re-evaluate their experience.

Perhaps the most important task of clarifying the concept of reflection is that of examining what students reflect upon. Van Manen's [1977] notion of 'levels of reflectivity' is helpful in this regard. He identifies three levels of reflection, each one emphasising a different focus. The first level is concerned with techniques needed to reach given objectives. The focus is on technological



issues for example accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. At this level students are concerned with 'what works.'

At the second level of reflection, students focus on the relationship between educational principles and practice. However, as Dewey [1933] emphasises it is not enough to give merely an educational rationale for certain practices. This level of reflection also implies the need to assess the educational implications and consequences of both actions and beliefs. As a result, there is debate over principles and goals.

The third level of reflection incorporates both ethical and political concerns into the educational discourse. Principles such as justice, equity and emancipation are used as criteria in deliberations over the value of educational goals and practice. At this level of reflection, students begin to identify the link between classroom life and broader social forces and structures [Goodman 1984].

Although reflection has become a major feature of many programmes of adult learning it is still found to be time consuming and difficult, at times challenging an adults' previous experiences of what learning involves [Dewer et al. 1994]. Within the students' workplace there are increasing pressures to increase productivity - of trying to do more with less - where there is a view that there is no need or time to reflect on practice. The contextualised rationality of the professional is then reduced to the technical rationality of the implementer of decisions elsewhere. Instrumentation and humanistic psychology serve to guide practice rather than a critical and interpretative form of reflection suggested by Schön [Foley 1993]. This therefore makes the process of encouraging reflection through the use of reflective journals most

challenging when the culture of the organisation is not necessarily encouraging the process.

Jarvis [1992] observed the occupational structures within nursing and likewise in other professions, which tend to endorse a ritualistic form of action rather than an experimental one. In such settings, the opportunity for reflective practice is deterred. Holloway and Pension [1987] explain that the ability to question as a learner declines when one moves towards qualification, as the socialisation process pressures nurses to conform once qualified. As professionals continue to develop and grow, they need to be more questioning of the established and habitual patterns of practice. Reflective education aims to help students take each patient encounter as unique and is constantly arriving at new or revised interpretations of the meaning of an experience. This guides and validates subsequent action [Boud et al. 1985, Mezirow and Associates 1990].

## **2.6 REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

Reflection is concentration and careful consideration, and reflective practice is the mindful consideration of one's actions, specifically, one's professional actions [Osterman 1990]. Reflective practice, however, is more than a leisurely speculation on one's own successes and failures, and more than the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Rather, reflective practice is a challenging, focused, and critical assessment of one's own behaviour as a means towards developing one's own craftsmanship. While reflection is certainly essential to the process, reflective practice is a dialectic process in which thought is integrally linked with action. It is, as Schön [1987] describes,

*a dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skilful*  
[p.31]

Prompted by a problem, a discrepancy between the real and the ideal or between what occurred and what was expected, the practitioners step back and examine their actions and the reasons for their actions. They reflect on the effectiveness or legitimacy of their action choices, and they use this new perception as a means of developing alternate strategies. Through this dialectic process of thought and action, the practitioner takes an active role in shaping his or her own professional growth [Osterman 1990].

Reflection enhances professional development methods that enable individual practitioners to become more skilful and more effective. It is also a process that has potentially a positive impact on organisational effectiveness. Reflective practice enhances professional practice in several ways. It leads to greater self-awareness, to the development of new knowledge about professional practice, and to a broader understanding of the problems which confront practitioners. Because it enhances professional growth, and thereby responds to the needs of individual practitioners, it also influences the environment of the workplace in ways that support organisational change and effectiveness. While the term 'reflective practice' was coined and popularised by Schön, the argument that reflection is a critical step in professional development is historically rooted in a tradition of learning theory. Kolb's [1984] explanation of experiential learning traces a common theme - developed by Dewey [1933], Lewin [1951], and Piaget [1971] that learning is dependent on the integration of 'experience' with reflection, and of theory with practice. While each of these theorists argued that experience is the basis for learning, each also maintained that learning could not take place without reflection. All viewed learning as a sequential process, consisting of

four stages: concrete experience, observation, and reflection, formation of abstract concepts or generalisations, and active experimentation.

Experience provides the basis for learning: a problem or unexpected event prompts an inner sense of discomfort and perplexity. If this event is to create change, or to stimulate growth, the person must make meaning of that event, examine it, and appraise the activity. Out of this process of observation and reflection comes new meaning, alternative perspectives, and new views about how things work. These new perspectives provide the rationale for experimentation. The learning process ends and begins anew as these new ideas become integrated into behaviour [Osterman 1990].

While experience may serve as the stimulus for learning, reflection is the essential part of the process that makes it possible to learn from experience. Without reflection, theories of action are not revised and, until new concepts, ideas, or theories of action begin to influence behaviour, learning will not occur.

Professional growth often depends not merely on developing new ideas or theories of action, but on eliminating or modifying those old ideas that have been shaping behaviour. As Kolb explains:

***Everyone enters every learning situation with, more or less particular ideas about the topic at hand...Some of our theories are more crude and incorrect than others...Thus one's job as an educator is not only to implant new ideas but also to dispose or modify old ones [1984, p.28]***

Reflective practice challenges us to discover those habits or beliefs or behaviour which preserve the inadequacies of the current system and prevent the introduction of new and better approaches to education. Through the reflective process, we subject our own actions to critical assessment. By posing questions about our own behaviour - What am I doing? Why? With

what effect? - new perspectives and new ways of looking at behaviour are developed. In Brookfield's terms, through reflection, or critical thinking,

*patterns of behaviour become clear, habitual responses are identified and insights dawn regarding the nature of our assumptions and motivations. With this understanding, people can make some judgements about the effectiveness of different actions in changing some aspects of our lives, and they can try to learn from whatever errors they have made [1987, p.78]*

As we become more aware of our theories-in-use, we become more aware of contradictions between what we do and what we hope to do; as a result, we can shape new directions.

In recent years the nursing profession has adopted the reflective practice movement, which has been present in teacher education for the past twenty years [Day 1993]. Following the re-emphasis on practice-based theory cultivated by Benner [1984] and the continuing debates in nursing on the necessity to close the theory-practice gap, the timing is appropriate. Clarke's [1986] strong belief in a personal action theory of learning in nursing concludes that the starting point in nurse education should be nursing action and that students should observe and take part in action first and explore the reasons afterwards through guided reflective processes. Schön's [1983, 1987] theories of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action adhere to a very similar premise, with reflection-on-action being the most frequently quoted by nurse educators because it is retrospective, can be structured and does take time within a conscious learning cycle.

There is considerable debate regarding the level of learning possible within reflective processes. Habermas's [1971] critical theory of knowledge underpins much of this discourse. Mezirow [1981] outlines the three domains of adult learning explicit within Habermas's theory, namely the technical, the practical and the emancipatory. The domains are grounded in different

aspects of the experiences of the learners, namely work, interaction and power. According to Mezirow [1981] each of the three learning domains suggests different learning needs and therefore different modes for facilitating such learning. The first area, that is, technical /work requires the learner to be able to control his or her immediate environment. This implies having the empirical knowledge and the technical ability to undertake instrumental actions, that is having the knowledge and skills 'to do the job' of nursing. The practical/interaction domain involves the learner in trying to recognise and understand the social norms that pertain in the practice setting. Habermas [1971] characterises the third domain as 'emancipatory' because it requires the student to develop self-knowledge through critical reflection. Knowledge gained at this level allows the student to gain power and control over his or her life through recognising the reasons for his or her particular problems.

A review of the domains of learning is important to debates on developing reflective practitioners in nursing. There is a hierarchy built into these domains, and the curriculum should recognise that students will be preoccupied while coping with the technical level of knowledge before proceeding into the practical/social, and emancipatory level studies by nurse educationalists. On the level of reflection undertaken by undergraduate students at various stages in the course it is not surprising to find a predominance of the first two levels during the early stages of student learning [Palmer et al. 1994, Richardson and Maltby 1995]. Students should be introduced to reflective processes gradually, moving from relatively simple and undemanding strategies to more complex processes at a later stage in their education. However, the use of reflection in developing experienced

practitioners in nursing through clinical supervision and post-registration/graduate clinical courses should encompass all three domains of knowledge with the possibility that the emancipatory level will not only liberate the individual practitioner, but will lead to 'perspective transformation' Mezirow [1981]. It is anticipated that it will promote increasing professional competence and therefore may enhance the quality of care given to patients. The practitioner should also develop the potential to instigate change. Theories of reflection built into the action research-learning spiral promote such change activities. [Carr and Kemmis, 1986, Stockhausen, 1994]. Although there are many ways of expressing reflective processes, such as poetry, drama, painting and sculpture the literature points mainly to two methods as being the oral recounting of 'stories' and the recording of experiences in the journal/log/diary.

## **2.7 THE LIMITATIONS OF REFLECTION**

Although reflection has been seen as a means of integrating theory and practice and as a way of providing a holistic student-centred approach to education, compatible with current patient-centred trends in nursing philosophy, there are recognised limitations with the approach [Schön 1987, Osterman 1990, Reed and Procter 1993]. The reflective act is made up of two key elements: the content of the reflection and the process itself. Reflective content concerns all that an individual talks or thinks about while he/she reflects on a situation. This may present problems in a number of areas. Firstly, individuals may find it difficult or impossible to verbalise the rationale that underpins their action; secondly, they may only recall what they

want to; and thirdly, they do not always do what they say they do [Andrews 1996].

Although intuition enables practitioners to perform spontaneously it is difficult or impossible for them to explain how decisions were made. According to Argyris and Schön [1974].

*We know more than we can tell and more than our behaviour shows.*  
[p.23]

They distinguish between the theory that the individual uses in practice and theory they profess to use [espoused theory] and suggested that the former guides practice more significantly than the latter. Not only are the theories used in practice different but also practitioners are often unaware that they are in use. Greenwood [1993] argued that simply asking practitioners for evidence of these theories is bound to fail as they only report espoused theories. She also argued that in advocating classroom methods such as role-play to promote reflective practice Schön [1987] failed to confront the 'messy' indeterminate situations of uncertainty; instability uniqueness and value conflict in the practice of nursing the very task he set himself. Mingella and Benson [1995] disagreed, as they believed that their involvement with students within the context of critical incident analysis enabled the 'messy' reality of nursing to be addressed. Greenwood [1993] called for empirical evidence concerning effective reflective exercises, which enable access to theories, and theories-in-use. Similarly, Kottamp [1990] expressed the need for practical ways in which reflection can be used as an educational tool rather than merely a desirable rhetorical concept. Reflection relies largely on the recall of events, and the accuracy of recall could be questioned. Newell [1992] viewed the reflective process as potentially flawed. The basis of his



argument was that reflection relies on memory, which may be a major source of practical difficulty because inaccurate recall and anxiety could alter the individual's account of events that have taken place. He suggests that accuracy of recall may be improved by reflecting as soon after the event as is practically possible, and anxiety may be reduced by the support of a skilled supervisor.

A further problem with reflection may come from a phenomenon known as the hindsight bias. Hindsight bias refers to phenomena, where individuals know the outcome of an event and consequently judge that outcome as more likely than when they would not have that outcome knowledge. In essence when we reflect with hindsight we cannot dismiss the knowledge of the outcome on which decisions were necessary to arrive at that outcome. It becomes difficult to view the situation and its antecedents in any other way than that which complements the known outcome [Reece-Jones 1995]. Spencer and Newell [1999] suggest that this bias should alert practitioners to the potential limits to the validity of reflection as an instrument which can improve professional practice as individuals may reflect on a biased version of events.

It appears that there are almost no accounts which describe the effects of reflection upon professional practice, Newell [1992] as it affects patients, or from the patients' perspective [Jones, 1995, Atkins and Murphy 1993]. Reflection relies on the ability to uncover personal theories and make them explicit. However, there is little research to assist educators to make their own personal theories and those of their students explicit [Day 1993]. In addition, and importantly it is claimed that reflection raises the learner's self-awareness and may cause negative feelings such as fear, self-doubt,

inadequacy and anxiety resulting in a lack of confidence which may consequently cause a block to both reflection and learning [Cayne, 1995, Davies, 1995, Newell, 1992, Mezirow, 1990]. It has been suggested that it is unethical to encourage learners to disclose aspects of themselves without having knowledge of their past experiences and possible unresolved conflicts [Rich and Parker 1995].

A further area that deserves consideration is when detailed reflective accounts of a critical incident are submitted, and it may be possible to infer that certain arrangements or supervisory functions are not being examined adequately. By highlighting these problems, some of which are of a sensitive nature ethical dilemmas are created for both the student and the teacher. The question could be asked what should be done with the information received. There is an assumption on the part of the student that anything disclosed will be done so in complete confidence. One could question if the teacher can use this information without the permission of the student and people involved [Rich and Parker [1995].

Burns [1994] believes that information cannot be used without the student's consent. However, Hunt [1991] disputed this, suggesting that the teacher has both a moral and legal responsibility to disclose information about activities which may be detrimental to patient care. Burns [1994] points out that whistle blowing is a key concern in nursing, and the passing on of information on an informal footing is more constructive. It follows that teachers must lay down the ground rules before disclosures are made and inform the students that it may be necessary to act on certain information. This, of course, will have major implications for the student who may feel unable to disclose the information and therefore, may be denied the opportunity to reflect on an

incident and learn from the reflection. In addition the student may carry many more feelings of unresolved guilt and grief.

Enthusiastic advocates claim that reflection is beneficial to practitioners, in general, and also to nursing students in particular. In general terms, many of the attractions of reflection appear to be due to the fact that it is grounded in an understanding of practical knowledge [James and Clarke, 1994]. Reflection is seen by many authors to enable nurses to reframe problems in the practice setting and to assist them translate aspects of theory into everyday practice [Scanlan et al. 2002, Rolfe 2002]. It is also suggested that involvement in reflective practice improves student's interpersonal skills through the organisation of ideas and verbal and written reporting [Powell 1989]. Reflection has also been reported to enhance critical thinking, listening and observation skills while also promoting understanding. Durgahee [1996] argues that through reflection, students are able to analyse nursing situations by breaking them down into significant components and integrating them with their patients to achieve goals.

Other scholars have expressed concern that reflection is a fashionable concept in nursing education while denying that it has made a difference to clinical practice. Burnard [1995], Rich and Parker [1995] express concern regarding a growing body of research which identifies reflection's potential dangers, and the harmful effects of its widespread use in education. A number of authors argue that there is little evidence to justify the claims of reflective practice's enthusiastic advocates, Atkins and Murphy 1993, Goodman 1989, Boyd and Fales 1983]. Yet, despite this, reflective practice is increasingly used as a process to examine nurses' actions [Rich and Parker 1995].

## 2.8 REFLECTIVE JOURNALS

In nursing as well as other health professions, there have been calls for the development of skills in reflection, usually with reference to the work of Schön. The aim is to discourage professionals from practising in an automatic fashion and to help them develop an understanding of themselves and their practice. One method, which has been suggested to promote reflective practice, is the use of a reflective journal.

Van Manen [1990] suggests that

*Writing teaches us what we know, and in what way we know what we know. As we commit ourselves to paper we see ourselves mirrored in this text. Now the text confronts us. [p.127]*

He describes the process of writing as an integral part of social science research and as a tool for making knowledge explicit. He is addressing educators and researchers, but his point is equally relevant to other professionals in that he speaks of how the act of writing can help facilitate understanding and encourage reflection.

The use of writing to encourage reflection is not new in education or in our daily life. Educators have adapted the personal or therapeutic journal for this purpose, and journals are particularly common in writing across the curriculum. Williams, Sundelin, Foster-Seargeant and Norman [2000] and Usher, Tollefson and Francis [2001] suggest that journal writing is now widely used as an educational strategy to encourage reflection in professional education.

In exploring the topic of written narratives, there are a variety of names used for similar tools. Among these are 'journals', 'logs', 'diaries', 'casebooks' and

'notebooks'. Although some authors are very specific in their distinction between a diary and a journal, not all agree on terms.

Several authors, particularly those writing of using journals for therapy or personal development, choose the term 'journal' because they feel it illustrates something more than a diary. Carr [1984] suggests that a journal differs from a diary, which is a daily written account of activities, yet a journal can include a diary. Although Baldwin [1977] acknowledges the use of both terms, she sees a diary as an outwardly focused record of observations and experiences, whereas a journal would be more of a vehicle for personal expression. Snyder [1985] adopts this distinction in her discussion of possible uses of journals as a nursing intervention with patients, as do Landeen et al. [1992] in their work on student nurses' journals.

In other areas, there are those who take quite a different view of the split between a diary and a journal. Fulwiler [1987] has written and edited several works on 'Writing Across the Curriculum', and his associates take the opposite view. Fulwiler [1987] believes that diaries record the private thoughts and experience of the writer, class notebooks are simply the documentation of events of a class, and journals are something less objective than the notebook yet less personal and subjective than a diary.

An examination of the literature also shows that some authors use the terms interchangeably. There is no real consensus as to whether a journal is different from a diary. Both terms are derived from words meaning 'day' suggesting only a form of record of days or daily life. Perhaps the distinction is not worth the concern, and educators should use whichever term they feel suits their purpose best. In this study the term 'reflective journal' will be used.

Journals are used for a variety of educational goals. Usually, the aims go beyond gaining experience in writing. Although writing in a journal can involve writing that is similar to that of early drafts of an assignment, journals can also be used to introduce a different form of writing. Many educators want to encourage expressive writing, using this term in the sense described by Britton et al. [1975] in his classification of writing types. Fulwiler [1986] describes it as a form of writing essentially written to oneself, as in diaries, journals and first-drafts papers, or to trusted people very close to the writer, as in personal letters. One desired effect of expressive writing is increased student involvement with the course material. The reflection necessary for this type of writing is thought to reinforce learning, stimulate the imagination, and clarify issues. Students may also, through reflecting on the material as they write about it, discover relationships and gain insights that they might otherwise miss. The time taken in writing is seen as stimulating thinking and reflection. Kalmbach and Powers [1982] believe that narrative is one way in which students can articulate for themselves what they know or can become comfortable with what they have found out. It can also be part of the process of learning. It can also make them aware of their own learning [Dart and Clarke 1991, Ballantyne and Packer 1995]. A journal leaves the learner with a record of the process, which can itself be used as part of later learning and reflection. For the person who uses journals as a way to follow research activities, readings, and thoughts, the written record in the journal can be indispensable.

Wagenaar [1984] discusses the rationale for journals and he derives it from a variety of educational theorists with particular reference to Bloom's taxonomy [Bloom et al. 1956]. He concludes that journals can be used for encouraging

and evaluating learning at the higher levels of the cognitive domain of learning, particularly application, analysis and synthesis. In addition, he argues that journals are well suited to achieving the taxonomy's affective domain objectives. These involve things like attitudes, values, and appreciation. A journal is potentially a tool through which reflection on learning and personal exploration can affect attitudes and beliefs.

Most writers who advocate the use of journals in courses include as part of the rationale the argument that journals help with reflection. Whether this is couched in terms of using writing, developing thinking skills through writing, developing higher-level cognitive skills, exploring the affective domain, encouraging personal development, or promoting critical thinking, all are talking about some form of thinking and reflecting on what has been observed or learned. Zacharis [1990] however, reviewed the relationship between journal writing and thinking processes. She located authoritative statements but no actual research was found. A thorough analysis and definition of writing provided useful statements about the use of writing as a tool for thinking [Richardson and Boutwell 1992].

In journals, the physical act of writing is seen as stimulating thought, with the interaction between student and teacher facilitating additional reflection. Journal writing is therefore one of the most widely used strategies for promoting reflective learning among students [Boud et al. 1985, Hahnemann 1986, Mezirow et al. 1990, Mezirow 1991, Nicasso 1992, Kember et al. 1996, Williams et al. 2000, Bleakley 2000]. Reflective writing helps to explain and clarify complex thoughts or arguments. In reflective writing, we externalise our thoughts, 'freezing' them there to have second thoughts, and to experiment with new combinations of ideas [Biggs and Telfer 1987]. Lukinsky

[1990] promotes the use of journal writing as a form of reflective withdrawal. He stresses the importance of a pause in the learning activity to allow the individual or group to reflect upon what is being learned. It enables the journal writer to re-engage in something missed, neglected, or avoided in the past so that the unfinished business can be dealt with. Journal writing is recommended as one of the specific educational approaches for transformative and emancipatory learning by Mezirow [1991].

A number of writers in the health professions have emphasised the link between writing and reflection. Hahnemann [1986] sees writing used in a journal as a process which forces students to search for connections and relationships in their learning. Burnard [1988b] argues that journals promote reflection and evaluation in more than one way. Students must reflect on their experiences in order to convert thoughts to journal entries and are facilitated in an additional level of evaluation and reflection through the feedback provided on journal entries by peers and teachers. In their report of journal use by medical students, Ashbury, Fletcher, and Birtwhistle [1993] conclude both that reflection should be an integral part of medical education and that reflection was encouraged by the use of journals. In describing several models of reflection Atkins and Murphy [1993] reach similar conclusions with regard to nurse education. They add that in promoting reflection, reflective diaries may be used as source materials for researchers studying the reflective process. Saylor [1990] writing about the use of a journal by nursing students in practice settings notes that the journal encourages students to think about and integrate the entire experience, rather than focus on the practical task in hand. Others who have used journals with health professional students have commented on their value in demonstrating the



link between theoretical work and clinical practice [Hahneemann 1986, Williams et al. 2002]. Reynolds [1997] suggests that journal writing is particularly beneficial because it not only encourages explanation of experiences that are meaningful but also promotes the identification of understanding of what is positive or problematic in the situation. A number of writers in the literature describe journals as an effective method for helping students reflect about their perceptions and reactions to learning experiences in all clinical areas [Davies 1995, Kober 1995, Wong et al. 1995]. Jung and Tyssenaar [1998] in a study to explore the lived experience of clinical preceptors in the field of Occupational Therapy believe that a rich learning opportunity may be being missed by not using narrative writing as a means of support with clinicians and preceptors. They suggest that journals could be used as an additional tool in their repertoire of helping and supporting preceptors and as a means of seeing their lived experience.

Journals are used in different ways and there are a variety of journal types. Abbreviated forms of journal writing or narrative may be used during classroom sessions to stimulate thinking about a topic or as a springboard for discussion, with students reflecting on a class theme, or an experience with a patient. Journals may be highly structured forms of writing on a set topic or completely free forms of self-expression. They may be confidential documents kept between the teacher and the student. At the other extreme, journals written by groups of students to promote peer interaction also have been described [Graybeal 1987].

Their theoretical value as a tool for reflection and achieving affective domain objectives has made journals a reasonable choice for certain types of courses and areas of practice perceived to be complex and difficult.

Landeen, et al. [1992] used journals as an intervention with nursing students in psychiatric practice experiences. They wanted students to explore their own attitudes towards mental illness and hoped journals would either help prevent negative attitudes and stereotypes from developing or alter present attitudes. Although their study of this aspect of the journal keeping was inconclusive, the staff felt that the journals were a valuable intervention in that they promoted communication with the students in areas traditionally difficult to access. Also working with students undertaking psychiatric and mental practice experiences, Hurtig et al. [1989] found that a relatively unstructured interactive journal was a good way of promoting dialogue between the student and teacher. Cameron and Mitchell [1993] were cautious in relation to the pitfalls that may occur in such an interaction, where students may write what the teachers want to hear. They suggest that journals be a shared experience between peers and the department to minimise the 'student-teacher game.' Tryssenaar [1984] used an interactive journal with students during the academic portion of a Mental Health Unit to help them deal with an area of practice that many found intimidating. The aim of using journals was to foster and develop reflective thinking skills. She also used journals as both a means of communication and as an aid to evaluation in non-traditional clinical placements where there is no on-site teacher supervision. She concluded that interactive journal writing was an effective strategy to promote reflection.

The evidence from the studies by Sedlak [1992] Landeen et al. 1992/1995] Button and Davies [1996] indicate that while students derived benefits from keeping a journal, they did not develop many reflective skills. A study by Richardson and Boutwell [1992] examining the journals of pre-service

teachers found little evidence of reflective thinking. Although the term 'journal' was used by Landeen et al. [1992] the written accounts were more like log entries. Sedlak [1992] and Button and Davies [1996] used logs. This approach probably did not require the students to fully engage in reflective processes to enable the development of reflective skills. Within the British literature studies by Bennett and Kingham [1993] Burns [1994] and Richardson and Maltby [1995] and Stuart [1995] reported greater degrees of success in helping students learn through reflection. A pilot study undertaken by Bennett and Kingham [1993] over a six month period with twenty-eight undergraduate student nurses using comprehensive semi-structured guidelines the students were required to provide more than a straightforward descriptive account of clinical experiences in their diary. In order to reflect upon and interpret experience, students were encouraged to analyse the experience in terms of the rationale for the care, theoretical underpinnings for care given, personal reflection on quality and delivery of care, and strategies for improving care. Significant findings include the development of reflective skills including insight and abilities to analyse, and well-balanced and penetrating critiques of care created to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Wong et al. [1997] in their study into the development of nurses as reflective practitioners demonstrated that a combination of journal writing and dialogue was essential to student learning. Reflective diary writing was introduced as a tool for the promotion of reflection and learning from clinical experiences during the community practice unit by Richardson and Maltby [1995]. The higher levels of reflection, skills of critical inquiry and problem solving were however, not frequently demonstrated.

Other writers also describe the benefits of journals in promoting reflection and as an educational tool applicable in many different settings. Hahnemann [1986] writes of using a variety of structured and semi-structured journal formats. These range from short in-class entries to entries completed at home, which encourage more personal reflection. Her focus was on the promotion of critical thinking skills. Brown and Sorrell [1993] also write about the value of journals in nursing, using a more structured format than most, to help students develop the skills of analysis and evaluation. In her experience, the structure helped to keep the focus on the critical thinking which was the aim of the journal.

Burnard [1988b] and Lyte and Thompson [1990] believe that the diary or journal can be a useful way of encouraging independent, self-evaluation for students, compatible with the *move in nurse education more towards self-directed learning*. Burnard [1988b] describes the journal as a valuable source of material for discussion between student and tutor and, where this has been part of the design, as a source of material for student seminars.

Journals are also useful for people doing research in education. While appreciating and commenting on the educational value of the journals for the students, researchers also use them as a means of studying the students, the process of education, and professional development. Sedlak [1992] used clinical logs to compare the preoccupations and concerns of traditional and non-traditional students in their first clinical placement. Schaffer and Juarez [1993] also working with nursing students examined ethical aspects of teacher and student interactions. Journals were one method used by Hembrough and Sheehan [1989] to follow the professional development of students throughout a course. In physical therapy, Jensen and Denton [1991]

have studied a structured form of journal writing used by physical therapy students throughout their clinical experience. They found that journal writing provided students with a method for restructuring events and thinking more critically about their actions. While journals have been shown to be useful tool to promote reflection, the level of reflection demonstrated appears to be variable. Lyons [1999] stated that in her experience students wrote in a low level narrative mode, while others wrote as a simple descriptive catalogue of external events. In research undertaken with student teachers Colton and Sparks-Langer [1993] found journal writing helped them to develop the consciousness of the profession. Bean and Zurlich [1989] claim that journal writing helps students to generate their own questions in a course, explore hunches and hypothesis and begin to perceive the multiplicity of views inherent in the human experience. Dinkelman, [2000] in a study to explore the extent nature and development of critical reflection in secondary student teachers revealed limited but significant evidence of critically reflective teaching. The students ranked journals as important in promoting reflection and numerous examples of critical reflection were identified from their pages. Journals are tools that encourage reflection; however, they do not ensure that this happens. Jensen and Denton [1991] found that some students thought that journal writing provided them with an opportunity to reconstruct events and think more critically about their actions. A minority of the physical therapy students despite being given clear instructions on how to write a journal produced recordings in an abbreviated documentary form without any discussion or reflection on their experience. This echoes the reports of others that have found that minorities of students do not adapt well to journal writing. Whether these students have problems because they misunderstand the

purpose of the journal or because they dislike the task, or they question its value is often unclear. Wong et al. [1997] in a study involving the use of journals to promote reflective practice in undergraduate nurses found that students expressed boredom at having to complete a number of journals during their programme. It does therefore raise the issue of journals not being suited to all students or to all situations. Proffitt [1975] suggests that some students fail to reflect in journals. His experience is that a number of students write in a rather superficial way. He suggests therefore the importance of guidance for students [and others] new to the idea of journal writing. Gonzalez et al. [1999] and Spencer and Newell [1999] support this view.

Another concern centres on the very personal nature of reflection and the affective domain objectives that are the goal of many journal-writing exercises. Students are encouraged in journal writing to self-disclose. Landeen et al. [1992] and Burnard [1988b] suggest that this may be beneficial for both teachers and students and can help foster a relationship of mutual trust that facilitates development. However, there are risks as well as benefits in self-disclosure [Burnard and Morrison 1992 and Derlega et al. 1993]. Teachers have a responsibility to plan journal-writing activities that do not lead students to unacceptable levels of disclosure [Perkins 1996]. Burnard [1988b] highlights the issue of the level of self-disclosure that is acceptable in some journals, and suggests that the use of the journal should be discussed prior to writing to ensure that the level of self-disclosure is appropriate. He also believes that the content of the journal may be useful as a focus for group discussions. However, this type of journal writing assignment should be carefully planned and discussed in advance with the groups. Landeen et al. [1992] suggest that a level of trust must be built up

between the teacher and student and this takes time to develop. This may take longer than the short periods of learning experienced by students during one module. He also suggests that students may benefit from being linked to the same teacher for longer periods. However, this is not always possible depending on the nature of the education programme.

Perkins [1986] emphasises the difficulty with the use of journals in education is that an essentially private endeavour becomes semi-public, if journal entries are shared with fellow students or others. A stated aim in many cases is to encourage honest self-expression and personal reflection. Yet the student is usually writing for an audience or at least the teacher and this awareness of audience may interfere with the frank experience desired for achieving affective domain objectives. If teachers are particularly concerned with developing the affective domain and encouraging a higher expressive form of journal writing, a suggestion by Fulwiler [1987] is that journals should be kept in a loose-leaf notebook. Students are advised to remove any pages that they wish to keep private before submitting the journal. In this way, the student can be as open, expressive, and reflective as he or she wishes and still submit to the teacher a journal fitting course requirements and protecting student privacy.

While diaries and journals are owned by the individual and are private, difficulties arise if the reflections highlight poor practice or even disciplinary issues [Burns 1994]. This can be avoided if the ownership of diaries clearly lies with the student. There may however, be situations where issues of poor practice have been highlighted and need to be tactfully fed back to the practice area [Burns and Bulman 2000].

One further difficulty for teachers is the evaluation of the students' journal. A variety of views have been expressed related to the positive and negative aspects of grading journals. Some argue that the journal should not be graded at all as this would inhibit free thought. Hurtig et al. [1989] believe that assigning a grade would undermine the essence and value of this tool and Saylor [1990] emphasises the importance of a safe, non-judgemental environment if reflection is to be encouraged. Kember et al. [1996] also highlights problems associated with the grading of journals. They suggest that assessing can discourage the process of private reflection. There is the problem of what might have been written for the student alone becoming transformed into something quite different in an attempt to gain better marks. Assessing journal entries tends to discourage criticism and leads to polishing of work and a more academic style rather than spontaneous reflection. Richardson [1995] firmly believes that assessing reflection contributes to reducing it. Beveridge [1997] states that although his student's journals are assessed he has some reservations about this practice. Jenson and Denton [1991] also firmly believe in the principle of un-graded journals so as to encourage students to write freely without pressure of a grade.

Others have given grades for the journal part to ensure that the journals are seen to be valued rather as a supplementary assignment of superficial importance [Williams et al. 2000]. Hahnemann [1986] initially used un-graded journals but found that many students put little effort into the writing and for this reason made journals worth a small portion of the course grade.

The literature suggests that the attitudes and skills of reflective writing can and must be consciously developed. Francis [1995] suggests that a combination of sequenced, structured tasks and free focused writing make a



positive contribution. Critical incident analysis was particularly useful when used in the early stages of the learning process. Hatton and Smith [1995] identified four types of writing, three of which they specified as representing different kinds of reflection. The four include descriptive writing that is non-reflective, and simply refers to the literature or events. Descriptive reflection attempts to identify reasons for a personal or literature base. Dialogue reflection is an exploration of reasons through self-disclosure, and critical reflection entails the provision of reasons for decisions or events that recognise broader social or political contexts. In their analysis of student teachers' written material they reported that most evidenced descriptive reflections, less dialogue and a small number critical reflection.

A study by Jasper [1999] was undertaken to explore how nurses use and develop writing techniques as a tool for facilitating and supporting their development in practice. Her findings suggest that skills for reflective writing need to be learnt rather than assumed and that this leads to an acceptance of writing as a learning strategy in its own right. She also found that reflective writing was considered to be a tool that helps the practitioner to develop analytical and critical abilities. Nurses identified that reflective writing was facilitating their own personal and professional growth.

An important fact to remember in assisting students to become increasingly skilled in reflection is that changes in reflective ability take time [Duke and Appleton 2000]. Landeen et al. [1992] suggest that the time span of most clinical courses in nursing education may not permit the time or opportunity required to sufficiently affect student's professional development. Students should be encouraged to write their journal entries by the day following their experience to facilitate their recall of the experience [Sedlak 1992]. Time

should be allocated in the student's academic schedule to permit uninterrupted time to reflect on their clinical experience [Cameron and Mitchell 1992]. This allocation of time accomplishes two objectives: it communicates to the students the importance of reflection in nursing and in the curriculum and it allows the student time to reflect. Kember et al. [1996] suggest that students were often unwilling to write journals on an ongoing basis because it would consume too much of their time to reflect. They stated that they needed to spend time on the aspects of their studies that affected their chance of passing their course examinations.

On reviewing the literature one of the most popular techniques used for promoting reflection in nursing seems to be the writing of diaries and journals. However, the number of research studies that actually evaluate the effectiveness of such techniques is minimal. The research that has been undertaken tends to rely on self-reports rather than investigating either the outcome of reflection or the techniques by which reflective practice may be facilitated.

Within the nursing literature there were only a small number of studies that made an attempt to assess levels of reflection in nursing practice. A study by Powell [1989] attempted to measure the level at which nurses reflected in relation to their practice, utilising a modified version of Mezirow's [1981] seven levels of reflection. This process involved observing nurses in clinical practice and interviewing them directly afterwards. The findings suggested that the nurses only reflected at the lower levels of reflection. However, it is difficult to establish from this study how the observations of practice as well as the interview transcripts were analysed using the model devised. A modified version of Mezirow's model had been used, and only a brief

explanation of the rationale for this was given. There was no indication of how the data was coded in relation to using the levels of reflection within the model. One could therefore question the validity and reliability of the methods used. The potential for researcher bias with regard to the teacher/student relationship was not discussed. Powell [1989] acknowledged that her interview technique and the method of recording field-notes could have been improved. The following studies also attempted to measure the levels of nurses' reflective ability. [Richardson and Maltby 1995, Wong et al. 1995, and Spencer and Newell 1999, Williams et al. 2000, Usher et al. 2001]. Richardson and Maltby [1995] analysed reflective diaries in order to determine the extent and level of reflection achieved by students during a period of learning related to the community health care experience. A modified version of Mezirow's [1981] seven levels of reflection as adapted by Powell [1989] was utilised. Focus group interviews were undertaken as validation of diary findings. The findings suggest that students do reflect on their practice, however, the highest number of reflections occurred at the lower levels of reflectivity. Only a small percentage of the total scores attained the higher levels of reflectivity. There was no reference in the study to the methods used to test the validity and reliability of coding used.

A study by Wong et al. [1995] was undertaken to assess the level of reflection from reflective journals submitted by registered nurses undertaking a teaching and assessing course. In their study, three educators used the criteria developed by Boud et al. [1985] that is attending to feelings, association, integration, validation, appropriation, and outcome of reflection and Mezirow's [1990] model of non-reflection, reflection, critical reflection, to examine the level of reflection of forty-five nursing students journals. They

found that the percentage of agreement between raters varied from fifty to seventy percent using the criteria by Boud et al. [1985] and eighty percent using the criteria by Mezirow [1990]. The findings suggest that student writing can be used as evidence for the presence or absence of reflective thinking. The process of allocating students to three categories of non-reflector, reflector, and critical reflector was straightforward and reliable. Identifying textual elements within the journals and allocating them to the finer levels of reflection within a more complex model of reflective thinking was, however, more problematic and less reliable.

More recently, Spencer and Newell [1999] undertook a study to examine whether written material could significantly improve nurses' reflective ability. Nineteen practising nurses were offered an educational package largely based on Boud et al. [1985] model of reflection in learning. In a repeated measure design study these participants completed a reflective exercise before and after offering the education material. Their scripts were rated using the Wong et al's [1995] tool. An initial analysis showed that there was no significant change in the subject's reflective ability following education. However, the removal from the analysis of six participants who had a pre-test ability at the highest level resulted in a significant improvement in participant's ability from pre to post test.

Williams et al. [2000] in a study to assess the reliability of grading reflective journal writing were able to establish criteria developed by Boud et al. [1985] for evaluating the level of reflection in student journals and they examined the reliability of educators' grading of the journals. The process involved three phases. Firstly, three educators who assigned a separate grade for each half of the journals independently rated the journals. The second phase involved

the remainder of the journals being independently rated by each educator. Phase three involved the use of a repeated measure analysis of variance to examine the inter-rater reliability of the educators' ratings of the journal. Split-level reliability was used to determine whether the students' reflective writing skills improved over an eight-week period. Results suggested that students did not improve during this time. The results showed that the criteria established were reliable for evaluating reflection in journal writing.

More recently Usher et al. [2001] undertook a study to investigate beginning nursing students' understanding and ability to use the different levels of reflective writing [technical, theoretical, critical] by involving them in self-evaluation of their own journalling using the framework developed by Van Manen (1977), and to determine whether the level of reflective writing could be changed as a result of involving the students in self-evaluation of their level of reflective writing. The findings of the study indicate that student self-evaluation and identification of the levels in their own writing can lead to changes in the levels of critical reflective writing achieved by undergraduate students.

It is evident from the literature that reflective learning has become an important focus within nurse education. There is a continuing search however, for strategies to facilitate reflection and a need to establish a means of monitoring its effectiveness. Reflective journals are increasingly used to encourage and record reflection. [Wong et al. 1995, Spencer and Newell 1999]. There is some evidence to suggest that reflective journals can be used as a tool for assessing students' achievement of learning [Sudellin et al. 2000]. Approaches to evaluate the level of reflection demonstrated are essential to the implementation of reflective learning. There is limited

research evidence available related to the ability to assess the reliability of grading reflection. There is also evidence of a need to explore the use of reflective journals, as an educational strategy for facilitating reflection and learning and the support required by students to aid reflection and journal writing.

It is therefore the aim of this study to investigate the use of reflective journals in promoting reflection and learning in post-registration students.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

As a result of the experience of using reflective journals with students in order to promote reflection and learning over a number of years the researcher decided to undertake a study to evaluate their use. While there was some evidence in the literature that journals can be used as an effective tool to promote reflection, little research had been undertaken to evaluate their use [Wong et al. 1995, Durgahee 1998]. In order to examine their use it was considered necessary to analyse the content of journals to determine the extent and level of reflection and to explore student's views on their value as an educational strategy to promote reflection. The nature of the guidelines given to students and the support provided by preceptors was investigated. In order to achieve these aims the researcher adopted a research design which aimed to explore the effectiveness of reflective journals in promoting reflection, and to ascertain whether they are a useful educational strategy for facilitating reflection and learning in the practice setting.

In order to justify an appropriate methodology to investigate the research questions, a number of considerations have been made. These are explored in this chapter, which details the data collection process, and shows the steps taken to ensure rigour and the ethical integrity of the study.

### **3.2 CHOICE OF RESEARCH DESIGN**

A qualitative descriptive case study design as opposed to a quantitative approach was thought to be most appropriate. Qualitative research attempts to understand the entirety of phenomena rather than focus on specific concepts. It stresses the importance of people's interpretation of events and circumstances rather than the researcher's interpretation. It does not attempt to control the context of the research but, rather attempts to capture it in its entirety [Polit and Hungler 1999]. Information is generally collected without formal structured instruments, and narrative information is analysed in an organised but intuitive way. In contrast a quantitative approach generally focuses on a relatively small number of specific concepts. It begins with preconceived hunches about how the concepts are interrelated and uses structured procedures and formal instruments to collect information. Information is collected under conditions of control and emphasises objectivity in the collection and analysis of information. The data is analysed through statistical procedures [Polit and Hungler 1999].

### **3.3 CASE STUDY DESIGN**

A case study design was thought to be most appropriate, as it would focus on a unique group of post-registration students undertaking continuing education programmes within the same university department. The approach taken was based on the work of Argyris and Schön [1974, 1978] Schön [1983]. Their approach to examining the phenomenon of reflection was to use a qualitative open-ended form of enquiry to uncover and describe the complex abstract processes of reflection used in professional practice. Descriptive research provides an accurate portrayal or account of characteristics of a particular



individual situation or group [Polit and Hungler 1999]. Descriptive studies are a means of discovering new meaning, describing what exists, determining the frequency with which something occurs, and categorising information [Marriner 1981]. Descriptive studies are usually conducted when little is known about a phenomenon [Burns and Grove 2001].

Case study research is a single, in-depth investigation. The single subject is defined by Meihner and Pugh [1986] as

*an individual, a group, an organisation or society [p.6].*

The unit of analysis remains the 'single object', which gives the research a holistic perspective [Yin 1994]. Case study research describes a 'real' situation [Alderman, Jenkins and Kemmis 1983]. This situation is associated with a contemporary phenomenon that has been socialised by the group to which it belongs [Yin 1994]. A further characteristic of case study research is that multiple methods of data collection are typically used [Hakim 1987, Yin 1994]. *By using multiple data collection tools, the researcher gains a rich picture associated with the single unit of analysis.* Merriam [1988] states that case studies tend to spread the net for evidence widely whereas experiments and surveys usually have a narrow focus.

Its special features can further define a case study. There are four characteristics that are essential properties of a qualitative case study, particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive [Merriam 1988].

Particularistic indicates that the focus is on particular phenomena. This specificity of focus makes it an especially good design for practical problems, for questions, situations or puzzling occurrences arising from everyday practice. Descriptive means that the end product of a case study is a rich 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study. Thick description is a term

from anthropology and means the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated. It also means

***interpreting the meaning of demographic and descriptive data in terms of cultural norms and mores, community values, deep-seated attitudes and notions and the like [Lincoln and Guba 1985 p. 119]***

Heuristic means that case studies illuminate the readers understanding of the phenomena under study. They bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known. Stake [1981] believes that insights into how things get to be the way they are can be expected to result from case studies. Inductive indicates that for the most part case studies rely on inductive reasoning. Generalisations and concepts emerge from an examination of data, and data is grounded in the context itself. The discovery of new relationships, concepts and understanding, rather than verification or predetermined hypothesis characterises qualitative case studies [Merriam 1988].

The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomena. It offers insights and can be constructed as a tentative hypothesis, which help structure future research. Therefore, case studies play an important role in advancing a field's knowledge base. Because of its strengths, a case study is a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study such as education and nursing. Nursing is a diverse occupation and the flexibility of case study design allows it to be used in a descriptive fashion. Thus it would allow an in-depth study of nursing and nurses themselves [Meiher and Pugh 1986]. Nursing as it happens in the 'here and now' is a contemporary phenomenon and by Yin's definition of case study

research [in that case study is associated with a contemporary phenomenon] nursing is well suited to case study research [Pegman 1999/2000].

The special features of case study research that provide the rationale for its selection also present certain limitations in its usage. Although rich, thick description and analysis of the phenomena may be desired one may not have the time or the money to devote to such an undertaking. Lincoln and Guba [1985] note that case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation leading to erroneous conclusions being drawn or that the reader may believe that accounts of the 'whole' are being presented when it is only part of the total picture. Having considered the advantages and disadvantages of the case study approach I decided that it was the most appropriate design for this study.

The research design used involved the utilisation of reflective journals completed by a unique group of students during a period of learning which were analysed to determine the extent and level of reflection achieved. Semi-structured interviews involving a sample of students were undertaken in order to establish their views on the role of journals in promoting reflection and learning. The views of the two teachers involved in facilitating the students' learning were obtained on the guidance given to students in relation to completing a reflective journal. The views of a sample of preceptors were obtained on their role in supporting students during their practice placement in relation to promoting reflection through the use of a journal.

This enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of the levels of reflection demonstrated by students and their views on the value of writing a reflective journal. It also provided an insight into the guidance given by

teachers to support the encouragement of reflection, and the support given by preceptors in the practice area.

### **3.4 THE RESEARCH LOCATION**

The study took place within a university in the north of England. The students were undertaking one of two continuing education programmes which were facilitated at a university satellite centre. The two teachers involved were employees of the same institution. The three preceptors who supported the students were nurse practitioners from a variety of practice settings both in hospitals and the community in the north of England.

### **3.5 THE RESEARCH RESPONDENTS**

The sample of research respondents used in this study were part-time students undertaking two specialist-continuing programmes in the same academic year in the same university department. The students had used a reflective journal as a tool to promote reflection during a period of learning. They were undertaking either the Diploma in Professional Studies in Palliative Care Nursing [Appendix Five] or the Diploma in Professional Studies in Breast Care Nursing [Appendix Six]. These two programmes form part of the teaching activity within the university department in which the researcher is employed as a senior lecturer. In order to qualify for entry to such programmes, all the participants were registered nurses on the United Kingdom Professional Register [now known as the Nursing and Midwifery Council] as general nurses and had a minimum of six months post qualifying experience. A considerable number of the nurses in the sample had significantly more experience. All of the students had undertaken a nurse-training programme within a similar theoretical and clinical framework as laid

down by the English National Board for Nursing. The two teachers who facilitated the student's study were also involved. Three preceptors who supported the students were experienced practitioners and were also experienced in undertaking their role as a preceptor. The role of the preceptor involves teaching, assessing, and guiding the student during the practice component of the programme.

### **3.6 THE SAMPLE**

Sampling refers to the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population. Sampling plans can be grouped into two categories; probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling involves some form of random selection in choosing the elements. Non-probability samples are selected by non-random methods [Polit and Hungler 1999]. The non-probability approach to selecting a sample was used in this study [Polit and Hungler 1999]. There are three methods of non-probability sampling namely; accidental, also known as chance or convenience; quota, and purposive sampling respectively. Of the three purposive homogenous sampling was used as it was thought to be the most appropriate. A homogeneous sample is used to explore a particular subgroup of people [Grbich 1999].

Probability sampling decisions are based on random selection. That is, each subject in the chosen population has an equal and independent chance of being a subject in the study. This random assignment seeks to randomise irrelevant factors across experimental conditions and to create a group of subjects very similar to the population in order to increase external validity [Polit and Hungler 1999]. Probability sampling would not have been

appropriate to use as it may have excluded nurses who were willing to take part in the research and have included others who refused to participate. A non-probability sampling frame however, has some shortcomings. The method often introduces bias into the study and also lacks generalisability of results as subjects are chosen by non-random methods. There is an understanding however, in qualitative methodology that the findings are contextual and therefore not necessarily generalisable. Convenience sampling entails the use of the whole population, time and resources permitting or size of population or use of the most readily available group of subjects for the sample. The advantages of this method are that it is convenient and economical to use. Quota sampling divides the population into homogeneous strata or sub-populations [Polit and Hungler 1999].

The two programmes of study that the students were undertaking were chosen randomly from a list of programmes being delivered in the same academic year. The sample of students who were selected from these programmes was a purposive homogenous sample. The respondents were chosen according to their availability and willingness to participate in the study [May 1993, Polit and Hungler 1999]. By adopting this sampling design it was possible to have a more representative sample of the population of nurses who had used reflective journals. The sample consisted of individuals with similar educational and clinical experiences. They were all experienced registered general nurses undertaking further part-time study within the same university department in which reflection, reflective practice and journal writing is an integral part of each module within their programme. These students were chosen in recognition of their experience in using a reflective journal with the aim of gaining rich in-depth information in relation to the

research questions [Patton 1990]. Popay et al. [1998] and Cormack [2000] describe the need for a small, selective sample, due to the in-depth nature of qualitative research. Relevance therefore, outweighs randomness. It is necessary to produce a sample with the necessary experience and knowledge to be explored. It was recognised however, that those who volunteer to participate may present positive views.

In recognition of my role as a lone researcher with limited resources and in order to obtain a sample size that did not run the risk of becoming too large I chose to approach students who had successfully completed one of four modules as part of the Diploma in Professional Studies in Palliative Care Nursing or the Diploma in Professional Studies in Breast Care Nursing. The modules undertaken by students were Interpersonal Relationships for Professional Practice, Advanced Symptom Control, Perspectives of Death and Dying, and Enhancing Quality with Palliative and Terminal Care. This could have produced a sample size of eighty-one students. A larger size may have potentially compromised the depth, richness, specific responses and meanings of the participants involved in the research [Wolcott 1994]. Sixty students were undertaking a subsequent module in the education setting at the time of data collection. Twenty-one students had completed their programme of study and were no longer available to speak to face-to-face. Forty-two students agreed to take part in the study.

### **3.7 DOING THE RESEARCH**

The first step was to gain access to the institution where the study was being undertaken. Gaining access to organisations is a problem shared by most researchers [Shaffir 1980]. The researcher wrote to the head of department

prior to undertaking the study in order to ask for permission to involve a number of students and academic staff [Appendix Seven].

Permission was granted [Appendix Eight]. Permission for access to the students was also granted verbally by the two teachers responsible for the students' educational programme. The researcher, although an employee of the organisation where the study was undertaken, did not have any contact with these students previously and was not in any way involved with their programme.

Being an 'insider' entails easy access and acceptance [Burgess 1984, Young 1991]. It also has certain advantages. One has the advantage of inside knowledge. This knowledge helped to overcome problems of interpretation of the culture within nursing and nurse education. It also gave the researcher the ability to understand what was happening in the education and practice areas where the respondents were employed. It allowed the researcher to participate actively during the interviews and it made it easier to analyse and construct meanings from interviews. Data collection in such circumstances contains the seeds of special inside knowledge; hence the researcher was able to penetrate barriers of language, education and social membership. Being an insider also meant that the researcher was able to translate the hidden and unspoken aspects of the cultural agenda that happen in health care settings and in nurse education [Burgess 1984, Young 1991].

There are however, also problems associated with being an 'insider'. The selection of a familiar setting, as in this study may create many problems. In the first instance those interviewed may expect certain contributions from the researcher in the role in which they are accustomed, thereby causing conflict. Secondly, the researcher may be seen as 'native' and may also have



subconsciously incorporated the values of the subjects, thereby becoming no longer an objective interviewer [Burgess 1984, Young 1991, Polit and Hungler 1999]. There are also problems of the disclosure of very sensitive information that may portray the organisation in a bad light. This creates a dilemma for the researcher. Any analysis of how power is maintained and used is uncomfortable for both the organisation and the researcher. Bad publicity especially by an 'insider' may affect business. Employees are expected to be loyal and to conform

***It is not what is written which causes the pain rather it is a breach of the convention which requires members in various arms of the executive to say nothing about their practices. [Young 1991 p.10]***

The researcher had to be cognisant of these issues when undertaking the study and take appropriate steps to minimise bias.

The three preceptors involved were contacted by telephone initially and then in person to discuss the nature of the research. All three preceptors approached agreed verbally to take part. The researcher met with the two teachers who were involved in facilitating the students learning to discuss the nature of the research and their possible involvement. They agreed to talk about the guidance given to students in relation to the completion of a reflective journal.

Arrangements were made to meet with the students who were to be involved with the study, who were continuing their studies. Their teachers advised the researcher of the days that they would be available at the education centre. The researcher requested to see the student's in small groups during their coffee or lunch breaks to ensure minimum disruption to their schedule. This arrangement was time consuming and required careful planning to ensure that as many students could be reached in the most efficient and effective

manner. A considerable amount of time was allocated to travelling to and from the education centre, which is about three miles from the main university campus site, to meet with students and to encourage them to participate in the research. Several weeks were spent making arrangements to meet with the students on a day that they were attending lectures in the education centre. Every effort was made to minimise the time taken to give explanations, and yet fully inform the students of the purpose of the research being undertaken and to encourage them to participate. The students were given verbal information regarding the nature, purpose and intended design of the study in order that they could make an informed decision as to whether or not they wished to participate. This was supported by written information that explained the nature of the study and that it was part of a higher degree programme [Appendix Nine]. An explanation of how the reflective journals would be handled and analysed was also given. They were advised that the original journal copy would be returned to a locked cabinet within the university after a copy had been taken. The respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity and only the researcher, the rater, and the academic supervisor would have access to the data, and that no names would be mentioned or the place where the study was undertaken identified [Burgess 1984, Polit and Hungler 1999]. It was also explained that a small number of students may be approached to take part in an interview. The letter was accompanied by a reply slip giving the student an opportunity to reply to the request in order to grant permission for their journal to be used and also to take part in an interview should that be required [Appendix Ten]. A specific date three weeks later was given by which the reply should be received. Some students replied almost immediately. The students who had

already completed their programme and were no longer available to meet face- to- face were sent a letter by post and asked to reply within the same time period [Appendix Nine]. Eighty-one students who had successfully undertaken the four modules were approached. Forty-two students agreed to participate and that the researcher could have access to their reflective journals. The sample included one male and forty-one female students. This sample size was felt to be sufficient to adequately describe and measure the levels of reflection and learning in the students' reflective journal. Twenty-six students agreed to participate in an interview if that was requested. The students had successfully undertaken the following modules:

Eleven students had completed the Interpersonal Relationships for Professional Practice module [Appendix Eleven]. Sixteen had completed the Advanced Symptom Control module [Appendix Twelve]. Eleven students had completed the Perspectives of Death and Dying module, and four students had completed the Enhancing Quality with Palliative and Terminal Care module [Appendix Thirteen and Fourteen]. This was a total of forty- two students. All those who agreed to participate were fully informed of what their involvement would mean, as well as highlighting ethical principles and issues related to anonymity and confidentiality, so that respondents were able to make an informed choice about whether or not to take part. Respondents were assured that they could leave the study at any time.

### **3.8 DATA COLLECTION**

The study involved the analysis of reflective journals previously completed by students. In-depth interviews were also undertaken involving students, teachers and preceptors. Due to the nature of data to be collected the process took place over a twelve months period.

#### **3.8.1 REFLECTIVE JOURNALS**

Following the request made to students to have access to their reflective journals a period of three weeks was permitted for the students' reply. The process of access to the journals was facilitated by the fact that students were required to submit a second copy to the university as part of the assessment process. Therefore, when the students granted permission, the researcher was able to have access to the students' completed journals fairly readily. In a number of cases where a copy of the completed journal was not available, students were sent an addressed envelope to facilitate the forwarding of a copy of their journal. This was a satisfactory arrangement. The researcher had no involvement with these students previously. The journals had been completed prior to the research being undertaken and the students therefore were not aware that the material from the journals would subsequently be used for research purposes. The researcher had no influence over the writing and content of the journals thus avoiding bias [Polit and Hungler 1999]. As the researcher I had however to bear in mind my past experience as a teacher of using reflective journals with students. I made every attempt to minimise bias in this respect. When the researcher was in receipt of the journals two copies were taken without the front cover in order to remove student identification. A number was allocated for the purpose of identification. The original copies of the journal were returned to the archives

for storage in a locked cabinet as requested by the teachers involved with the students' programme, or in a few cases, returned to the students directly when requested.

Reflective journals are an integral part of the continuing education programme's assessment strategy within the department, and are mostly linked formatively to the assessment process. However, within the modules undertaken by the students in this study they were required to complete a reflective journal as part of the achievement of the learning outcomes. Students are encouraged to keep their own reflective journals in order to record and analyse a significant event or critical incident that has occurred during their clinical experience and to identify future learning needs as a result. The students had completed their journals according to specific guidelines and had also discussed the recordings with their teachers and preceptors as their programme of study progressed [Appendix Fifteen]. The content of the journal is shared only with the students' full consent.

### ***3.8.2 THE USE OF DOCUMENTS AS DATA***

During interviews and observations researchers gather data for the purpose of investigation. In doing so they intrude as a foreign element into the social setting. Researchers describe, create, as well as measure attitudes, they elicit atypical roles and responses, and they are limited to those who are accessible, and willing to co-operate [Webb 1981]. Documents on the other hand are usually produced for reasons other than research and therefore are not subject to the same limitations. They are in fact, a ready-made source of data that are easily accessible. It is however, necessary to consider the limitations and strengths of documents. Firstly, their limitations will be considered. Materials may be incomplete from the research perspective and

be an unrepresentative sample. Secondly, as documents are not produced for research they may come to the researcher in a form that they do not readily understand. The data may therefore not fit the definition of the concepts under scrutiny [Riley 1963]. They may also lack correspondence with the conceptual model being used. Thirdly, there may be a problem of determining authenticity and accuracy. Distortion in personal documents may be unintentional in that the writer is unaware of bias, or simply does not remember accurately. Determining the authenticity and accuracy of documents is part of the research process. Burgess [1982] states that documents should not be used in isolation and indicates it is the responsibility of the researcher to determine as much as possible about the document, its origins and reasons for being written, its author and the context in which it was written. Despite these limitations documents are a good source of data and therefore are being used in this study [Merriam 1988]. In this study the journals had been completed as required and did not present any problems with regard to their format.

### **3.8.3 INTERVIEWS**

Interviews can be conducted either face-to-face or by telephone. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages. A total of seventeen face-to-face interviews were conducted involving students, *teachers and preceptors*. Three of the student subjects were unable to be interviewed face-to-face as they had moved to another part of the country. They agreed to be interviewed by telephone.

Interviews face-to-face allow an intimate form of contact. It enables the interviewer to interact directly with the subject and develop a rapport. This was very important in this study as some of the interview content was of a

sensitive nature. Face-to-face interviews also allow the researcher who conducted the interview personally, to read the non-verbal cues of the subjects that may indicate confusion, or lack of understanding of the questions. It allows the interviewer to explain or restate the questions when required [Polit and Hungler 1999]. It also enabled the interviewer to gain information about the respondents' experiences, feelings, reactions and attitudes regarding the use of reflective journals and reflection.

The organisation of face-to-face interviews required a lot of effort on the part of the researcher. A great deal of time was involved in contacting subjects, arranging appointments and travelling to undertake interviews.

Telephone interviews provide the advantages of reducing the travel time for the interview and also being able to contact subjects you wish to be involved, and are no longer accessible face-to-face. Individual interviews do not run the risk of low response rates. They allow the researcher to probe particular issues and they can generate vast amounts of information. Interviews may suffer from bias due to a number of factors that influence responses. There is the eagerness of subjects to please the interviewer; a vague antagonism may sometimes arise between the interviewer and the respondent in order to seek out the answers that support their preconceived notions. The questionnaire method does not suffer from those drawbacks [Burns and Grove 2001]

Following the process of analysing forty- two reflective journals and placing the students into one of three broad categories of critical reflector, reflector and non-reflector as derived from the work of Mezirow et al. [1990], five participants were randomly selected from each of the categories. The aim of the interview was to obtain students' views on reflection and their experience of writing a reflective journal. The two teachers involved in providing

guidance for the students were interviewed in order to obtain information on the specific guidance given to students. Three preceptors who supported the students during the practice component of the module were interviewed in order to obtain their views on the support given to the students. A preceptor for one student from each of the categories of critical reflector, reflector and non- reflector was randomly selected.

The individual interviews were semi-structured in nature. The use of semi-structured interviews ensured that similar types of data were collected from all the student respondents by using the same interview schedule [Appendix Sixteen]. This schedule had been previously piloted with two students who did not form part of the sample for the main study. I conducted the pilot interviews to become acquainted with the process and to review the data collected, recognising that interviewing requires certain skills that need to be developed. Undertaking pilot interviews highlighted the fact that due to lack of experience of the process I did not probe the respondents sufficiently well. On listening to the tape I realised that I needed to explore more fully the respondents views and at times reword the question asked in a more conversational style, which I subsequently did, to allow the respondent to reveal 'rich description' and assist them to voice their views freely [Appendix Eighteen]. The schedule was sufficiently flexible to encourage the collection of rich data in order to find the 'emic' perspective as experienced by the respondents, whilst maintaining some degree of control over the interview, in order that the overall purpose of the research could be achieved [Leininger 1985, Holloway and Wheeler 1996]. I was aware of my lack of experience as an interviewer during the earlier interviews, and the possible effects on the



data collection process. My confidence however improved greatly as I gained more experience.

Respondents were asked where they would like the interviews to take place. This could have been at their clinical practice base or at the university campus. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the university at the main campus site or at the satellite centre, at the students' request where they attended their study days. They indicated that it was often difficult to be released at their work base and that accommodation suitable for interviewing was difficult to arrange. The researcher therefore arranged a quiet interview room at the university campus in order to avoid any interruptions. The arrangements had to be made well in advance with the accommodation officer to ensure the availability of a suitable room. A number of interviews had to be rearranged due to participants not being available as agreed due to work commitments or illness. They were rescheduled at the convenience of both as close to the previously agreed date as possible.

Individual face-to-face interviews were undertaken with twelve students. These were conducted with the view to obtaining students' views on their experience of reflective journal writing and their role in promoting reflection and learning. The researcher used eight open-ended questions as a basis for the interview [Appendix Sixteen]. Prior to the interview the respondents were reminded of the purpose and nature of the research and of their right to withdraw at any time. Their permission was obtained in order to use a tape recorder. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity in relation to the information being gathered. At the end of the interview the respondents were given the opportunity to ask further questions or add comments relating to the research. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. An

opportunity was given to listen to the audiotapes to allow the respondents to challenge their accounts on the grounds of accuracy and meaning, with adjustments made as necessary. The audio-tapes were labelled with codes to protect the identity of the respondents and securely stored. Respondents were advised that the tapes would be destroyed at the end of the research study. In this way the collection of trustworthy full and rich data, an essential component of qualitative research was made possible [Leininger 1985].

Three respondents who had agreed to be interviewed were not available for face-to-face interviews. Initial contact was made to give an explanation of what was involved. They were informed about the purpose of the study, and the length of the interview. Following an explanation the three respondents were advised that consent would be required in order to indicate that they wished to participate. All three, having previously given written permission to be involved, also gave verbal agreement to participate. The researcher explained that she would be making notes on the replies as the interview progressed and that time would need to be allowed for this to occur. The respondent was requested to choose a private place to receive the interview phone call and if possible to select a line on which a 'call interrupt' service is not used. An appointment for the interview was arranged. Information regarding the areas of questioning was forwarded two weeks before the interviews were due to take place in order to familiarise the respondent with the content of the questions. While it could be argued that these respondents were at an advantage over the other respondents who were interviewed face-to-face it was felt that this was most appropriate as they would not have the benefits associated with face-to-face interviews. The researcher phoned at the agreed time prior to the interview to check if the respondent was able to

undertake the interview as planned. On all three occasions it was possible to proceed with the interview at the agreed time. The researcher used eight open-ended questions as a basis for the interview [Appendix Sixteen]. All the student interviews took place over a period of two months.

Following the analysis of the reflective journals to determine the extent and level of reflection the students were grouped into one of the three categories, critical reflector, reflector, and non-reflector. Five students from each category were randomly selected. In the category of critical reflector all five students were interviewed. A preceptor who had supported one student from each category was randomly selected for interview.

Face-to-face interviews were undertaken with three preceptors. These were conducted to obtain their views in relation to the preparation that they had received for the role and the support that students required during their practice component of the module in relation to completing a journal. The interview schedule included the following questions:

1. Do you feel that the preparation you received was sufficiently adequate to enable you to support the student in relation to completing the reflective journal?
2. What type of support did the student require to enable him/her to use the journal?
3. Is there any further guidance that could be provided by the university staff to assist in the role of preceptor in relation to the use of a reflective journal?

One of the interviews took place at the preceptors' place of work and the other two at the university campus at their request. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

Face- to-face interviews were undertaken with the two teachers who were responsible for facilitating the student's programme. Both requested to be interviewed at the education centre where they were employed. They were questioned on the type of guidance they provided for students in relation to completing a reflective journal during a module. The interview questions related to the content of the guidance given to students regarding the use of a journal. They were asked if they showed the students examples of completed journals. Questions also related to the monitoring of students' progress and their role in assessment and feedback to students.

The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. A sample of the transcribed interviews was returned to three-student respondents, one preceptor, and one teacher to check for accuracy. They were considered to reflect accurately what was said and no amendments were necessary.

It was my intention to use field notes as part of the reflective process Holloway and Wheeler [1996] to evidence my thoughts and feelings following the interviews. It was anticipated that this would capture aspects on non-verbal cues from respondents. However, I felt that I had little to document that would not have been obvious on listening to the tapes. I did however record some of my reflections on the process in my reflective diary [Appendix Eighteen].

### 3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It has been necessary to consider that the ethical principles have been applied at each stage of the research process.

At the time of commencement of this study the School of Human and Health Sciences Ethical Approval Committee was not in existence, therefore Ethical Approval was not required. It was also not necessary to gain ethical approval from the NHS Trusts or the Hospice at that time, as patients were not directly involved. However, verbal and written permission was obtained from the Head of Department within the school [Appendix Seven]. Respondents also gave verbal and written permission to be involved. In order to have access to staff on NHS and Hospice premises permission was obtained verbally from the managers concerned.

The following provisions were made in order to meet expected standards of protection of individuals who participated in the research.

The four *prima facie* principles, as described by Gillon [1994] of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice were considered within this study.

***Autonomy*** In order to uphold this principle the respondents as self-determining individuals were asked to give informed consent prior to the study commencing. To respect autonomy the nature and purpose of the research as well as the potential risks and benefits to the respondents were fully explained verbally. This was reinforced with written information before the research was undertaken, and verbally prior to each activity during the data collection process [Appendix Nine]. Having made their decision to take part, respondents were asked to return a reply slip if they agreed to allow the researcher to have access to their reflective journal, and also if they agreed to take part in an interview should that be required during the subsequent few

months. The teachers and preceptors gave verbal permission to take part following a full explanation of the nature and purpose of the research.

In an attempt to be consistent with the information given to respondents the same information was used when explaining my responsibilities as the researcher and the respondent's rights to withdraw if they so wished at any time. None of the respondents involved exercised their rights to withdraw. Morse and Field [1996] suggest that such an approach is necessary to clarify boundaries so that the respondents will not expect the researcher to adopt a teaching, interviewing or counselling role. Edwards [1996] argues that informed consent is not just a once-and-forever permission, but an ongoing process and respondents should be aware of their rights.

***Beneficence and Non-Maleficence*** refers to the 'obligation to maximise benefits and minimise harm' to individuals involved in the research [Crooks and Davies 1998]. This includes aspects of confidentiality and anonymity. The front sheet of the reflective journals was removed and each journal was allocated a number to protect anonymity. To ensure that these rights were upheld, the interviews were conducted in a private room, and the tapes and transcripts were stored securely. The researcher transcribed all the interviews personally. It was only the researcher, one rater, and my supervisor who had access to the data throughout. The respondents were made aware that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. However, they were advised of the necessity to disseminate research findings as part of the fulfilment of the Doctorate in Education. The same number that had been allocated to the reflective journal was also used to identify the transcribed interview data. This was important where direct quotes from the journals or interviews were used for analysis. The names of

respondents were kept separately from the tapes and written data. The respondents included students, preceptors and teachers. It was important to ensure that they were not exposed to professional harm when revealing sensitive information of which they may not necessarily wish their managers or colleagues to be aware. This was particularly important when they expressed embarrassment or felt guilty when they did not have the specialist knowledge to enable them to deliver some aspects of care.

The issue of encouraging the use of patient's experiences for use in critical incident analysis by respondents raises the moral issue of confidentiality and informed consent. Patients may not be aware that 'cases' were used as a basis for discussion in wider clinical and educational settings. From the premise that patients are more likely to benefit from being cared for by well qualified and experienced nurses, one could argue that if anticipated that the outcomes of reflection are an improvement in patient care, such may be justified. However, one could argue that one is on uncertain ground since critical incident analysis may be seen as using patients' experiences as a means to someone else's' end [Hargreaves 1997].

**Justice** refers to the ethical issue of fairness [Gillon 1994]. It concerns the selection of the sample as discussed earlier in the study. Rigour needs to be established to ensure quality and the truth related to the research being conducted. It has been necessary to consider the ethical responsibilities related to all the respondents in this study. It was also necessary to ensure that the strategies described were in place prior to the commencement of the study and upheld at all times throughout the study. Issues related to confidentiality and anonymity will require further consideration should aspects of the research be published.

### **3.10 RIGOUR IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

In order to demonstrate rigour in this study, it is necessary to establish 'trustworthiness', the process described for evaluating qualitative research [Holloway and Wheeler 1996]. There have been ongoing debates in relation to the appropriateness of criteria to use, and Field and Morse [1996] highlight how achieving consensus on the criteria necessary to establish credibility is a major challenge. Positivistic philosophy asserts an objective reality, and a measure of the accuracy of this reality is its validity. In contrast, qualitative research has no single reality and human experience is studied in the context in which it occurs, therefore making it difficult to establish validity using quantitative principles [Cutcliffe and McKenna 1999]. Some would argue that it is more appropriate to use criteria explicitly designed for qualitative research that does not seek to establish cause and effect, as is the case in quantitative methodology. However, there are those who suggest that qualitative research is often found to be lacking because it is measured by quantitative criteria [Burns and Grove 2001]. Sandelowski [1993] is of the opinion that there is a pre-occupation of 'quasi-militaristic zeal to neutralise bias', rather than 'creating the evocative, true-to-life, and meaningful portraits, stories and landscapes of human experience that constitute the best test of rigour in qualitative research studies' [p.1]. There is a range of views expressed with regard to how to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research. It has been suggested that it can be assumed that as long as the approach can be justified and described, whatever the criteria used for evaluation then the approach will be considered valid [Sandelowski 1993].



The following criteria devised by Lincoln and Guba [1985] have been used to establish the quality of the research process and findings:

***Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, Confirmability.***

**Credibility** is often compared to internal validity in quantitative research, and is a process whereby the data can be said to be a true representation of the respondents' understanding of the area under study. In establishing credibility the respondents are carefully identified and described, as is evident in the section on sampling [Holloway and Wheeler 1996]. Member checking is a process where the respondents are asked to review the findings and to validate them [Polit and Hungler 1999]. This process was employed to review five transcripts prior to analysis, for accuracy, and true representation of the respondent's words. The interview transcript of three students, a teacher, and a preceptor were member checked shortly after the interviews had taken place. All five transcripts were returned and were considered to represent accurately what was said. It is important to understand the limitations of this process, as often time has elapsed between gathering the data and reviewing it. Consequently one is relying on the respondent's memories, and also their assertiveness in challenging the researcher [Sandelowski 1993].

The technique known as triangulation is also used to improve the likelihood that qualitative findings will be found credible. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple referents to draw conclusions about what constitutes the truth [Polit and Hungler 1999]. In this study the use of the content of reflective journals from a number of respondents, and the interview data from students, teachers and preceptors were used to explore the research questions

related to the use of journals in promoting reflection and learning. This approach was taken to enhance the believability of the findings.

**Transferability** is a process of providing detailed rich description, or what is sometimes called 'thick description', both of the data and research process [Holloway and Wheeler 1996]. It is often seen as the ability to transfer findings to similar situations or respondents, by the nature of the detail that is provided concerning the research, which might enable that process to be repeated. It is my intention to provide as much description and clarity as possible related to the methodological process as well as the data analysis and findings.

**Dependability** is a way of establishing if the data are reliable. It may be establishing an audit trail, consisting of field notes, and analytical memos, or a decision trail, which demonstrates how methodological decisions resulted in the end results and enables the reader to understand the process. Dependability should help elucidate the influence that the researcher's thoughts have on the research process, showing how the data are a clear representation of the respondent's reality rather than a reality imposed by the researcher. The changes necessary following the pilot interviews highlight the decision trail. Extracts also from the reflective diary highlight aspects of the process in relation to the analysis of data [Appendix Eighteen].

In order to enhance the process of reliability in relation to data analysis, another researcher was involved in the process of analysis of the journal content and interviews transcripts. Following the analysis of the content of the journals, the process of allocating respondents to the categories of non-reflector, reflector and critical reflector was possible. The identification however, of finer levels of reflection within the journal using the Boud et al.

[1985] model was less reliable. The process of involving another rater in this aspect of the study highlights the importance the researcher attached to ensuring that dependability was demonstrated.

**Confirmability** demonstrates that the conclusions are real and recognisable by the respondents, and acknowledges the influence as part of the research process. It may be described as reflexivity, as a monitoring process that examines reasoning, relationships with respondents and the influence which preconceptions might have on the data [Holloway and Wheeler 1996]. Inquiry trails or audits can be used to establish both the dependability and confirmability of the data. Rogers and Cowles [1993] identify areas where documentation should occur and suggest the recording of changes in methodological approach in a diary, which was the case in this study [Appendix Eighteen]. I see this as being akin to establishing an audit or decision trail. They suggest it is important to record subjective interpretations of events that alert the researcher to potential bias.

Much of nursing enquiry, like other forms of social research, inevitably deals with the experiences and understandings of human beings and as such cannot be completely objective or neutral. Instead of searching for definitive explanations and the prediction of outcomes, qualitative research tries to describe and understand human thoughts and behaviours. The researcher undertaking a form of qualitative enquiry is the main research tool, with their own beliefs and personality forming part of the framework through which data is collected and interpreted. Data is therefore not merely collected but is also interpreted through the individual identity of the researcher. Some writers have criticised the presence of bias created by the personal beliefs and experiences of the researcher, whose interactions with the group that they

are studying inevitably influences it and created a degree of subjectivity [Le Compte 1987]. However, others feel that the presence of such 'bias' can be a positive resource for the study, enabling richer data to be collected, as long as the assumptions and thoughts of the researcher are made explicit in the form of reflexive accounting [Olesen 1994].

### **3.11 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK USED IN THE STUDY**

As part of this study it was necessary to find a procedure for assessing the level of reflection within journals. While there had been several attempts to determine the level of reflection by Powell [1989] and Richardson and Maltby [1995] there were no indications of any tests for reliability and validity of the coding process used. Therefore it was decided not to utilise the earlier work of Mezirow [1981] adopted by these authors. Several other potential models were explored to see whether they provided a suitable framework for a coding scheme. I finally decided that the reflective process portrayed by Boud et al. [1985] and Mezirow [1991] should be used as a conceptual framework for this study. These two models had been adapted by Wong et al. [1995] with some degree of success. Spencer and Newell [1999] also used them in their study. These two models offered a clear description of the conception, and process of reflection.

Boud et al. [1985] devised a model of reflective process in which they have suggested the key elements of the process [Appendix Two]. Mezirow et al. [1990] and Mezirow [1991] have distinguished individuals who are non-reflectors, reflectors and critical reflectors. These two models were utilised and adapted in a study by Wong et al. [1995]. The model of reflective process by Boud et al. [1985] explains that as an individual encounters an

experience, they subsequently respond to it. The reflective process is initiated when the individual returns to the experience, recollects the salient events, and replays the experience in their own mind or recounts the experience to others. Attending to feelings has two aspects: utilising positive feelings and removing obstructing feelings. Utilisation of positive feelings involves focusing on positive feeling about learning and the experience, which is subject to reflection [Appendix Two]. This may involve the conscious recollection of good experiences, attending to pleasant aspects of the immediate environment, or the anticipation of the possible benefits to be derived from the processing of events. Removing obstructive feelings is a necessary precursor to a rational consideration of events. This may involve expressing one's feelings when recounting an event to others that may take the form of highlighting an embarrassing incident or through some form of catharsis. It involves whatever needs to be done in order to remove impediments to a thorough examination of the experience. This leads to a stage of re-evaluating experience, which although it is the most important, is often not completed if the preceding two are omitted. Some form of evaluation might have taken place at the time of the experience and may in the learner's mind be part of the experience itself. The re-evaluation process involves four elements:

1. **association** - relating new knowledge with that which is already known [p.31].
2. **integration** - seeking the nature of the relationships among the data, drawing conclusions and arriving at insights. Synthesis is a feature of this phase and is the basis for future reflection [p.32].

3. **validation** - testing for internal consistency between the new appreciations and existing knowledge and beliefs. Determine the authenticity of the ideas and feelings that have resulted [p.32].
4. **appropriation** - making knowledge one's own. New knowledge feelings or attitudes entering into own sense of identity. New knowledge, feelings or attitudes were becoming a significant force in own life [Boud et al. 1985 model p.33].

The 'outcomes' of reflection may include a new way of doing something, the clarification of an issue, the development of a skill or the resolution of a problem. The changes may involve the development of new perspectives on experience or changes in behaviour. The synthesis, validation and appropriation of knowledge are outcomes as well as being part of the reflective process. Boud et al. [1985] explain that the elements are separated just to draw attention to the various features in the process. The elements do not proceed in a linear sequence, nor are they dependent of each other. There can be omissions of some stages, or compression of some of the elements at times.

### **3.12 DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **3.12.1 REFLECTIVE JOURNALS**

Forty-two reflective journals were analysed during this study. In order to analyse journals a coding scheme was developed based on the work of Wong et al. [1995]. The aim of the coding was to tie the research questions and conceptual interests directly to the data [Miles and Huberman 1994]. The

researcher used the reflective process described by Boud et al. [1985] and adapted by Wong et al. [1995] as a base. Wong et al. [1995] had devised categories for coding as described in [Appendix Seventeen].

Five principles of coding were used as developed by Wong and Chung [1993] and Wong et al. [1995] as these were thought to be most appropriate.

1. The initial stage of the reflective process, as depicted by Boud et al. [1985] was referred to as 'returning to experience'. This stage was not coded because returning to experience was the requirement of all students within the study when they wrote reflections in their reflective journals.
2. Repeated points or arguments were coded only once.
3. Coding was only valid with evidence or substantiation.
4. Coding had to be supported by textual data. Interpretative speculation was not accepted.
5. Using quotes from the literature to illustrate or substantiate one's own experience was amenable to coding. However, quotes that merely demonstrated textbook knowledge were not coded.

### **3.12.2 RELIABILITY OF CODING**

Two levels of coding were used. At the first level the entire content of each journal was examined for paragraphs that appeared to provide evidence that the student had utilised one or more elements of the Boud et al. [1985] model of reflection, namely, attending to feelings, association, integration, validation, appropriation or outcome of reflection [Appendix Seventeen]. The researcher first had to locate paragraphs that appeared to indicate that reflection had taken place, and then to determine the elements of the reflective process to which it referred.

The second level of coding was to allocate each student to one of three categories of non-reflector, reflector and critical reflector derived from Mezirow et al. [1990], and Mezirow [1991] and utilised by Wong et al. [1995]. In the second level of coding, the unit of coding is the student as opposed to the first level, which has paragraphs of text as the unit of coding. The normal approach to estimating the reliability of coding is to use the formula:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{total number of agreements} + \text{disagreements}}$$

*Miles & Huberman [1994].*

When this formula is used to calculate reliability values the segments of text to be coded are normally well defined. The formula is generally used to determine whether the coders agree as into which of several categories a determined case should be placed. Coders are required to reach agreement on two aspects of the coding process. Firstly, identifying the same paragraph within the journals, and secondly, allocating the identified paragraph to the same element from Boud et al.'s [1985] model of reflection. A fellow researcher was involved in validating the findings.

### **3.12.3 FIRST LEVEL OF CODING**

During the first level of coding of the reflective journals it was necessary to become familiar with the content and hence I immersed myself in the data. The individual reflective journals were read and reread. Memos were written which recorded my reaction to the situations described [Extracts from reflective diary Appendix Eighteen]. Following repeated reading each paragraph was examined for evidence that the student had utilised one or more of the elements of the Boud et al. [1985] model of reflection. Content



that was unrelated to the research was excluded [Morse and Field 1996]. Where evidence was provided that the student had utilised elements of the Boud et al. [1985] model the sentence or paragraph was coded numerically from one to six in the margin of the reflective journal [Appendix Seventeen]. All the material from within the journals that provided evidence of utilisation of this model of reflection were coded and collected together under the category headings [See Tables 1-4]. Two copies of each reflective journal were available for constant reference.

### **3.12.4 SECOND LEVEL OF CODING**

The next level of analysis was to place students into one of three broader categories of non-reflector, reflector and critical reflector derived from Mezirow et al. [1990] and Mezirow [1991] and utilised by Wong et al. [1995].

#### **Non-Reflectors**

Non-reflectors show no evidence of any of the reflective elements in Boud et al.'s [1985] model.

#### **Reflectors**

Students demonstrated reflection at one or more of the first three levels, that is, attending to feelings, association, and integration.

#### **Critical Reflectors**

Students could attain reflection at the level of validation, appropriation and/or outcome of reflection.

During this second level of coding it was necessary to continue to be familiar with the content of the journals. Memos were written which recorded my reactions to the situations described. The journals were read through and each paragraph was examined for evidence of whether the features of non-reflection, reflection and critical reflection were met or unmet. Where the

content of the journal provided evidence that the student demonstrated features of these categories, the paragraphs were coded numerically in the margins of the journal. This information was then transferred to a chart, where the findings were recorded. Following the second level of analysis of the journals the respondents were allocated to one of three categories of non-reflector, reflector, and critical reflector [See Tables 5-7].

Prior to commencing coding the researcher discussed the process of rating with the rater who was a fellow researcher with knowledge of reflection and the use of reflective journals. She did not have previous experience of coding the level of reflection demonstrated in journals. This therefore was a limitation within this study. The rater was given a copy of the Boud et al. [1985] model and the Wong et al. [1995] coding scheme reflecting the stages of the reflective process so that she could become familiar with their content. Using the model devised by Wong et al. [1995] the rater was asked to record whether the respondents' journals showed evidence of Attending to feelings; Association; Integration; Validation; Appropriation or Outcome of Reflection [Appendix Seventeen]. It was agreed that the rater would indicate in the right hand margin of the journal, if there was evidence of reflection that would fit into the categories. This allowed the researcher and the rater to compare their findings. Following the first level of coding the rater was asked to record the category in which the respondents were placed. The criteria utilised by Wong et al. [1995] was used to enable the process of analysis to take place.

### ***3.12.5 THE EXPERIENCE OF USING THE MODELS***

The formula outlined was used for both levels of coding. Agreement between the researcher and the rater as to whether students were non-reflectors, reflectors and critical reflectors was high. The coding was performed

independently and following discussions regarding the content of the journals it was possible to reach almost full agreement. Using the reliability formula for the first level of coding proved to be more difficult. The researcher and the rater were required to reach agreement on two aspects of the coding process. Firstly, identify the same paragraphs within the journals, and secondly, allocating the identified paragraph to the same element from Boud et al.'s [1985] model of reflection and adapted by Wong et al. [1995]. As the students had reflected on a range of different episodes related to patient care, those coding had to interpret what the respondents had written by distilling out evidence of levels of reflection. The coding was not of direct statements about reflection or reflective processes. The rater had therefore to analyse each paragraph within the journal and attempt to identify whether what was written reflected the levels of reflection in the categories of the model used. In view of these caveats on the use of the conventional means of coding reliability, it is not surprising that the level of reliability was lower than that for the second level of coding. In some instances it was a straightforward process to allocate the various levels of reflection to the textual material within the journals while in others, it was more difficult. This was due to some similarities in the criteria agreed within the model. Therefore, the interpretation for example between elements of association and integration was at times similar. The two raters reached agreement levels of between 0.5 and 0.75. Once the first level of coding was completed the second level involved deciding whether the respondents were non-reflectors, reflectors, or critical reflectors. The level of agreement was 0.95. After discussion it was possible to achieve almost full agreement. These

findings were similar to the findings of the researchers in the study undertaken by Wong et al. [1995].

### **3.12.6 ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS**

Following the second level of analysis the respondents were allocated to the categories of non-reflector, reflector, and critical reflector. Five respondents from the first two categories were selected randomly for interview. All five respondents in the category of critical reflector were interviewed. Therefore a total of fifteen students were interviewed.

Data were analysed using a modified technique described by Burnard [1991], which involved a step-by-step method of qualitative data analysis. The method was based on techniques used in the grounded theory literature by Glaser and Strauss [1967], Strauss [1986], and the literature on content analysis by Babbie [1979], and Couchman and Dawson [1990]. Other sources which describe the analysis of qualitative data by Bryman [1988], Miles and Huberman [1994], and Morse and Field [1996] were also used. The method offers a detailed and a systematic approach to recording the themes and issues raised in the data, enhancing the links between the original interview data and themes through a detailed system of categorisation. This approach complements the production of a detailed audit trail [Holloway and Wheeler 1996]. The stages of the process are as follows:

#### **Stage One.**

In order to aid familiarisation with the data it was necessary to immerse myself in the data. The individual interview transcripts were read and re read. Memos were also taken about anything which drew my attention as the data was collected and analysed such as the respondents or my own reactions to

the situations described [Miles and Huberman 1994]. [See extracts from reflective diary Appendix 18].

### **Stage Two.**

Transcripts from the interviews were read through again and headings recorded which covered all aspects of the content. Any content that was unrelated to the research was excluded [Morse and Field 1996]. Categories were freely generated.

### **Stage Three.**

Higher order headings were created in order to reduce the number of categories and a final list was devised.

### **Stage Four.**

A fellow researcher was involved in discussing the categories generated. This allowed opportunities for the categories to be verified and/or amended as well as giving the opportunity to ensure that the important issues had not been overlooked. The categories were confirmed after some discussion. This process helped to ensure that validity of the categorising method could be checked and researcher bias minimised [Burnard 1991].

### **Stage Five.**

Transcripts from the individual interviews were read alongside the list of categories to check the degree to which the categories covered all aspects of the data collected.

### **Stage Six.**

Each transcript was analysed and coded using the list of categories. Colour coding was used to identify each category. All items related to each code were cut, pasted and then collected together. Copies of complete transcripts

were at hand for continual reference to ensure that data taken out of context did not lose its original meaning.

***Examples of Categories created through the coding process.***

***Interview Transcript.***

***Categories finally agreed.***

***Student No. 10 [Critical Reflector]***

*'I think I already reflect but I didn't write anything down. It is quite useful to write it down and writing it down made me look for literature that would support or disagree with what I did.'*

*Journal writing –  
the promotion of reflection  
on experience and the  
associated feelings.*

***Student No. 40 [Non Reflector]***

*'I did feel guilty that I did not have the knowledge to care for the dying patient in the best way possible. I thought I had the knowledge but I didn't. Yes, it was therapeutic. I kept thinking I could have done better.'*

*The expression of feelings  
through journal writing.*

***Student No. 20 [Non Reflector]***

*'Definitely yes, writing forces you to think about issues. As you write you reflect. I reflected more on the module and the episode. This helped me to link theory and practice. I have good interpersonal skills but it did make me think of how I could do things better.'*

*Journal writing and the  
creation of ideas which link  
theory and practice.*

**Stage Seven.**

A fellow researcher was asked to comment on the appropriateness of the category system, and whether quotations used fitted into the agreed categories. Following discussion there was overall agreement. This person helped check the validity of the categorising process [Miles and Huberman 1994].

### **Stage Eight.**

The categorised section of the transcripts, copies of the full original interview transcripts and the audio tapes were at hand in case anything appeared unclear during the writing up process, thus ensuring that the original meaning and contexts of the data were not lost.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS OF REFLECTIVE JOURNALS**

There were forty-two journals analysed as part of this study, which had been completed by students undertaking one of four modules [Appendices Eleven to Fourteen]. The first level involved analysing the textual content of the journal using the Boud et al. [1985] model of reflection and secondly, to place the students into three broad categories derived from the work of Mezirow et al. [1990] and Mezirow (1991). The textual material was initially classified into six subcategories, attending to feelings, association, integration, validation, appropriation and the outcome of reflection as devised by Boud et al. [1985] and adapted by Wong et al. [1995] [Appendix Seventeen]. A total of sixty-one reflective elements were coded [See Tables 1-4]. Most of the reflective elements appeared in the first three categories. The components of association appeared to be most prominent. Five respondents demonstrated elements of integration. None of the students demonstrated the level of validation. Only two respondents demonstrated the element of appropriation, and five students demonstrated the outcomes of reflection. Illustrative text from each category is depicted in the following exemplars. The students have been allocated numbers to disguise their identity, and fictitious names have been used for the patients mentioned.



# ANALYSIS OF REFLECTIVE JOURNALS ACCORDING TO MODEL DEVISED BY BOUD et al. (1985) AND ADAPTED BY WONG et al. (1995)

## MODULE – ADVANCED SYMPTOM CONTROL

TABLE 1

STUDENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
<b>SUB CATEGORIES:</b>																
1. Attending to feelings	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	1	1
2. Association	3	2	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	2	1	3	0	0	2
3. Integration	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
4. Validation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Appropriation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Outcome of reflection	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	2	0	0	0

## MODULE – INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

TABLE 2

STUDENTS	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
<b>SUB CATEGORIES:</b>											
1. Attending to feelings	0	1	2	0	7	1	1	0	0	2	1
2. Association	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	1
3. Integration	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
4. Validation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Appropriation	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Outcome of reflection	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**ANALYSIS OF REFLECTIVE JOURNALS ACCORDING TO MODEL DEVISED BY BOUT et al. (1985)  
AND ADAPTED BY WONG et al. (1995)**

**MODULE – PERSPECTIVES OF DEATH AND DYING**

**TABLE 3**

<b>STUDENTS</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>SUB CATEGORIES:</b>											
1. Attending to feelings	0	3	3	1	0	1	1	0	1	4	3
2. Association	1	1	0	3	0	1	3	0	1	2	3
3. Integration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
4. Validation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Appropriation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Outcome of reflection	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**MODULE – ENHANCING QUALITY WITH PALLIATIVE AND TERMINAL CARE**

**TABLE 4**

<b>STUDENTS</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>SUB CATEGORIES:</b>				
1. Attending to feelings	2	0	0	1
2. Association	2	0	2	0
3. Integration	0	0	0	0
4. Validation	0	0	0	0
5. Appropriation	0	0	0	0
6. Outcome of reflection	0	0	0	0

## **4.2 ATTENDING TO FEELINGS**

This element included criteria which students could demonstrate in relation to utilising positive feelings and removing obstructive feelings [Appendix Seventeen].

### **4.2.1 UTILISING POSITIVE FEELINGS**

Boud et al. [1985] believe that utilising positive feelings is particularly important as they provide us with the impetus to persist in what might be very challenging situations. They can help us see events more sharply and provide the basis for new affective learning. During the module the students focused either on a critical incident or were involved in a focused discussion with other colleagues on a specific topic area. They recorded their reflections retrospectively in a journal. Positive feelings were expressed by a number of the respondents in relation to their experiences. Two respondents expressed how they felt positively about aspects of their communication with patients, which would appear to have enhanced their learning experience.

One respondent stated

*I feel that I was able to comment well in this instance due to my existing knowledge and relationships with the patient. This gave me confidence to act in the way that I did plus the fact that this couple had confidence in me as a practitioner, and felt comfortable and reassured by my presence....*

**Student 9**

Another felt positively about her ability to answer the patient's questions

*.... When I visited Jane at home she was still worried and nervous about her impending surgery but appeared to have coped well with the diagnosis. She was able to ask me more questions having studied the written information and we both felt comfortable with each other. I felt it was valuable to meet Jane in her own environment away from the clinical scene as she seemed more relaxed and I felt confident and good that I had been able to answer her questions...*

**Student 22**

Positive feelings were expressed in relation to overcoming a personal barrier with a patient that may have inhibited learning.

*After the visit I felt a sense of achievement that I was gaining confidence in my ability to help...*

**Student 21**

One respondent expressed positive feelings in relation to aspects of care delivery.

*...In the past I found that the involvement of other agencies when nursing Palliative Care patients can improve their quality of life. The burden of sharing their care is made lighter for me as a community nurse, and I feel satisfied that they are receiving the benefits from a multi-disciplinary team approach....*

**Student 18**

Another respondent expressed positive feelings about her reflections on the focussed discussion that had taken place with other colleagues and the possible implications.

*I also learnt that a focussed discussion on any subject is a good way of getting people around a table or together in a group, and to share their views, however varied. It is important that people involved feel safe and comfortable in the group, and are aware that what they say is respected as their opinion and is accepted. This also makes for a good teaching and learning environment, which can contribute to improved staff morale, boost self esteem and confidence, and this in turn must have beneficial effects on the quality and standards of care given to the patients and their relatives in the clinical area...*

**Student 3**

#### **4.2.2 REMOVE OBSTRUCTIVE FEELINGS**

Boud et al. [1985] highlighted how when we are describing events it can bring us to an awareness of feelings that were present during the initial experience. If these feelings are obstructive or negative they may form barriers, and should be recognised as such and removed before the learning process can proceed. A number of respondents expressed negative feelings in relation to their documented experiences on a number of aspects of care delivery in the field of Palliative Care.

Two respondents experienced negative feelings in relation to the area of symptom control and expressed anxiety about these situations.

One stated

***When I reflect on Charles' experience I find myself feeling powerless to totally relieve his pain. I realise that 80% of patients with severe pain respond to Radiotherapy and therefore 20% do not. It is hard to cope with this as a professional when faced with a person in this position...***

**Student 4**

Another stated how inadequate she felt when unable to relieve a patient's symptoms

***.... Failure to improve Ruth's symptoms and her having Endoscopy [which seemed to have no real rationale to the nursing team] caused Ruth further distress, culminating in a very difficult experience for my patient, my nursing staff and myself. I had feelings of inadequacy in this situation, both in being able to understand the pharmacological management and not being able to reassure my team that we were infact doing quite well in managing Ruth's care.***

**Student 7**

One respondent felt upset in relation to not recognising a patient's problem earlier.

***Although I had come to know Jackie very well I was upset that I had not picked up her problem earlier, and maybe had set services in motion much sooner...***

**Student 15**

Another respondent expressed how distressed she felt in relation to whether she had made appropriate decisions with regard to care delivery.

***...On reflection I found the whole situation very distressing. The decisions I had to make, my colleagues were junior and had limited experience in Oncology and dealing with such a sudden and distressing symptom. I felt isolated, scared, that I may have made the wrong decision about Julie's treatment, administering medication before the allocated time, or should she have gone to theatre? ...***

**Student 3**

A respondent felt inadequate due to her lack of experience in the field of Breast Care.

*My first experience as a Breast Care Nurse was to look after a woman with breast cancer who had a young family. I did not give them the support they deserved because I could not handle the situation myself. I realised that the problems the woman and her husband were having in supporting one another were something that I could not at that time deal with...*

**Student 21**

Four of the respondents expressed negative feelings with regard to handling aspects of death and dying.

One respondent wrote

*...I had found caring for Keith and supporting Sheila a difficult and frustrating experience. Sheila had fixed views on the involvement of the children and Keith was too ill to make his views known. My concern was that the children would not have an opportunity to say good-bye to their father and indeed may have difficulty in coming to terms with their loss. I however, felt that I did not have sufficient knowledge on issues surrounding children's involvement in the dying process to explore Sheila's views and offer advice...*

**Student 36**

Another respondent experienced concern about having to deal with a death request

*...It was very upsetting seeing this patient struggling to accept that he was dying. His request for euthanasia led us into a debate within my clinical area about this subject. His family were very upset about a death request and a lot of time was spent with them explaining his responses and the fact that it was part of him coming to terms with his own death. It was also hard mentally, continually explaining and supporting the family who too were also trying to come to terms with their eventual loss.*

**Student 30**

A third respondent felt angry in relation to the approach used to treatment

*I felt angry with the consultant because despite all the evidence she wanted to continue in the 'old way' not allowing her patients the benefit of trying something potentially better...*

**Student 16**

A fourth expressed her feelings following the death of a patient

*Following Bill's death the Hospice team discussed his management. He left us feeling that we had let him down. Logically we know that we had done our best to help him and had sent him for Radiotherapy with the very best intentions, but emotionally we all felt very deflated...*

**Student 10**

### 4.3 ASSOCIATION

Boud et al. [1985] described 'association' as the connecting of the ideas and feelings that have occurred during reflection with existing knowledge and attitudes. It is necessary that the new ideas and information be related to or associated with, these elements of the pre-existing knowledge relevant to it. New input linked with existing knowledge and feelings can challenge individuals both intellectually and affectively. This aspect of reflection can lead to the discovery that old attitudes are no longer consistent with new ideas and feelings, that reassessment is necessary, and in the cognitive area that earlier knowledge needs modifying to accommodate new ideas.

Most of the reflective elements within the journals fell within this category [See Tables 1-4]. A number of the respondents recorded that on reflection they were able to link prior knowledge, feelings, and attitudes to the new knowledge, feelings and attitudes as part of their learning experience.

I will consider firstly the linking of prior knowledge to their new knowledge in the light of experience or gaining an enhanced knowledge.

One respondent commented

*I feel that my action in this situation was appropriate as I kept the family fully informed and up-to-date by answering any questions... I made my presence felt and ensured that they were not alone and had someone at hand if they needed to talk... I identified this distress although the patient herself was unaware of this happening. The haemorrhaging was not massive; I did use tissues... I had not recognised that green towels were an option. I now am aware that these are much better than tissues and they also mask the distressing colour of blood...*

**Student 11**

Another respondent stated that due to her enhanced knowledge she would plan a different strategy for her patient in the future. This demonstrated the linking of prior knowledge with the new, and also the possible outcome of

reflection. The respondent had reviewed the literature to enhance her knowledge of the drugs used and their limitations.

*I believe that although we did not achieve great success in managing Stellas' Dyspnoea we did contribute towards improving her quality of life. I feel that both the peer and professional support provided in day care facilitated some degree of rehabilitation and improvement in self-esteem. The limited efficacy of the pharmacological intervention used appears to reflect that described in the literature. We possibly did not focus on the fact that 'panic' may have exacerbated the Dyspnoea and we need to plan a strategy to manage this in the future...*

**Student 13**

Another respondent highlighted the fact that on assessing the situation based on current knowledge she may have considered other possible options for the delivery of a patient's care.

*...This lady was already on a twenty-four hour package of care. I could have assessed her as needing ongoing care as before and left the twenty-four hour package in place. The family was apprehensive about reducing it, although once the new package was in place they felt more assured and less apprehensive. On reflection an alternative could have been for her to be admitted to a community hospital or a nursing home both of which were considered before her discharge from hospital. However, I felt her condition at this time did not warrant this and she was a lady who enjoyed her independence and will be able to do so for a bit longer with the supporting package that we had organised...*

**Student 25**

I will now consider the respondents linking their reassessment of prior feelings with their new feelings based on their experience.

One respondent related that

*...On reflection the situation was challenging in that Simon and his family were relying on the medication to work straight away and it was difficult to reassure him otherwise. I was aware of the need to isolate the cause of the nausea prior to the administration of anti-emetics and I felt that this challenged my knowledge base with regard to the correct anti-emetic to give. His family were anxious and distressed and I felt frustrated myself at not being able to effectively manage his condition... Eventually the prescription of a syringe driver seemed to be effective in treating Simon's nausea and vomiting. He appeared to feel better and his family were able to leave him that night feeling reassured. I was also reassured...*

**Student 2**



Another respondent questioned her own feelings on how best to decide on the method of giving extra fluids

*...On reflection, I feel Joan's care was very effective for her problems making life more tolerable than it might have been. It made me question my own feelings on giving extra fluids, and I will consider Hypodermoclysis more often on an individual basis, for patients facing the same distressing symptom...*

**Student 9**

A further respondent stated how she felt more secure with her enhanced knowledge and that she was better able to support colleagues

*...I feel much better informed now than I did about the treatment of Lymphodema and I feel confident that by continuing gentle massage 'right up to the end' I will not be in danger of doing more harm than good for my patient. I now feel much more secure with my own knowledge of Lymphoedema. I feel better able to help and support my nursing colleagues when they express their concerns about continuing treatment...*

**Student 10**

A further reflection on feelings:

*...In this instance I was aware that I was emotionally involved. I had to acknowledge that I was witnessing the death of someone whom I had grown very fond of and admired. I was also conscious that this lady was a similar age to myself, which I found distressing. I was prepared for the physical deterioration I saw but not the emotional impact on me. On reflection I realise that it was the setting that made the difference. I have a lot of experience in dealing with progressive illness and impending death within the Hospice, but not in the patients own home. For me that made the situation much more sad and poignant...*

**Student 19**

This respondent felt negatively about her feelings regarding a different situation with a patient, however, on reassessment, her feelings changed following a discussion with another colleague.

*I returned to the office feeling quite upset at Margaret's reactions. I feel that our conversation had not been a success owing to my own lack of experience. I may have compromised further communication with Margaret just when we had achieved some measure of success. I discussed with a senior colleague on duty what had happened and how inadequate I felt. I was quite reassured when my colleague reflected with me on how difficult it was to initiate any discussion with Margaret. Discussing it helped me put things in perspective. I was relieved to find as we discussed the incident, that I was not alone in finding Margaret quite intimidating, and that my colleague would have used a similar approach to my own in the same circumstances...*

**Student 11**

The reassessment of prior attitudes that may be modified to accommodate new attitudes will now be considered. One respondent reflected on the review of her attitudes and anticipated the possible change that may occur.

*...On reflection there is a need to gain more knowledge of all cultures. There also appeared to be a need to consider more human behaviours. I feel that I identified that ritualistic practice is performed. The decision was difficult to accept change, and indeed easier to keep to ward protocols. I feel that overall we had all displayed an empathic and paternalistic viewpoint, wanting to protect the relatives, the deceased and ourselves. I wondered if things would change but hoped they would...*

**Student 31**

#### **4.4 INTEGRATION**

Boud et al. [1985] highlighted how associations need to be processed to examine whether they are meaningful and useful to us. If they can be integrated into the new whole, a new pattern of ideas and attributes develops. Association brings together ideas and feelings in an almost indiscriminate manner: integration begins the process of discrimination. There are two aspects to integration. The first of these is seeking the nature of relationships that have been observed through association. Secondly, the drawing of conclusions and arriving at insights of this integration phase in which we seek an insight which is the basis for further reflective activity.

One respondent gained a great deal of insight into the management of a patient with Ascites due to malignancy

*...I feel that I have gained a great insight into the case of patients with malignant Ascites. The use of diuretics has I feel little effect in Ascites and I would now suggest the earlier use of Paracentesis drainage. If the patient is presenting on several occasions with recurrent Ascites then I should most certainly suggest the Denver Shunt. Mary gained not just physical relief from the shunt but psychological help as well. She remained at home with her family where she wanted to be and if only for that reason I would encourage the use of the shunt in the future...*

**Student 3**

Another respondent arrived at a new insight into the management of a patient at the Hospice. This related to the type of fluid replacement used that was deemed to be most suitable.

*...I find it amazing that we have never in eleven years at the Hospice used subcutaneous fluids, as it is so simple and effective...*

A further insight was experienced by the same respondent in relation to a specific form of medication that proved to be most beneficial to a patient in leading to a better quality of life. This respondent was able to associate her previous knowledge with the new knowledge regarding the use of this drug.

*I would now also be very alert to the use of Hyoscine Butylbromide at the commencement of chesty secretions as a problem for the patient and family. I now realise that we as professionals can occasionally be a bit late in the commencement of the drug, in order to obtain its best results. In Joan's situation secretion were reduced, the fear of choking and therefore the anxiety was resolved, giving her a period of peace and tranquillity...*

**Student 9**

One respondent's journal extract highlighted her insight into a situation involving a patient and his wife and how she came to the realisation that the circumstances were challenging but the right decision had been made. This involved reassessing previous knowledge, feelings and attitudes in relation to the new knowledge:

*I had not been at the Hospice long, but had conducted some family assessments previously, with apparent success. I realised I had been lulled into a false sense of security and taking into account my previous knowledge of Margaret and her interactions with other staff and with Jack, should not have been surprised at her reactions. I could of course have curtailed the conversation when I realised how difficult it was becoming but I made the conscious decision to continue as I realised that it may become even more difficult if another attempt was made. I was guided by intuition in not touching Margaret to comfort her. Following discussions this with my colleague I later realised I had made the right decision. Evaluating the incident with my colleague helped me put things into perspective and recognise that the incident was challenging and stressful, but not a failure. The experience and conceptualised meanings enabled me to understand the event and what it meant to me...*

**Student 38**

Another respondent reflected upon how she had gained an insight when she realised that on reassessing her previous knowledge and actions she had acted appropriately in relation to the communication strategy chosen.

She had gained an insight into the interpersonal skills involved in communicating with a couple at the Hospice. Her enhanced knowledge enabled her to recognise that her past knowledge may have been inadequate to deal with the situation. She also recognised the learning that had taken place.

*If I had less knowledge of this patient or less insight into their relationship, I may not have felt as comfortable in this situation. I was fortunate in that I was working alongside a calm close couple who I knew were very supportive of each other and amenable to accept help and advice. This patient and immediate family were such that it was easy to match the theories of good communication and interpersonal relationships with practice. Had the situation been one of anger, aggression and high tension it would have been more difficult to match theory and practice. However, had this been the case I would have used the same strategies of a unhurried pace, quiet voice, allowing silence, complete honesty in answering questions and endeavouring to be non-judgemental and open...I have learnt a lot from this situation...*

**Student 19**

## **4.5 VALIDATION**

In the process of validation individuals are subjecting what they have started to integrate to what they might call 'reality tests'. They are testing for internal consistency between the new appreciation and existing knowledge and beliefs, for consistency between these and parallel data from others and trying out new perceptions in new situations. If contradictions present themselves the situation is reappraised and decisions are made on what basis to proceed [Boud et al. 1985].

This element of the reflective process was not demonstrated by any of the respondents in their reflective journal entries.

## 4.6 APPROPRIATION

Boud et al. [1985] highlight that when individuals learn tasks it may be quite sufficient for them to have integrated the new knowledge which has arisen from the experience into their own conceptual framework, but in many areas a further step is required. The new information which has been integrated needs to be appropriated in a personal way. It has been suggested that appropriated knowledge becomes part of one's value system and it is less amenable to change than other knowledge which we accept and work with but do not make our own to the same degree.

Only two respondents appeared to have demonstrated this component of reflection. Both emphasised how they used the knowledge gained to promote holistic care in the future by making the knowledge their own.

One stated

*By researching and undertaking this reflective journal I have gained the knowledge to make me a better practitioner. The acquisition of such knowledge has given me the confidence to use a holistic approach to care in conjunction with other health care professionals to provide better information for Palliative Care patients and their relatives. I now want to focus on some specific aspects of care, like the care of relatives...*

**Student 18**

The other stated how on gaining new knowledge she would be focusing on a particular topic for development

*Yes, I have gained new knowledge that I will use to help me deliver holistic care in the future. I will focus on the care of the dying. I really want to improve on this area, particularly focusing on pain control. That is my goal and I have already attended a study day to improve my knowledge...*

**Student 17**

## 4.7 OUTCOMES OF REFLECTION

Boud et al. [1985] emphasise the importance of the outcome of reflection in developing a new perspective. They state that reflection is itself an experience and not an end in itself. It has the objective of making individuals ready for a new experience. The outcomes of reflection may include a new way of doing something, the clarification of an issue, the development of a skill or the resolution of a problem. A new cognitive map may emerge, or a new set of ideas may be identified. The change may be small or large, and could involve the development of new perspectives on experience or changes in behaviour. Some of the benefits of reflection may be lost if they are not linked to action. Action ends the reflective process for the time being. Action can occur at any stage of the learning process and it may in itself precipitate a new reflective activity.

Five respondents demonstrated clearly specific outcomes to their reflective episodes, which highlights the action that had occurred as the result of their learning. One highlighted her action in relation to the management of patients with Dyspnoea.

*...Reflecting on the management of Stella has reinforced my understanding that management of Dyspnoea in Palliative Care patients is multi-factorial. I have now learned that breathing retraining is a strategy to be used early in the course of the disease rather than when 'all else fails'. I feel we did use a multidisciplinary approach and considered a wide variety of treatment options ... On another occasion I would introduce breathing retraining much sooner and would try harder to communicate with Eric to ascertain his worries and anxieties if appropriate.*

**Student 13**

Another commented on the knowledge gained in relation to a specific type of cancer and how she hoped to use that knowledge in the future

*...I also gained knowledge regarding the Parotid Gland and related cancer. Thirst and its mechanism are controlled by the Hypothalamus. This will enable me to study patients' problems more thoroughly and*

***enable me to give better guidance and care. I have more knowledge to contribute to the multidisciplinary team already...***

**Student 9**

A further respondent expressed her concern about the treatment given to a patient and the subsequent outcome. While the treatment prescribed was thought to be the most appropriate, it became evident that the patient had not been psychologically prepared. She therefore wanted to take action in the future to overcome this problem.

***I still feel uncomfortable about Bills' treatment, but I know that we acted in his best interest. Spinal Cord Compression is very difficult to treat and in itself it is evidence of the progression of the disease. My only regret is that we were so keen that Bill should be given Radiotherapy quickly. We failed to involve him adequately in the decision making process. If I should be involved in a similar situation in the future I will make sure that the patient is fully informed of the limitations and consequences of undergoing treatment as well as those of doing nothing and 'letting nature take its course'...***

**Student 10**

A fourth respondent also wanted to alter her practice in the future in relation to the delivery of Palliative Care and the dying process based on her reflection on an episode.

***...If faced with the same situation at any time in the future then there would be things that I would do differently. Firstly, I would ensure that both the patient and family were given all the information that they required in order for them to make informed decisions and choices with regard to their life and future care. Secondly, I believe in telling a person that they are dying and evidence suggests that by telling those who want to know does not hasten this process. Thirdly, to keep a person in hospital when they are terminally ill and would rather be cared for at home is another factor that I would change if I could...***

**Student 17**

A fifth respondent highlighted how based on her experience she would change her behaviour in the future to achieve more appropriate outcomes for patients.

***In looking to the future I should not have placed a burden of the truth upon Margaret. I will in the future seek more information from the hospital, even if this means approaching the consultant involved. If a***

*relative approaches me again for the truth I cannot lie, but will discuss the issues with the General Practitioner. It would have been more appropriate to make an appointment for Margaret and Mr B's daughter to see the hospital consultant or the General Practitioner to discuss the diagnosis. Telling someone a diagnosis of cancer outside on the footpath, is very bad practice, particularly when they have to go back into the house and face the patient...*

*From the nursing perspective I do feel that the patient with cancer does need to know the truth. Mr B could have had his quality of life greatly enhanced by the involvement of other agencies. The gentleman died very quickly and suffering some pain. Involvement of the Macmillan Nurse could have avoided this situation. From the psychological perspective Mr.B. could have visited the Day Hospice and gained comfort and support from other patients.*

**Student 18**

#### **4.8 CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO MEZIROW'S MODEL AS ADAPTED BY WONG et al. [1995]**

Following an analysis of the textual material within the journals, the next level of analysis involved placing the students into one of three broader categories derived from Mezirow et al.'s [1990] model of reflection and adapted by Wong et al. [1995]. The categories were that of non-reflector, reflector and critical reflector.

Total 42 Students included in the study.

Non-reflectors	9 students	21%
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Reflectors	28 students	67%
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Critical Reflectors	5 students	12%
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Non-reflectors showed no evidence of any of the elements of reflective thinking [Table 5]. Reflectors showed evidence of attending to feelings, association and/or integration, but did not demonstrate any critical changes of perspective [Table 6]. The critical reflectors demonstrated features of a reflector and also showed evidence that they had changed their perspective [Table 7].



#### **4.8.1 FEATURES OF NON-REFLECTORS**

Table 5 shows the coded results the nine students who were classified as Non- reflectors [NR]. Non-reflectors showed no evidence of any of the reflective elements of the model by Boud et al. [1985]. Of the sample of forty-two students involved in the study nine respondents or twenty-one per cent, were classified as non-reflectors. An analysis of their reflective journals indicated that there were some common features that could be identified among the non-reflectors [NR].

They wrote in a descriptive fashion, and merely described a critical incident. Some made observations in relation to the reflective episode, but there was little evidence of analysis of the experience. Their views were presented without any supportive evidence. Their thinking tended to be concrete with minimal evidence of abstract thinking.

#### **4.8.2 FEATURES OF REFLECTORS**

Table 6 shows the coding results of the reflectors. Twenty-eight students, or sixty-seven per cent, were classified in this category.

This group of students demonstrated reflection at one or more of the first three levels - attending to feelings, association, and integration. The reflectors were able to relate their experiences and turn them into new learning opportunities. They could identify relationships between prior knowledge/attitudes and/or feelings. A small number of the students were able to modify what was known to new situations and arrive at new insights. However, unlike critical reflectors they did not demonstrate evidence of validating assumptions, signs of making knowledge one's own or show a transformation of perspectives.

### **4.8.3 FEATURES OF CRITICAL REFLECTORS**

Table 7 shows the coded results of the students who were classified as critical reflectors. Five students, or twelve per cent, were classified in this category. While these students did not demonstrate levels of validation two demonstrated appropriation and all five achieved the outcomes of reflection. They also demonstrated attending to feelings and levels of association [Appendix Seventeen]. On an examination of the content of the journals of the critical reflectors various common features were identified. Firstly, they had always returned to the experience in the discussion. There was an attempt to examine the experience and themselves in a critical way. Secondly, they were able to set the problem in its context. They adopted a wide and multi-dimensional perspective in dealing with the episode. They were able to draw on existing resources, prior knowledge, relevant information and appropriate literature. Thirdly, they demonstrated that they were amenable to change.

**ANALYSIS OF REFLECTIVE JOURNALS BASED ON THE MODEL OF REFLECTION  
DEvised BY MEZIROW et al. (1990) AND ADAPTED BY WONG et al. (1995)**

**TABLE 5 – CODING RESULTS OF NON-RELECTORS**

<b>STUDENTS</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>SUB CATEGORIES:</b>									
1. Attending to feelings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Association	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3. Integration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4. Validation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Appropriation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Outcome of reflection	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**ANALYSIS OF REFLECTIVE JOURNALS BASED ON THE MODEL OF REFLECTION  
DEvised BY MEZIROW et al. (1990) AND ADAPTED BY WONG et al. (1995)**

**TABLE 6 – CODING RESULTS OF REFLECTORS**

STUDENTS	1	2	3	4	7	11	12	15	16	19	21	22	23	25	26	27
<b>SUB CATEGORIES:</b>																
1. Attending to feelings	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	7	1	1	0	2	1
2. Association	3	2	3	1	1	2	1	0	2	1	0	1	1	2	2	1
3. Integration	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
4. Validation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Appropriation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Outcome of reflection	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

STUDENTS	28	29	30	31	33	34	36	37	38	39	41	42
<b>SUB CATEGORIES:</b>												
1. Attending to feelings	0	3	3	1	1	1	1	4	3	2	0	1
2. Association	1	1	0	3	1	3	1	2	3	2	2	0
3. Integration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
4. Validation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Appropriation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Outcome of reflection	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

ANALYSIS OF REFLECTIVE JOURNALS BASED ON THE MODEL OF REFLECTION  
 DEvised BY MEZIROW et al. (1990) AND ADAPTED BY WONG et al. (1995)

TABLE 7 – CODING RESULTS OF CRITICAL REFLECTORS

STUDENTS	9	10	13	17	18
SUB CATEGORIES:					
1. Attending to feelings	4	4	0	0	1
2. Association	1	2	3	1	1
3. Integration	1	0	1	0	0
4. Validation	0	0	0	0	0
5. Appropriation	0	0	0	1	1
6. Outcome of reflection	1	3	2	1	1

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS – STUDENT INTERVIEWS**

#### **5.1 ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS INTERVIEWS**

Following the process of analysing forty-two reflective journals which had been completed by students during one module, using the model devised by Boud et al. [1985] and adapted by Wong et al. [1995] the students were placed into one of three broad categories. The categories were critical reflectors, reflectors, and non-reflectors as devised by Mezirow et al. [1990] and Mezirow (1991). Within the category of non-reflector there were nine respondents. Five respondents were randomly selected for interview. Within the category of reflectors there were twenty-eight respondents. Five respondents were chosen randomly for interview. The category of critical reflectors included only five respondents, and all five were interviewed. A total of fifteen respondents were interviewed in order to obtain their views on reflection and their experience of writing a reflective journal. Following the analysis of interview data, eight categories were devised which summarised how the respondents felt about the use of journals in promoting reflection and on the guidance they received. Illustrative text relating to each category is depicted in the following exemplars. The students have been allocated numbers to disguise their identity. Students will also be identified as follows: Non-Reflectors [NR] Reflectors [R] and Critical Reflector [CR].

## 5.2 JOURNAL WRITING – THE PROMOTION OF REFLECTION ON EXPERIENCE AND THE ASSOCIATED FEELINGS

### 5.2.1 REFLECTION ON EXPERIENCE

The respondents' views in relation to whether writing in a journal helped them to reflect on their experience will be considered. The respondents demonstrated both positive and negative views on the value of journals in relation to the promotion of reflection. Firstly, to consider the positive views.

One respondent stated

*...Yes, writing it down helped me to come to terms with the experience because it wasn't a good experience that I had. Yes, it was useful to look back and if I had a similar scenario again I'd consider how I'd dealt with this one. I don't think I dealt with it all that well at the time. Obviously you learn from the experiences that you have had. If that happened to me again I would think more clearly about how I would handle it...*

*Student 18 [CR]*

Another respondent stated that it was valuable to reflect on her experience and also to write it down.

*Oh! Definitely it was useful to write it down. The first thing that comes to mind for me is I choose this incident because I found it a very difficult and sad experience and the very fact that I went back to this issue and had the opportunity to work it through before I put pen to paper was therapeutic in itself...it helped me to get things in perspective. The writing was beneficial however; it also opened up further questions for me...*

*Student 7 [R]*

Another respondent also felt positively about journal writing

*Yes, it has been useful. I can now look back at things and think I can do this and the journal has taught me that. I was brought up in the 'old way'. You never questioned it and you might think that is not right but now I feel more assertive. If I have a situation that did not go well I am now inclined to think well I won't let that happen again I really learnt from that...I did find the writing daunting though. I wondered if what I wrote was in the right context. The tutors were very supportive though...*

*Student 41 [R]*

Another respondent found writing a useful experience; however, she found it a difficult task

*...I think I already reflected but I didn't write anything down so it was quite useful to write it down. While writing it down it made me look at the literature that would support what we did or didn't do...I did find it difficult though to write it academically. You could write it easier if you were saying what he or she said but you are conscious that you are not just telling a story but do gain something educationally from it. I do reflect quite a lot informally at work and do not always structurally write it down.*

**Student 10 [CR]**

One respondent although she thought that writing a journal might be valuable for some students she did question its value, as she believed that she had already developed her reflective skills.

*...Probably it is useful to write, yes. It depends at which stage you are at. I was fairly advanced with my thinking on reflection so it was less useful for me to write a journal. Perhaps for other students at an earlier stage it may be more useful. It did not benefit me particularly. I always review critically what I do.*

**Student 13 [CR]**

A respondent believed that reflecting and writing helped her to appreciate some problems that she was not fully aware of at the time

*...Most definitely yes, emh...when I was writing in the journal many things came through my mind which probably at the time I wasn't aware of as a problem. It was not easy, but good to reflect...*

**Student 14 [NR]**

Another respondent stated how writing in her journal helped her to consolidate her thoughts

*...Yes, writing did help. It makes you sit down and focus your thoughts. It is not absolutely necessary to write it down to reflect. The journal helps you focus though. I've always reflected. The journal helped me consolidate my thoughts. I share my experiences anyway with my preceptor and during clinical supervision. It is helpful to talk and share...*

**Student 20 [NR]**

A further respondent liked the structure required to write about an incident

*Yes, it did really help. We've got a number of patients and what I thought was good was the structure. It made you think in a structured way. It made me think about the quality of time I spent with patients. It urges you to create new ideas and think more deeply about things.*

**Student 6 [NR]**



This respondent had mixed views regarding the use of a reflective journal

*Emh! I found in Palliative Care I was going home and writing about it, I found that very 'draining'. I felt that I was doing death and dying for seven days emh!...Writing about it yes, it did help, it was draining though...that was the downside I suppose. It made you aware of what the patient said. Your listening skills were improved doing the journal.*

**Student 40 [NR]**

### **5.2.2 THE EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS THROUGH WRITING IN A JOURNAL**

Respondents expressed positive views with regard to the role of journals in helping them express their feelings.

One stated how writing had helped her 'unburden' herself when relating the outcome of care given

*Yes, it was helpful. You feel you want to tell people all about it, because you unburden yourself by writing it down. Yes, the man with the Spinal Cord Compression. I thought I'd found him early and I wanted to say to people at work that I felt I'd let him down. I didn't like to say that outright really but writing it down I felt that I could acknowledge that because he was angry with me even though he didn't say so for having sent him for Radiotherapy. I felt if I wrote it down on paper because I probably wouldn't have said it so easily to people...*

**Student 10 [CR]**

Another claimed that it did help her express her feelings

*...Yes, it did help me express my feelings. I felt guilty that I did not always have the knowledge to care for the dying patient in the best possible way. I thought I had the knowledge but I didn't. Yes, it was therapeutic, I kept thinking about the dying patient and how well I had cared for them in the past. I could have done better though.*

**Student 40 [NR]**

A further respondent stated that writing in a journal enabled to her face issues better and also to look back on the record

*Yes, writing helps you resolve issues for you, how you felt. The fact that you felt that you put pen to paper. I don't know why that should be but it helps you face the issues better. I know you talk a lot about the issue when it happened on the ward but I can now look back on it as it is written down.*

**Student 7 [R]**

One respondent felt that writing down her feelings was beneficial, as it had been a very sad experience

*...I think it did help to write about my feelings. Reading what I wrote was very emotional and it was just so sad. This lady had Chemotherapy and died very quickly. I usually verbalise my thoughts and reflect with someone else. This is now expected of us as professionals with portfolios. We are required to write down our reflections. As this module focused on interpersonal skills one could reflect on their feelings. I didn't find it too hard to write...*

**Student 23 [R]**

Another stated that she did not have time to sit down and reflect at the time so writing about feelings was beneficial...

*...It was a busy ward where I worked so we didn't have time to sit with a colleague and talk about feelings. It was good to get it out of my system and write it down...*

**Student 14 [NR]**

Only two respondents expressed negative views with regard to writing a journal and the value of writing in relation to expressing feelings

*...This is the only reflective journal I've ever done. I've done a couple for my portfolio, shorter ones but I don't think this has helped me to express feelings... Not really...*

**Student 9 [CR]**

Another stated that she preferred to reflect on feelings rather than write them down

*Writing didn't really help me to express my feelings. I prefer to just reflect on my feelings without writing them down...*

**Student 13 [CR]**

### **5.3 JOURNAL WRITING - ASSISTING WITH THE ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCE**

In this area there were both positive and negative responses expressed by respondents regarding the value of writing a journal in relation to assisting in the analysis of an episode that they had reflected upon.

Firstly, positive aspects will be highlighted.

One respondent stated

*...Yes, I teased out things. I did about dehydration – the different types, it was more of a learning process for that than 'teasing out' the issues. Doing this I learnt a lot.*

*Student 9 [CR]*

A further respondent stated that writing had helped her put things in perspective

*...Yes, it helped me analyse what I was doing. I think sometimes in a very busy work area we don't always appreciate what others are trying to achieve and we go about our business, but this is a tool that helps us put things in order and when you look back at the process you can see why. At times you feel frustrated and ask why are we doing this? Then you can go back and see the order and why it happened...that is very helpful.*

*Student 7 [R]*

Another stated that once she knew what was expected it was useful and did assist with analysis

*...Probably, yes I learnt from others. We sat down with the other staff to discuss the focus. We looked more closely at the quality of care of the dying person. We considered what was good and what was not so good. I did this with the care assistants. We looked at what we considered to be good quality care. It makes you think more. It is more structured. I had to read more and reference it. I did find that a bit of a bind but once I knew what was expected it wasn't so bad.*

*Student 40 [NR]*

A further respondent believed that writing a journal had made her explore the topic more fully

*...Definitely yes, I read the literature about it all and the research that had been done into the subject. So yes, it made me look into it a lot more deeply.*

*Student 33 [R]*

And finally one respondent also valued writing as it helped take her learning a stage further

*...It helped in the fact when you talk you aren't doing any references. You are not going into more depth. Yes, by writing you've got to go away and read up on the reflections you have looked at and do a lot of reading. I do more work for a written piece. Readings help confirm what you know and writing takes it a stage further...*

*Student 28 [R]*

Two respondents were less positive in their views and did not find that writing in their journals helped them to analyse their experiences. The first felt confident that talking about issues was adequate and questioned the value of writing a journal

*...I'm not sure really. I found it a bit laborious all this writing to tell you the truth. I am really lucky where I work. We brief and debrief staff all of the time. We discuss ongoing issues. We reflect in an ongoing way everyday. We talk over the telephone as well as together face- to- face. I don't think it is necessary to write it down to reflect. This is what we do...*

*Student 13 [CR]*

A second also questioned the value of writing as she had reflected on the episode and reviewed the possible way forward

*...Not really, it helped you to remember what happened. But, because it was such a bad experience it was still quite clear in my mind a year later. I went through it quite a lot in my head at the time anyway. I thought how could this have been handled differently?*

*Student 18 [CR]*

#### **5.4 JOURNAL WRITING AND THE CREATION OF IDEAS WHICH LINK THEORY AND PRACTICE**

A number of the respondents expressed positive views and thought that writing in their reflective journal had helped them link theory and practice.

One stated how writing had made her think about issues and also helped with linking theory and practice

*...Definitely yes, writing forces you to think about issues. As you write you reflect. I reflected more on the module and the episode. This helped me to link theory and practice. I have good interpersonal skills but it did make me think of how I could do things better...*

*Student 20 [NR]*

Another expressed how she felt when the treatment of the patient was being decided

*...There were frustrations at times when you thought we seem to be varying here between the use of different drugs and because you*

*didn't have a knowledge of how the drugs worked at that time. You find yourself co-operating with other medical people and administering the drugs and now you can stop and can challenge the questions in a therapeutic manner and address the issues with medical staff... We have tried that. Can we try something else or can you tell me why you have chosen to do it this way. The issues are therefore addressed as you go along and also what the frustrations are... Yes, writing it did help me relate theory to practice...*

**Student 7 [R]**

Another related how she was able to link theory and practice in the care of the dying patient

*...Yes, I do think it helped link theory and practice... Probably, we were talking of hydration and dehydration and relating a lot of the theory. We were having experiences with patients who were going through the dying process and becoming dehydrated and were linking the two...*

**Student 33 [R]**

A further respondent stated how writing had helped with analysis and remembering what happened sometime later. This helped link theory and practice

*...Yes, it probably did help to link theory and practice. If you write it down at the time and then looked at it and analysed it like now, twelve months later yes, I can remember more or less what happened. Whereas, if I hadn't written it down I wouldn't have remembered nearly so clearly. Yes, it was useful...I find it difficult I can write the scenarios of what happened and actually find the literature to support or disprove what happens. I don't find it difficult then to link theory and practice because I can see how it does link...*

**Student 10 [CR]**

A few of the respondents were less convinced that writing had helped with the linking of theory and practice. One respondent stated that while it is useful to reflect and write it down you always needed to be able to support what you say with references, which seemed to defeat the purpose of writing.

*...Yes, it may have helped a little because you look at an experience and you reflect on it and try to consider why it happened...you work through like a framework. It is the end bit that's why you did it. You have to find references to back things up; it spoils the flow of things. It can influence what you put in the journal because if you can find references to support your reflections you include it but if you can't you don't. To me that spoils the whole point of it.*

**Student 35 [NR]**

Another questioned the value of writing and stated that she learnt from talking about issues

*...Emh no I'm not sure how helpful writing was. I got as much out of interviewing the staff and obviously talking. I learnt a lot from just talking about it...*

*Student 28 [R]*

## **5.5 JOURNAL WRITING - ENHANCING AN AWARENESS OF THE LEARNING ACHIEVED AND IT'S APPLICATION**

A number of the respondents believed that writing in their journal did make them aware of the learning achieved and how they would apply the theory.

*...Yes, it helped you to remember, you can go back. I mean there were issues that can occur afterwards in the work area and you can go back and think that happened because of...and the next time I would do it differently with the knowledge that I have gained. You can't always remember the situations clearly.*

This respondent also explained how she had learnt about the role of medication

*...Yes, it highlighted the lack of knowledge that I had about medication and it prompted me to look at things in this instance and certainly be proactive about issues instead of just accepting the fact we were using this drug. I would be very proactive about why we did use this drug in the future. I would question much more...*

*Student 7 [R]*

A further respondent spoke positively about her learning and how it could be applied to care delivery

*I...at times you would not accept what others would say and you might think oh! No that is not right it's not what the patient wants that...Someone says that, the patient needs to go home. Now, I am much more assertive, well no he can't go because this and that are not right, they have mobility problems. Previously I would not have done that I would just have accepted that they would go. Now, we communicate more with the team I ask them what they feel as well. That has helped me through reflection and writing...*

*Student 42 [R]*

One stated that she did not realise how much she had learnt at the time. However, on looking back it became more obvious that learning had been achieved

*...Yes, it did because you pick things up you have learnt but at times you don't realise how much you have learnt until we discussed it...I suppose you think about it more and made more of an effort because I was writing it down and I was interested and I could apply it...*

*Student 33 [R]*

## **5.6 AN AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR FURTHER LEARNING AS THE RESULT OF WRITING THE REFLECTIVE JOURNAL**

A number of the respondents felt positively about the use of the journal in relation to making them aware of further learning needs. Respondents recognised that they needed to enhance their knowledge in a number of areas.

One respondent identified the need to enhance her knowledge in relation to analgesic drugs

*...Yes, writing did make me aware of further learning that was required. The control of pain was an area that I recognised. I didn't have enough knowledge on analgesic drugs so I decided to do another module in that area...*

*Student 14 [NR]*

Another recognised the need for further learning and decided she needed to read more

*...Yes, as I wrote I realised that I had a lot to learn. I thought I had quite a good knowledge but I realised that there is always more to learn. It was all so high powered. I bought books to help with learning. I read some at the time, but I now read more out of interest as the pressure of the course is off!*

*Student 40 [NR]*

Another respondent was less certain if writing the journal had made her aware of further learning that was required

*...Perhaps yes, I looked at the theory of bereavement in more detail. I'm not sure if it was the writing in the journal or if it was as I delivered*

*patient care. Perhaps both. I did certainly become aware. I talked with colleagues and I'm going on a three-day course soon to enhance my knowledge in this area.*

**Student 13 [CR]**

Another recognised the need to enhance her communication skills

*...Yes, in specialising in Palliative Care you have to be aware of patients needs and the ward situation is so busy. You try to meet holistic needs but do become very stressed. At times the patients' condition deteriorates and may be dying; sometimes you have run out of options with drugs. You need to be able to communicate this to the patient as well as the doctor. It made me aware that I needed to enhance my communication skills to be able to talk to patients...*

**Student 41[R]**

Another explained how it was always possible to do things better and that it was important to consolidate

*Yes, it did make me aware that there is always something more to learn. I was aware that I had a good level of self-awareness but did realise that I have always got more to learn. It is always possible to do things better. It was important to consolidate...*

**Student 20 [NR]**

One respondent felt negatively about the use of a journal

*Truthfully no. I wouldn't have done it in such depth if I didn't have to do it. I'm not sure what I learnt...*

**Student 6 [NR]**

## **5.7 THE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR REFLECTION AND THEIR ENHANCEMENT THROUGH JOURNAL WRITING**

When respondents were asked to identify the skills required for reflection a number hesitated however, eventually they were able to highlight some of the skills. When they were asked if writing a journal helped develop these skills most found it difficult to connect the two.

Firstly, to consider their responses in relation to the skills required for reflection. A number of the respondents highlighted the skills required as those of analysis, self- awareness and good communication.



One highlighted the importance of being self-aware

*... I thought quite a lot about it. I do think about what I do. I analyse it. You also need to be self-aware otherwise you wouldn't recognise things or take them on board...*

**Student 9 [CR]**

Another also stated the importance of being self-aware and the possible implications of not demonstrating this skill

*...Yes, be self-aware. I try to put myself in a 'patient's shoes' and sometimes I do handle things badly. I do need to think. I am a direct person and sometimes I should have thought about that before I said something...*

**Student 18 [CR]**

A third respondent stated

*...Yes, you need to be self-aware. Sometimes you go too deep. The team are involved at times. You feel so drained. Doing this reflection makes me more aware. It has made me think more. It has made it more personal. I stand back and think.*

**Student 41 [R]**

Another thought that self-awareness was important and also sharing with someone else.

*...The skills required... Well, I suppose self-awareness. Also sharing with someone else. At clinical supervision we discuss issues and reflect on our experience. I find this most helpful. I think it's the sharing with other people that helps me reflect...*

**Student 20 [NR]**

One respondent felt that the skill of analysis was required to reflect.

*... It helped me to see things as they are, rather than what you thought they were...Why it happened...and you needed to consider what people were doing and why they did it also. You also need to consider which activities influenced them at the time. I feel this is the skill of analysis that is the main thing...*

**Student 7 [R]**

Several respondents believed that appropriate communication skills were essential to aid reflection.

One stated that lack of appropriate communication had implications for patients and staff

***Emh! Communication was lacking during the incident that I reflected on. Communication is so important. I thought how I would have felt if I'd been in that 'patients shoes' and district nurses were coming and going and I didn't feel that ill. He must have suspected that there was something wrong but had not been told the prognosis. Communication with the patient and with colleagues is so important. It is also important to be able to write it down...***

**Student 18 [CR]**

Another highlighted a number of important skills

***... I think everyone reflects in a way don't they? When we were asked to write a journal we found it quite daunting really but you've just got to be aware of your strengths and weaknesses and if you know pick them out, be literate, put yourself in 'someone's shoes' and good communication skills help also and also be non-judgemental...***

**Student 29 [R]**

Two respondents emphasised the importance being honest in several contexts in relation to reflection.

***... Be honest about what you do, honest with yourself about the benefits. Take into account how everybody involved in what went on felt about it, viewing it from other people's perspectives as well...***

This respondent not only believed that honesty was important but also a range of other skills

***... I think honesty, lateral thinking, being open -minded, acceptance that you need to learn, self-awareness, be articulate, to have respect and have good rapport with others. Having a good memory is also important***

**Student 13 [CR]**

Another also highlighted the importance of having a good memory

***...Good memory. Obviously awareness is important. That the experience was good or bad. Reflection isn't always about bad experiences it's about good as well. You need to be able to put it in your memory bank and think right when that happens again. I'll try that action and see if it works...***

**Student 28 [R]**

An important skill mentioned by one respondent was time management, in order to allow reflection to occur.

***... Allowing time to do this and we are sadly lacking in that. Really we don't always recognise the effects of that time to situations on people that work there. It is often expected that it is part of your job and not***

*that it has a 'knock on' effect on the other people. It takes time to reflect and to write it down...*

**Student 10 [CR]**

Respondents' comments in relation to whether writing a reflective journal helps them develop the skills required to reflect will be considered. In some cases respondents found it difficult to make the connection between the skills required to reflect and the development of the skills through writing. A small number of respondents expressed positive views

*... I think so; I have to write everything down. It helps you internalise it and you think more...*

**Student 29 [R]**

*...Yes, it has, yes on looking back the things I wrote now. It has done me good. I have learnt a great deal ...*

**Student 41 [R]**

Another respondent stated that having to write it down made her think more about what she did

*...Yes, it makes you think about it more. Which you might not do if you didn't write it down and analyse it a bit more. You have to think a bit more when you have to write it down...*

**Student 33 [R]**

Another respondent said that she did find it difficult to get her thoughts down on paper.

*...Sometimes it is hard to put it down on paper because it is all jumbled up in your head and to put it down in a logical format when you are thinking one step in front and I did find that difficult. It's not always easy to put things in a journal...*

**Student 18 [CR]**

Another respondent questioned the value of journal writing

*... I suppose it may be helpful over time. I found it such an ordeal writing the journal that the benefits were lessened by the ordeal. It took just such a lot of effort...*

**Student 9 [CR]**

## 5.8 THE PROMOTION OF JOURNAL WRITING AS PART OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

In order to encourage practitioners to reflect, writing in various forms is largely advocated, for example writing a reflective diary was suggested by Schön [1991] or in journals by Atkins and Murphy [1993] about their experiences. Their aim is to help nurses clarify the knowledge required to underpin their actions. Respondents in this study expressed a range of views on the role of journal writing in promoting reflective practice. Some respondents were positive while others were less convinced about the value of journals. Their views mainly relate to the structure of journals and the demands of time devoted to the task of writing. Issues related to the influence on writing of confidential material and the difficulties associated with the disclosure of sensitive information were also expressed. A number expressed views on their preference to talk about reflective episodes with colleagues rather than write in a reflective journal. Firstly, to consider the responses of respondents who expressed positive views regarding the use of journals in relation to promoting reflective practice. While positive views were expressed respondents highlighted other issues relevant to journal writing that they thought were important.

One respondent expressed positive views regarding the use of journals

*... It is a great way of learning from what you did. It helps you make sure you don't make those mistakes again and that was very evident in my experience with particular individuals. It prompted my learning and I'm sure it will help me ensure that it won't happen again...*

This respondent went on to say that due to working in a busy environment she found it difficult getting time to discuss issues with colleagues therefore writing was most useful and she also felt that it was easier to write down some confidential issues rather than discuss them verbally.

*... Sometimes in a busy work area you don't always get the opportunity to discuss these concerns with others and there are confidential issues of concern. There are things you wouldn't share with even your best friend. I think the ability to be able to write down these thoughts and feelings is useful. When the answers are coming through all the time it is worthwhile. You can see your own weaknesses as well.*

This respondent also believed that some students may not always be able to express their feelings freely and she highlighted how some practitioners may also not wish to express their inadequacies by writing in a journal.

*... Perhaps some practitioners who have been nurses for a long time may find it difficult to display their inadequacies in writing...*

*Student 7 [R]*

Another found the journal useful when she knew what to do.

*...Yes, it is useful. I found it daunting until I knew what to do. I'm a bedside nurse and not an academic. I suppose I enjoyed the writing. I know it was part of my development. I enjoyed doing the journal more than the essay. I felt this was part of me...analysing things...*

*Student 41 [R]*

One respondent thought it was useful to encourage reflective practice.

*...Yes, I think everybody ought to do it. The importance of reflective practice needs to be emphasised. If you talk to people who have not done courses recently they often do not know what reflective practice is.*

She went on to say that journal writing had been useful for one practitioner.

*...There was one nurse who didn't deal very well with a family after a death. I said write it down; write everything that you felt down. You need to look at what you wrote and decide the best way forward. The junior sister encouraged us. She is motivated. Some of the other sisters are not so motivated. Reflection is a newer issue. Some don't know about it. They feel uncomfortable with it. I have shown some of my journals to the sisters. This has helped to let them see what reflection is. It gave them some idea of what was expected.*

*Student 40 [NR]*

Another respondent believed that journal writing may be more useful to students at an earlier stage of their training where the learning environment may not be so conducive to learning than for experience practitioners.

*... Perhaps if nurses are in an area where the learning environment is not so good, it may be useful. I think it would be useful for undergraduates when they are learning. The experience of writing may be more useful then...*

**Student 13 [CR]**

Another respondent although she found journal writing useful and believed its use should be promoted thought it was a very demanding task along with all the other requirements of the education programme.

*I see reflection as part of my portfolio, not to the extent I had to do with the assignment I submitted. It helps you pick out things you have learnt I did not quite realise at the time I was learning so much but I do realise that now. I did however, struggle with the assignment and writing the journals for the course. It was just impossible. I was torn between the two with having to put so much effort into the assignment and the journal as well as meeting with my preceptor. I found it too much and as a result I did not get very good grades. I should have concentrated on the assignment, as it is the graded part. I found it difficult doing both...*

**Student 17 [CR]**

Another respondent stated that while journal writing is useful it seemed like an added burden with the other module requirements and that time management was a problem.

*... If I was to separate it out I would say it was a good thing that you can learn by writing things down but as part of the course it was an added burden to write the journal as well as complete all the other work...*

She went on to highlight the necessity of allocating adequate time to reflection and writing

*... I was really pushed for time... It takes time to discuss your particular learning needs with the preceptor and clarify issues and it takes time to write.*

**Student 6 [NR]**

Another respondent found that time management was also a problem.

*... The physical act of writing was an effort. It was worth it when I'd done it. Time was a real problem though...*

**Student 33 [R]**

A further respondent thought that journal writing may be useful for inexperienced nurses; however, she believed that for her the writing was something of a 'chore'

*...Perhaps people that are inexperienced may find journals useful, but I must admit I did find them a chore. All that paper work. You don't feel it is going to be beneficial. This is my personal view.*

This respondent believed that there were other ways of encouraging reflection as well as journal writing.

*... When I need to reflect on an episode I discuss the issues with colleagues at work. You review what happened and how you handled it. The people that I work with are very experienced and are supportive. At times there are experiences that we don't necessarily handle all that well. We talk and get peer support from the team. I would probably not have written a journal only I was doing a course. I would discuss issues with colleagues and perhaps have found alternative ways of handling situations better.*

**Student 18 [CR]**

Another respondent stated that while it was useful to reflect and also to write it down she preferred to have less structure involved and just talk about situations

*... I do think it has a benefit but I think it should be less structured. We have talked a lot about clinical supervision and its value in relieving stress and helping nurses to cope with what goes on in their practice. I think that is quite nice if you can sit down and talk to somebody who knows what you are talking about rather than actually writing a tremendous amount. How would you prove that you had actually done it? I don't know really.*

This respondent, while she had reservations about the value of a reflective journal seemed to think she had to be able to justify that reflection had occurred and if it were not written down it would be difficult to justify that it had happened. She went on to say that when she had completed her work and returned home in the evening she wanted to forget about what had happened during the day

*... I think that in a busy day it is a hard thing to actually do. When you get home you don't want to reflect. You need to 'switch off' and do other things. You can't always be linking back to work...*

**Student 10 [CR]**

Two other respondents also highlighted the value of being able to talk rather than write about their experiences.

One said

*... I feel it easier talking to someone about it at the time, getting the feelings out about it, experiencing it...*

**Student 33 [R]**

Another stated how she found it easier to talk and the model used was confusing

*... I find it much easier to talk than write. We reflect at work. I get confused with the Kolb's reflection cycle and where to write. I'd rather talk about it...*

She went on to say that she found the Kolb's framework restrictive.

*...Yes, if I could just write and say how it happened and what my thoughts were. I had trouble with the headings...*

**Student 28 [R]**

A number of respondents expressed concern with regard to issues related to confidentiality and the disclosure of information. They felt that their writing may be constrained and they were reluctant to write some reflections down.

One was concerned about the possible comeback if some information was recorded

*...You need to be careful about how you write things down. In some situations it is obvious who you are writing about and that may pose a problem. Students are inhibited in what they write as there may be comeback...*

**Student 41 [R]**

Another was concerned about confidentiality

*...Confidentiality is an issue... You have to be careful not to breach confidentiality. That might prevent the student from writing freely...*

**Student 14 [NR]**

Another questioned the value of handing in only part of a journal



*...I wouldn't write down anything that was really personal. You can take out something personal before handing it in, but that isn't much use to anybody...*

*Student 10 [CR]*

Another felt anxious about writing things down in her journal however, she felt reassured when she knew that only two people would see it

*... Initially, I didn't like writing things down. I was afraid who might read it. I felt reassured when I knew it was only the teacher and preceptor who would read it...*

*Student 40 [NR]*

A further respondent expressed concern about feeling vulnerable regarding issues of confidentiality

*Yes, I do believe that some students are concerned about the confidential nature of the material that may be written in journals. Yes, at times you do feel vulnerable...*

*Student 7 [R]*

## **5.9 GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM TEACHER/PRECEPTOR TO ASSIST WITH JOURNAL WRITING**

Overall the respondents were extremely positive regarding the support they received from their teachers and preceptors. A number found the task of journal writing most demanding and some questioned their value. Questioning in this area seemed to stimulate the students to talk about positive aspects of reflection and journal writing. However, some students expressed less positive views. A key area voiced was that of time management in relation to writing.

The positive aspects of teacher support will be considered. One respondent was extremely positive about the support received

*... The teacher's guidance was excellent. Yes, we had a briefing as a group, then individual support if required...*

*Student 7 [R]*

Another respondent although she did find the guidance useful, did not find the task easy.

*... I think the teacher did a very good job, they did their best. I found it difficult getting my head around it, that was my problem. I'm not academic. You could write in rough first and be given guidance. I think being the first one I did find it difficult...*

**Student 9 [CR]**

One respondent did not find the task easy however, she had previously undertaken a teaching and assessing course, which introduced her to reflection.

*...The teaching and assessing course introduced me to reflection and that helped my understanding. I didn't find it particularly easy but I did understand the concept. I'd come across reflection before. I did feel I had an understanding of what was expected but I did find it difficult reflecting in a reflective journal. I think this was more of a problem. The other reflections I had done before I hadn't to quote anyone or reference it. I found that the most difficult part really...*

**Student 10 [CR]**

Another was positive about the help given and she liked the framework used.

*...Yes, it was clear we did have the Kolb's cycle. It was clear to follow. I found Kolb fine to use...*

**Student 6 [NR]**

Another stated that she was also satisfied with the guidance given

*...The guidance from the teacher was fine. I did understand what to do. I completed it and handed it in at the end of the module...*

**Student 20 [NR]**

One respondent was critical of the support she received. However, her responses seemed to reflect other issues that she was concerned about. She questioned the value of writing a journal and was concerned about the disclosure of some information and also the issue of confidentiality.

*... I thought the staff could have been a bit more approachable. I realise they can't give you 'chapter and verse' on drafts, but very little of the good quality material was picked out. I didn't find it all that constructive. I found the demands of the assignment, the journal,*

*coming to lectures, and meeting with the preceptor was unacceptable. It was just too much to fit in...*

When asked how this could have been improved, the respondent stated

*... I don't think it was unfair to ask us to complete the journal. Given the nature of the work and the subject matter we are looking at. It was quite pertinent reflection as well as professional issues. Putting down personal feelings that you know are going to be looked at even though to a degree confidential you are handing those in and they are going to sit on a teacher's desk until marked or looked at also by the external examiner. You don't want any more people looking at what you have written as well as your preceptor and lecturer. You don't want other people prying into what you have written. It is private... I can see writing for some people is useful but not for others, it is not. It's very emotional...*

*Student 17 [CR]*

A small number of respondents stated that they would like more structure for journal writing and more guidance overall.

One stated

*...Yes, I would say look at the time for explaining what is required. Perhaps look at what reflection is and what journal writing is. When I started none of us knew what was required. We did receive quite a lot of guidance but I needed a lot more help...*

*Student 14 [NR]*

Another respondent also thought that there should be more guidance and that structure was necessary and there should be more flexibility allowed in relation to the episode chosen for reflection.

*... I think the journals are useful. People need guidance and structure and you need to get in the mood to write them! I want to pick out things along the way that I want to write about. Not what you are forced to choose...*

*Student 35 [NR]*

The students are normally given a broad area of focus for their reflection and are encouraged to select an episode related to the module. This student appeared not to want the specific subject area decided. She seemed to want to choose an episode she found interesting.

A further respondent asked that more guidance be given and suggested the use of examples of previously completed journals could be used for mature students.

*... I honestly believe that mature students who have never structured a reflective journal before could do with some clear guidance on how to write a journal. I can endorse this from speaking to other students. The concept can be difficult. I had no idea of reflection when I started to do journals. I knew it had something to do with linking theory and practice. I found that difficult to do. I didn't really understand what I had to do. If I'd had an opportunity to explore it as to why I was doing it that would have given me more of an idea of what to do. Also seeing more past examples of journals may have helped.*

When this respondent was asked if she sought any further help from the teachers she replied

*... Sorry this module was right at the beginning. I didn't have any experience of doing it before. I didn't ask and I learnt the hard way! That was my fault I should have asked. I cannot blame the tutor or the preceptor for that... I would say that it is more difficult than doing an assignment. It is something you have to learn... The teacher did offer time at the beginning of the session but there were a lot of people to see in a limited time...*

*Student 7 [R]*

A further respondent stated that if examples were made available that would be helpful.

*... Maybe a lot more examples would be helpful...*

*Student 28 [R]*

Mixed views were expressed in relation to the feedback received on their reflective writing.

*... I did receive written comments sometime later at the end of the module. I had then moved on to the next module. Feedback nearer to the time of writing would be helpful...*

*Student 14 [NR]*

Another commented that she received few comments

*...The comments that I received were few... The essay was marked but I don't think I got many comments on the journal...*

*Student 10 [CR]*

A range of very positive views were expressed regarding the support provided by preceptors in the practice areas

*... I think the preceptors are very useful. I am sorry that you cannot speak to mine she was excellent really. The interaction we had as well as what was written down was very useful. Other professionals are valuable. You dig deeper and find out more when you talk to people. Perhaps more than writing it down...*

**Student 10 [CR]**

One stated how helpful the preceptor had been

*... The preceptor was most helpful. She knew what was expected. She really was very helpful...*

**Student 9 [CR]**

One respondent pointed out that her preceptor was quite experienced and she provided good supervision

*... I did find it therapeutic at the time. I discussed it with the preceptor at the time. She gave me a different perspective on it. That for me was good. She was very positive she had done a lot before. Yes, it was very positive.*

**Student 18 [CR]**

Another respondent stated that she was a complete novice and valued the support of the preceptor even though she did not always make full use of the support available.

*... My preceptor was excellent. I was a complete novice in doing it. I had no experience at all. I really had to learn along the way. I should have asked but no I learnt by doing it myself but the support was there.*

She went on to say

*... . I didn't always make full use of the preceptor really. As I wrote the journal I got better at it. I did have some idea of what the various aspects of the model were. It really was learning myself.*

**Student 7 [R]**

A further respondent explained how the preceptor was supportive however, she realised it took time to understand what she was doing in relation to journal writing.

*... Yes, eventually it took some time to understand it. The preceptor was very good. The preceptor helped a lot. It just took me time...*

**Student 33 [R]**

One respondent although she did find the support of her preceptor useful also emphasised the importance of talking

*...It was really good to talk to the preceptor and to clarify things...*

**Student 14 [NR]**

Another stated that she found the preceptor support most helpful even though she did not have a lot of experience of writing journals.

*... My preceptor was a great support. She did not have any more experience than me at journal writing. She discussed areas with me. This helped me clarify my thoughts...*

**Student 20 [NR]**

## CHAPTER 6

### RESEARCH FINDINGS – TEACHERS INTERVIEWS

#### 6.1 ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS INTERVIEWS

##### 6.1.1 GUIDANCE GIVEN BY TEACHERS

The two teachers who had facilitated the four modules undertaken by students were interviewed in order to obtain their views on the support given to students to help them write their reflective journals [Appendices Eleven to Fourteen]. One of the teachers interviewed illustrated the type of support provided for students by using one module as an example. Both teachers highlighted the need to assess the students understanding of reflection and also their previous experience of using a reflective journal at the beginning of the module. It was then possible to tailor the preparation session accordingly. This information may be established at interview prior to the module commencing

*... The interview process gives us the opportunity to assess the students' level of familiarity with reflection and journal writing either from their portfolio or previous courses. That gives us some indication of individual styles and of what is expected of them when they start the modules. On the introductory day for the module we explain the module outcomes and the assessment strategy. The strategy requires the student to produce a journal using Kolb's cycle as a framework. However, if they prefer an alternative model that flexibility is encouraged... For the students who do not have much experience of reflection or journal writing we do emphasise during the preparation how to develop critical thinking skills, what reflection is, and how to reflect...*

Both teachers explained how they gave the students the opportunity to work through scenarios and view completed journals. It was anticipated that this would help students to see what was required.

*... I take a scenario and work through it with the student using the documentation... They get an opportunity to see other completed journals and see the levels of reflection and how students describe critical incidents and how they use the framework...*

One of the teachers used one of the modules as an example to illustrate how students were guided

*...During the module the students reflect on a focussed discussion so we talk about the fact that the experience would be in this area. It would involve their peers and colleagues, how they set it up, and who was present. During the reflection part we talked about the process of reflection, what actually happened, who was there, what were our thoughts and feelings at the time, did people say things that you didn't expect, how did that fit with the reading and your understanding around the area you are debating. Under the heading conceptualisation within the cycle I ask them to think about what they have written in their reflections and their understanding and to relate theory to practice with it. I expect them to incorporate literature. We ask the students to draw their own conclusions for practice and future patient care delivery...*

### 6.1.2 THE PRECEPTOR ROLE

One of the teachers also highlighted how she explored with students the role of the preceptor in supporting them during the module

*...We then discuss the role of the preceptor, as they are an integral part of the assessment strategy. When the students write up their reflections on a focussed discussion we expect the preceptor to be involved with the discussions and when it comes to reflection and conceptualisation we would expect them to ensure that the preceptor has access to their journal work, however if there are elements of their work that they don't want to submit that are personal they don't have to...The preceptor has the opportunity when students are thinking of reflection to challenge, to debate and maybe when you come to conceptualisation you may reshape your thinking through those discussions and possibly in terms of your future practice... The discussions may also include thinking about future changes or issues that the student has not necessarily have thought of so we actually take the preceptor as being an integral part of the process and having the right to ask them to go back to the reflections and rethink. The discussions with the preceptor are extremely useful...*

One of the teachers went on to describe the relationship involving the student, teacher and preceptor and how this type of support provided helped the student grow personally and professionally.

*...The preceptor completes the triangle in the process with ourselves and the student. We do explain to the student that we would be happy to discuss any aspect of the journal that they wish emh...if there is something that is particularly challenging them or they are uncertain about I am happy to see that it is a formative process about development and learning. It is not just something that they have to do and hand in it is about growth both personally and professionally and we talk about personal and professional growth...*



### **6.1.3 PRECEPTORS VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF JOURNALS**

While both teachers highlighted the important role provided by the preceptor in supporting students they were aware that they had mixed views on the role of reflective journals in promoting reflection.

*... Those who have been students on the programme themselves and quite a lot of them have been are very positive. They have strong feelings about the benefits of reflection and the interrelationship between reflection and practice. Other preceptors who are new to the programme and do not have experience of using reflective journals or have not seen the value of them personally are often less positive. I think some of the preceptors actually see it as another piece of work that the students have to do emh...I would say that those who actually undergo preceptorship and see some students successfully through are so much more positive...*

The students also share these mixed views on the value of journals. One teacher expressed these views by indicating the student's response.

*... Their responses range from 'I don't know why I have to do this journal work to Oh! I think it was really good...*

One of the teacher's described how some students with little experience of journal writing expressed concern about how to write a journal

*... Those who have not had much experience before are more uncertain, I find students are anxious about whether they have written the correct information in the appropriate sections of the journal. They often focus on this more than expressing their thoughts and feelings. The structure is an issue.*

The teachers went on to talk about how the students would share issues from the journal and although initially apprehensive about doing so, often found it useful and appreciated the support provided by their teachers to aid this process

*... Emh! They are uncertain normally at the outset emh... because they are worried about what is going to happen. With this particular module they have been asked to reflect on a focussed discussion and they are often looking at emotive and sensitive issues and potentially difficult discussions. They don't know how it is going to go and therefore when you ask them to come and share issues in a group they are a bit anxious about it. However, once we have undertaken the discussions usually what happens is they come and say 'I did really well; some really interesting things came out of it. I really need to think about this more.'*

One of the teachers went on to say that as this module was the last core module in the programme and that students were by this stage experienced in reflecting. Generally they were able to articulate their thoughts and feelings better.

***... This is the last core module and the majority of the students by this time emh...they are able to articulate their thoughts and feelings in a group and share sensitive material emh ...without feeling too uncomfortable...***

Within the modules undertaken by the students involved in this study there was a requirement to show evidence that they had integrated theory and practice which was assessed by the preceptor. As part of this process the students were required to reflect on an episode of care or a focused discussion and record their reflections in a journal. This could be used as a formative learning tool however; it also formed part of the summative assessment of practice, which was assessed by the preceptor. This element of assessment was not given a numerical score. The practice outcomes are assessed using specific performance criteria. One of the teachers emphasised how she saw the reflective journal as being integral to the practice assessment.

***... The practice element is focused around the learning outcomes. The journal work and the preceptor's process recordings therefore have to provide evidence of achievement of those learning outcomes. The actual wordage that the preceptor writes in the process recordings and the student's own reflections need to address the learning outcomes so it is summative. They are integral to the process. The theory and practice element are of equal importance and both elements are equally weighted and therefore the emphasis for the student and the preceptor changes totally because it is seen as summative and it isn't an option... The programme was revalidated in 1998 and we decided to add a statement on the evidence presented by the student and preceptor being part of the summative assessment.***

#### **6.1.4 FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY STUDENTS ON THEIR JOURNAL ENTRIES**

Another important element with regard to the guidance given by the teacher was feedback on the reflective journals, which has been submitted as part of

the assessment process. The teachers stated that they gave ongoing feedback if the student requested it during the module. However, the feedback was mainly written on the journal and returned to the student following the completion of the module

*... On the documentation there is a section for feedback and we make comments there. When I read the journals I make comments of a formative nature. We highlight key learning points and we see levels of reflection and good analysis or if there were unanswered questions. Any student that is having difficulty with reflection we would make an appointment to see them and look at how they structured the journal entries. If they are not undertaking further modules on this programme I invite them to come and talk about their journal entries. They value the feedback, as do the preceptors. Feedback is given to preceptors at their preparation workshops...*

Another area highlighted by teachers was that they emphasised when guiding students throughout the module was the allocation of time for reflection and writing the journal. Students often express concern about having to allocate so much time to this aspect of the module

*...Yes, I am conscious of the fact that for many of them it is difficult getting time with the preceptor as many students work full-time as well as study... They need time to reflect and have meaningful discussions with their preceptor. I advise students that reflection is not just done as a 'one off'. You need to come back to it and rethink issues over the period of the module. You may well come back even several months later... All this takes time...*

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS – PRECEPTOR INTERVIEWS**

#### **7.1 ANALYSIS OF PRECEPTOR INTERVIEWS**

Following the interviews of five respondents from each of the categories of non-reflector, reflector and critical reflectors, one preceptor who had supported a student from each of the categories was randomly selected for interview. The aim of the interview was to seek their views on the preparation that they had received for their role in supporting students with journal writing in the practice setting. Their views on the support required by the student were also obtained and they were asked if the teachers could provide any further guidance to enhance their role in supporting students during the practice component of the module. The students are required to achieve practice outcomes for each of the modules [Appendix Eleven to Fourteen]. They also were required to select an episode or critical incident to reflect upon and record their reflections in the journal. They discuss their progress with their preceptor during the module, which often involves focusing on the reflections recorded, and their relationship to practice.

##### ***7.1.1 PREPARATION FOR THEIR ROLE IN SUPPORTING STUDENTS***

Firstly, to consider their responses in relation to whether they found the preparation provided by the teachers responsible for the module had prepared them adequately for their role. All three preceptors attended a preparatory workshop at the beginning of the module that the students were undertaking and they valued the preparation received. A number of the preceptors were invited to attend the education centre on the same day to discuss their role in supporting students. One of the preceptors stated that

although she had received preparation for the role it was the actual experience of supporting students that was necessary in order to really appreciate what was expected.

*... In a way I felt that you had to feel your way along. I did the preparation. You are not always quite sure though. It wasn't until you did it that you felt you knew what was expected. It was a learning process for the student as well as the preceptor.*

She went on to say that having been a student herself previously on the same module had been a useful experience.

*...Yes, I did use a journal before. It was invaluable to have been a student before being a preceptor... You know what to expect from the student and also as a student you know what to expect from the preceptor.*

*Preceptor 1  
Student [CR]*

Another preceptor highlighted aspects of the preparations that were helpful

*... I went to the Hospice for a half day. We went through the course requirements and the role of the preceptor. I've been a preceptor twice and I did the course myself four years ago. I've been on a refresher course and that helped. The tutors were very helpful. They encouraged us to get in touch if there were any problems. That was fine.*

*Preceptor 2  
Student [R]*

A third preceptor also highlighted that the preparation she received was most adequate and talked about the specific details of the preparation

*...Yes, I do think it was quite adequate. We had a preceptor study day on more than one occasion. For this programme we had a preceptor half day. We met preceptors from other areas, which was helpful. We 'ironed out' some common concerns. We talked through the module content with the use of the documentation that the students would be using and the reflective journal was one of the documents...I took out of the day what I actually needed perhaps I could have asked more... it is difficult to say really because you go on your own experience...*

*Preceptor 3  
Student [NR]*

### **7.1.2 TYPE OF SUPPORT REQUIRED BY STUDENTS TO ASSIST THEM WITH JOURNAL WRITING.**

The type of support the students required was variable. Some of the students were quite confident to write in their journals and did not necessarily want the preceptor to read the content or discuss it. Others appreciated the preceptor's views on their reflections and they valued the opportunity to discuss the link between theory and practice. One preceptor emphasised how the student she supported found talking through issues helpful and she valued the preceptor's comments on what she had written. She also stated the importance of setting specific times to meet with the student during the module to discuss progress.

*... The student found it useful to chat through things and say do you think this is what is required? That sort of thing... She wrote things in rough and said should I include this information? Should I enlarge on that?... I'm sure it was nice for them to talk it through and have it confirmed that what they were thinking was appropriate...*

She went on to say

*... I found it was important to make appointments at the beginning of the module and to meet fortnightly or on a regular basis and even if it was only for a short period or sometimes for longer. It was important to have deadlines because it was something for the student to work towards and it helps monitor the progress of the module...*

**Preceptor 1  
Student [CR]**

A second preceptor stated that the student she supported required very little guidance. She did however, read what the student had written

*... This student was keen and she turned out a lot of work. She read a lot and was able to relate her reading to the work on the ward. She didn't have a problem with journal writing...She was quite happy for me to read what she wrote...She felt embarrassed when it was rough work...*

**Preceptor 2  
Student [R]**

The third preceptor emphasised that the support she gave was related to discussing the content of journal entries and any anticipated problems. The student's previous experience of using a journal was helpful.

*... I was fortunate that the student was familiar with the reflective journal. She had used it on previous courses. The support I gave was to discuss things that she was going to write in the journal and any problems she had anticipated...*

On further questioning she highlighted how she worked with the student

*... I don't always read everything they write. I would tend to discuss it and she tells me in general what the context of her journal is and I feel with this student that was effective...*

**Preceptor 3  
Student [NR]**

This preceptor expressed concern about the fact that students had to reference their journal content and believed that this may inhibit the students writing style.

*... In general when we discussed reflective journals the fact that they have to do them with a particular module... sometimes they were done in a false sense. They were doing them because they were told they had to do them. There wasn't so much of a natural input as we felt should be in a reflective journal. I felt that the ones that were false were the ones that you had to reference because you tended to make the scenarios fit into the references you could find.*

When asked if she thought that this inhibited students, she said

*... I don't think they write as freely when they have to reference it because they are looking for references to fit into their experience and I felt that on occasions they falsified the experience to fit in with the research. It prevents you writing freely from the heart... these things should be...you don't get what you should at the end of it... you get things that look good on paper as opposed to learning from the experience...*

**Preceptor 3  
Student [NR]**

### **7.1.3 FURTHER GUIDANCE REQUIRED TO ENACT THE PRECEPTOR ROLE**

One of the preceptors felt that it was important for them to talk to other preceptors who had supported students and also talk to the teachers for the module. She also suggested a debriefing meeting for preceptors as many of

the areas being discussed with the student were difficult and she questioned whom the preceptors could talk to following a discussion with the student on such issues.

*... It could be helpful to have a meeting and an update on what is expected in the light of having carried out the role. It would be helpful for the preceptors to talk to each other about the experience and also to talk to the teacher. Yes, peer support, a group meeting. We are anxious to do the best for students; we don't want to let them down as they put in a lot of hard work. You always want to improve on what you do... Yes, it would be useful to know what other people are feeling like following discussions with the student. I know the content of the discussions is confidential between you and the student but the associated feelings could be discussed with other preceptors. They may be going through similar things but we don't have a forum to discuss issues. That may be useful for the future...*

**Preceptor 1**  
**Student [CR]**

A second preceptor felt that the written guidelines for the use of documentation could be simplified to aid understanding

*... The written guidelines for both the preceptor and students are ambiguous. I'm sure they could be written in a simpler form and easier to understand. It's the jargon. It's frightening for the students and when I look at even though I have been through it before, it is just too much...*

**Preceptor 2**  
**Student [R]**

The third preceptor felt that the preparation for the role was most adequate. There was little more that could be undertaken to improve on the present system.

*...I don't think anything more could have been done necessarily. The teachers did say that they could be contacted if there were any problems so if people were 'struggling' they had that option...*

**Preceptor 3**  
**Student [NR]**

This preceptor did, however go on to emphasise that the journal was only a tool to aid reflection and that the importance of talking through issues should not be underestimated and indeed for some students it may be more valuable than writing.



*... Yes, the journal is only a tool. I found it was more beneficial to allow the student to talk about things with me. She liked to exchange ideas. She found that more useful and much less time consuming. I do recognise that journals may be useful but they should not replace talking about issues and not be too rigid and absolutely essential to complete. I'd like to see journals used in a more relaxed way and not having to complete so many. On the Palliative Care Programme students have lots to complete. They have less significance if they to produce too many. There appears to be some duplication as they are writing it up anyway for their assignment...*

The preceptor also thought that there was duplication of work as she had to write a long episode on what had been discussed with the student in the journal, which was similar to what the student had written

*... I had to write a long episode as well about what we had discussed. I thought it was duplicating what the student was writing in the journal as well. Perhaps there could be some consensus so as to suit both parties really. It was reflected on twice...*

**Preceptor 3**  
**Student [NR]**

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **DISCUSSION**

The aim of this study was to explore the use of reflective journals in the promotion of reflection and learning in post-registration nursing students. In order to achieve this aim an analysis of previously completed reflective journals was undertaken to determine the extent and level of reflection achieved by students. The use of a reflective journal as an educational strategy for facilitating reflection and learning in the practice setting was examined. The nature and content of guidance given to students by their teachers, and the support provided by preceptors in the practice setting were also examined.

#### **8.1 REFLECTIVITY OF STUDENTS AS DEMONSTRATED WITHIN THE REFLECTIVE JOURNALS.**

The findings related to the analysis of the reflective journals will be discussed. The process of analysis of the journals involved determining the extent and level of reflection achieved by students during a module of learning. The respondents had undertaken one of four modules as part of the Diploma in Professional Studies in Palliative Care Nursing, or the Diploma in Professional Studies in Breast Care Nursing.

An analysis of the reflective journals completed by respondents in this study demonstrated reflectivity mainly at the level of attending to feelings, and association. Reflection at the level of integration was demonstrated less frequently, according to the model of reflection devised by Boud et al. [1985] and adapted by Wong et al. [1995]. These levels could be considered to be

the first level of reflectivity or the non-critical level as described by Wong et al. [1995], prior to moving to the next level of validation, appropriation and the outcome of reflection. The second level corresponds with 'critical reflectivity' as described by Mezirow et al. [1990]. Respondents who reached a level of critical reflectivity have achieved some of the stages at the non-critical level. Many of the students who achieved at the non-critical levels of reflectivity did not achieve at a critical level. The findings of this study seem to support the work of Boud et al. [1985] and mirror the findings of a study by Wong et al. [1995], which suggests that the reflective processes may proceed in this type of sequence. *While many of the students have been able to demonstrate levels of reflectivity, there were a number who were not able to demonstrate any reflective elements within their journal recordings. They recorded their reflections as a descriptive catalogue, highlighting the care given to patients. While the students had returned to the experience as part of the reflective process, they appeared unable to write analytically about the process. They described how they had planned care delivery in the fields of Breast Care and Palliative Care Nursing and implemented appropriate actions. This accords with Lister's experience of using journals with Mental Health and General Nursing students [Lister, 1984]. Button and Davies, [1996] also had a similar experience with undergraduate nursing students using learning logs. Only a small percentage of the students in this study were able to demonstrate that they were able to turn their experience into another potential learning experience.*

## **8.2 ANALYSIS OF STUDENT REFLECTION USING THE BOUD et al. (1985) MODEL ADAPTED BY WONG et al. (1995)**

The first three components of the Boud model can be separated from the latter three, which corresponds with the features of 'premise' or critical reflection as described by Mezirow et al. [1990]. The elements of the reflective process do not follow in a linear fashion as described by Boud et al. [1985]. These processes should not be thought of as stages through which to pass, but elements of a whole. However, some elements tend to follow others. In general the processes tend to proceed in a sequence, which may involve many cycles between the stages, repetition of important elements, and delaying over particularly significant components. All the stages are influenced by the intent of the learner; therefore some stages are omitted while others are brought together. This can be demonstrated for example by Student [41] [Table 4] who did not demonstrate achievement within the category of attending to feelings, however, she did achieve at the level of association. Boud et al. [1985] suggest that learners do not wish to subject all their experiences to the same level of reflective analysis. They suggest that there are some events in our lives that we prefer to forget and others that we like to cherish as memories.

In some instances it was possible to allocate the various levels of reflection to the textual material within the journals while in others, it was more difficult. This was due to some similarities in the criteria agreed within the model. Therefore, the interpretation for example between elements of association and integration was at times similar, which was also experienced by Wong et al. [1995] and Spencer and Newell [1999] in their studies. The level of reliability achieved may therefore have affected the coding of results. It could

be argued that it might be more appropriate to use criteria that could be more broadly interpreted.

The Boud et al. model [1985] appeared to be the most appropriate model available that clearly identified levels of reflectivity. It offered a clear description of the concept of reflection as indicated by Wong et al. [1995], and it promoted critical reflection as identified by Mezirow et al. [1990]. It may also lead to perspective transformation and learning. Spencer and Newell [1999] also highlighted these features as being important aspects of this model in their study. These factors therefore influenced the choice of model used. This however, was not the model used by the students in this study as a framework to encourage reflection within their journals which were subjected to analysis. The students had used the model devised by Kolb [1984], which suggests that the learner should focus on an experience or a critical incident. They reflect on different aspects of an episode and create concepts and integrate observations into theories that they apply to decision-making and problem solving in relation to future practice. The aim is to develop a changed perspective for the future. The model by Boud et al. [1985] adapted by Wong et al. [1995] identified finer levels of reflection. While the overall process of reflection and learning was being encouraged using the Kolb model, the Boud model detailed the reflective components in more specific detail. Therefore, it could be argued that if the students had been encouraged to use the Boud framework, they may have written their reflections with the specific headings in mind, which may have influenced the content of the journals.

Spencer and Newell [1999] undertook a study to examine whether giving support to students in the form of written educational material could

significantly improve nurses' reflective ability. The results suggest that it is possible to improve the reflective ability of trained nurses with a simple educational package that was based on the model by Boud et al. [1985]. The nurses involved in the study demonstrated significantly better reflective ability following education, once participants who were already at the critical reflector level prior to education were removed from the analysis. Even though the overall process of encouraging reflection may be similar the fact that the students in this study used a different model within their journals to that used for analysis may have affected the levels demonstrated in the journals. This could be considered to be a limitation within this study. Foster and Greenwood [1998] suggest that reflective frameworks need to be utilised effectively to assist in the guidance of learners attempting to reflect at an appropriate level of reflection. More specifically nurse educators should be aware of the level of reflection the various frameworks are promoting, as this is not always explicit.

At the beginning of the modules students in this study were given specific guidance regarding the use of the Kolb Cycle as a framework. This was the model of choice being used in the school where the education programmes were delivered. When interviewed respondents overall expressed favourable comments in relation to the use of this framework. The journals analysed had been completed prior to the research being undertaken.

An analysis of the content of the journals in relation to the Boud et al. [1985] model and adapted by Wong et al. [1995] will now be discussed. Boud et al. [1985] discuss how utilising positive feelings in relation to a situation is important in that it provides an impetus to persist in challenging situations. They can help one see events more sharply and provide a basis for new

affective learning. In this study, a number of the respondents expressed positive attitudes in relation to how they felt confident in relation to care delivery and specific aspects of communication. However, a number of respondents expressed negative feelings in relation to challenging areas of care delivery in their respective fields. This included feeling isolated and anxious about making appropriate decisions on aspects of symptom control, death, and dying. They found dealing with death and dying extremely stressful and anxiety provoking. Taylor [1990] and Cox et al. [1991] suggest that nurses often find the process of reflection painful and need encouragement to facilitate the process. Newell [1992] suggests that anxiety affects both the acquisition and recall of information. Therefore, in order for practitioners to engage in effective reflection, he suggests that they need effective anxiety management. This may take the form of avoiding or escaping from anxiety provoking situations in order to perform other, less threatening, but also necessary tasks which are maladaptive techniques. By contrast once avoidances have been identified the practitioners with the support of other experienced nurses may be encouraged gradually and repeatedly to attempt the avoided behaviours whilst journal keeping continues. He recommends that feedback on their growing confidence and competence should be given. Some aspects of this strategy particularly in relation to avoiding or escaping from anxiety provoking situations may be difficult to achieve for respondents in this study as they all encountered death and dying frequently within the field of Palliative Care and Breast Care. Ongoing support therefore needs to be provided particularly for less experienced practitioners. Respondents in this study did however, appreciate the support they received from their teachers and preceptors in the practice

setting and explained that they had an opportunity to discuss the content of their journal entries, and the actions taken during the module. This may have helped to minimise their anxiety levels, which may have aided the reflective process. However, having recognised these challenging areas the respondents took appropriate action to enable them to achieve positive outcomes in relation to care delivery. This involved for example, working with other agencies to relieve the demands of some aspects of care delivery. Some of the respondents reflected on a focussed discussion that had previously taken place related to an aspect of care delivery, while others reflected directly on an episode of care.

Most of the reflective elements demonstrated within the journals fell within the category of association, and the respondents overall expressed positive views regarding their ability to connect ideas and feelings that had occurred during reflection with their existing knowledge and attitudes. Hounsel [1976], Hoffman [1983], Fulwiler [1986], and Osterman [1990], support this view and suggest that through reflecting, students discover relationships and gain insights that they might otherwise miss. The respondents recorded in a positive way that their enhanced knowledge had improved their ability to deliver direct patient care and also seemed to improve their communication with carers.

A range of both positive and negative feelings associated with care delivery and their role as practitioners were expressed. Some respondents were able to reassess their prior feelings and recognise when they were no longer consistent with the new feelings in the examples illustrated. Callister [1993] suggests that the opportunity to release feelings about clinical experiences



with emotion and candour is valued by students. This view was also supported by Bleakley (2000).

Only one respondent demonstrated that she was able to reassess previous attitudes and anticipate where attitude change was necessary.

A small number of respondents were able to demonstrate a new insight following the integration of prior knowledge, feelings and attitudes with the new. Boud et al. [1985] highlighted how associations need to be processed to examine whether or not they are meaningful. If they can be integrated into the new whole, a pattern of ideas and attributes develops. The respondents demonstrated that they were seeking relationships that had been observed through the association of ideas and feelings and were able to draw conclusions and arrive at insights, which is the basis for further reflective activity. This was reflected in the delivery of specific aspects of clinical care, and interpersonal communication with clients and carers.

The process of validation was not demonstrated in the journals by any of the respondents. This process involves testing for internal consistency between the new appreciation and existing knowledge and beliefs. While it is anticipated that respondents may have experienced this level of thinking during the process of reflection they had not recorded reflections to demonstrate that this was the case. Students therefore may have had some reservations about exposing all their thoughts, in case the negative experience or testing inconsistencies might indicate their weaknesses in planning and delivery of care.

Boud et al. [1985] highlighted how for some learning tasks it may be quite sufficient for us to have integrated the new knowledge, which has arisen from the experience. The new information which has been integrated needs to be

appropriated in a very personal way if it is to belong to the individual. Some learning can become so related to the self that it enters into our sense of identity and can have a considerable importance and becomes a significant force in our lives. Significant feelings may come to be attached to this type of learning and any learning experience which occurs in this area can give rise to strong emotions and may need to be taken into account in future reflection. Rogers [1969] recognises this reality in relation to the experiential character of learning. It has been suggested that appropriated knowledge becomes part of our value system and is less amenable to change than other knowledge which we accept and work with but do not necessarily make our own to the same degree. It is difficult to predict which learning will become such a central part of ourselves. It is expected that individuals will select those experiences that they find are significant to them and ensure that they are processed in the most appropriate way.

The respondents who were able to demonstrate this level of reflection, stated that on gaining new knowledge they wanted to make it their own. They wished to use it with a specific focus in mind in relation to care of patients and their relatives in the field of Palliative Care and Breast Care. They felt confident to use their newly found knowledge in this way.

Boud et al. [1985] emphasised the importance of the outcome of reflection in developing a new perspective. This was also recognised by Mezirow [1981]. He described the outcome of reflection as learning, and highlighted the fact that reflective processes are involved in the development of a new perspective on the situation. Boud et al. [1985] discuss in some detail the outcomes of reflection, and suggest that there are both affective and cognitive changes, which may or may not lead to behavioural changes.

Mezirow [1981] also argues that both synthesis and evaluation are crucial to the development of a new perspective or perspective transformation. He describes this stage as being synonymous with the Habermas theory of emancipatory action [Habermas 1971]. He also suggests that it is central to adult learning, and saw a 'meanings perspective' as being important for adult learners as they develop a critical awareness based on past experiences in a current context. He goes on to say that a 'meanings perspective' refers to the structure of cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated to and transformed by one's past experience. Mezirow [1981] also states that we acquire a 'meanings perspective' of our culture, and that individuals have the propensity to become critically aware which is distinctly an adult capacity. This is achieved through perspective transformation, which is a guiding paradigm for practitioners.

Johns [1995, 2000, 2001] suggests that reflection will encourage reflexivity through the assimilation of learning with existing personal knowledge. This involves a personal deconstruction and reconstruction of the existing knowledge in interpreting and responding to clinical situations. As a consequence the practitioner is able to respond to new situations with a changed perspective, which ultimately benefits patient care [Alsop 1995]. Hanson [1996] emphasised the fact that in order to sustain the change involved in moving to new a new perspective, support may be required. Of the forty-two respondents in this study, it was surprising that only five were able to demonstrate this level of reflection in their journal and therefore classified as critical reflectors. The remainder of the respondents who were either classified as non-reflectors or reflectors were unable to demonstrate this level. The preceptors who were interviewed, however, stated that they

were able to verify within the student's practice documents that the students had reflected and that they were implementing changes as a result. The preceptors who were interviewed highlighted that they discussed with the students the link between theory and practice and were satisfied with the actions taken by the students in relation to patient care delivery. It may be that the students did not consider that it was necessary to detail the outcomes of reflection in their journal as they had previously discussed the process with their preceptor who seemed satisfied with their achievement. Throughout the interviews a number of the respondents and preceptors stressed how they preferred to talk about their reflections, rather than write them in their journals. This may have influenced whether or not the respondents decided to record the outcome of their reflections in the journal. Following the analysis to identify the extent and levels of reflection from the journals the students were placed in the category of non-reflector, reflector and critical reflector based on the work of Mezirow et al. [1990], Mezirow [1991]. Special features could be identified within each of the categories. From their recordings in the reflective journals non-reflectors wrote in a descriptive style and showed no evidence of reflective thinking. The reflectors showed evidence of attending to feelings, association and or integration however, they did not show evidence that they had changed their perspective. The critical reflectors had attained reflection at the level of validation, appropriation, and/or outcome of reflection. It is therefore possible to make this distinction using Boud et al. [1985] model. At times the fine differentiation of levels was difficult. The discrimination from the first three levels of reflection [attending to feelings, association, and integration] from the other higher three levels was, however, possible. The percentage of

respondents falling into the categories of non-reflector, reflector and critical reflector was similar to those in the study by Wong et al. [1995]. The presenting features were also similar.

### **8.3 REFLECTIVE JOURNALS AS AN EDUCATIONAL STRATEGY FOR FACILITATING REFLECTION**

The use of a reflective journal as an educational strategy for facilitating reflection and learning in the practice setting will now be discussed. In order to examine this area interviews were undertaken with a sample of respondents irrespective of which module they had undertaken from the three categories of non-reflector, reflector, and critical reflector in order to obtain their views on the use of reflective journals in promoting reflection and learning. While the respondents interviewed were categorised into these three areas, the interview transcripts were analysed with a view to obtaining their views on the role of the reflective journal in promoting reflection and not to establish the level of reflection achieved. While it is evident from the extracts of the respondents' interviews, the category to which they belonged, no attempt was made to analyse their comments in relation to their reflective ability. A wide range of positive and negative views were expressed with regard to the value of journals as an educational strategy in promoting reflection from the respondents in all three categories. The views expressed however, were largely positive regarding their usefulness. A small number of respondents did however, question their value. Respondents expressed a range of positive and negative views more or less equally, irrespective of whether they were classified as non-reflectors, reflectors, and critical reflectors. No attempt was made to analyse their views in relation to their designated category of reflection. Their views were considered overall.

The respondents who stated positive views regarding the role of journals in promoting reflection, related how they felt that writing about very difficult and sad experiences from the field of Palliative Care and Breast Care was often cathartic. They related how it helped them to come to terms with some of the very challenging issues, they faced with care delivery.

Some of the respondents stated that it was useful to record reflections; however they did find the writing process difficult. These views were supported in a study undertaken by Jasper [1999] to explore the perceptions of nurses on the value of written reflection. The study demonstrated that nurses often found the process of journal writing difficult initially. It was suggested that whilst verbal reflection occurs spontaneously, written reflection is not a natural process. However, it was suggested that the technique could be learnt and practised. It was emphasised that part of the challenge of reflective writing was moving from a largely verbal culture in nursing that is unstructured, to organising and structuring the reflective process formally. The process also involved using a different language and context. The key here was the discipline of structured writing. It appeared that once the person had developed a certain format, or approach to writing, it became more disciplined and to some extent easier. Evidence showed that eventually individuals became more skilled in analysing their experiences and evaluating their learning. These views were in keeping with those of the respondents in this study.

The respondents in this study felt that writing reflections in a journal made them more aware of the problems they were encountering and it helped them focus and consolidate their thoughts. A small number stated that although they had reflected, they did not believe it was always necessary to write it

down. There was also a view expressed that journal writing may be more useful for students at an earlier stage of their education programme rather than for experienced practitioners, whom they considered were already reflecting effectively.

With regard to helping them reflect on feelings in relation to the experience, most of the respondents interviewed believed that writing in a journal did help them reflect on their feelings and that it contributed to a positive outcome for them. They talked about how writing had helped them to unburden themselves in relation to emotional and social reflections. Bleakley [2000] supported this view and highlighted the confessional qualities of creative writing. One respondent stated that she had felt guilty in relation to the delivery of episodes of care when she did not have the specialist knowledge to assist her to make decisions at that time. She did however, obtain the relevant information from other experienced practitioners, so that care delivery was not jeopardised in any way. The knowledge was subsequently gained as the education programme progressed.

Two respondents did not believe that writing helped them reflect on the feelings associated with the experience. They believed that it was sufficient to think through the episode, talk about it, and decide the appropriate action for the future. They did not see the need to write in a journal. Cameron and Mitchell [1993] relate how despite the promise that journal writing will enhance students' ability to reflect on their clinical learning experiences they found that not all students respond positively to journal writing as a learning tool. Jenson and Denton [1991] in using journals with rehabilitation students found that a small minority of students reported facts and information rather than reflecting on their experiences. Their findings suggest that reflective

journals may be more suited to some people than to others. Holland [1989] found that some students complain bitterly about the requirement to write a journal, while Cassidy and Luxton [1992] found that some students were noticeably indifferent to the whole activity. Wellard and Bethune [1996] related how some students adopted a minimalist approach, writing very small and uninhabited entries to meet the requirement for a pass grade. Others did not write at all, and some wrote fictional accounts of idealised practice. It may be that different methods of encouraging reflection need to be developed for those students who prefer techniques other than writing. The importance of the role in promoting reflection through dialogue may need to be emphasised.

Overall positive views were also expressed regarding the role of writing in relation to promoting analysis. Respondents talked about how writing helped them return to issues and review them more deeply. They stated that part of their analysis also involved undertaking further reading which enhanced their understanding of the topics under discussion.

In a study by Jasper [1999] to explore nurses' perceptions of the value of written reflection a tentative suggestion indicated that writing appears to provide a mechanism through which nurses can develop analytical and critical skills, which then impacts on the conduct of professional practice. Jasper's study identified two key elements involved in the use of reflective writing by nurses. Firstly, the utility identified by other authors that writing is seen as facilitating learning as a process in its own right [Cayne 1995, Paterson 1995]. This suggest that these nurses have discussed the writing to learn paradigm described by Allen et al [1989] which is characterised by the use of a commonly held assumption that writing provides evidence of or the



end result of learning. Secondly, that reflective writing was seen to play a part in the development of analytical and critical skills, which was supported by the views of respondents in this study. Jasper [1999] suggests that reflective writing also appears to provide a medium for nurses to explore themselves. Whilst this can be threatening it is seen as an immensely personal and relatively safe way of admitting strengths and weaknesses and developing as a result of dealing with these factors. These observations support the conclusions of Atkins and Murphy [1993] who as a result of a literature review on reflective practice suggest that there are certain pre-requisites and attributes which a person needs to have in order to reflect successfully. These relate to levels of maturity, self-awareness and language skills, which are essential components of the reflective process. This also reflects the findings of Yataoka-Yahiro and Saylor [1994] who propose that critical thinking in nursing is reflective and reasonable thinking about nursing problems often without a single solution, and is focused on deciding what they believe and do. These views also provide some evidence to support the findings of the American Philosophical Association [1990] in describing the attributes of a critical thinker. Callister [1993], Baker [1996] and Williams and Wilkins [1999] suggest strongly that journal writing and reflective summary writing enhances critical thinking, organises thought and thereby improves analyses and synthesis.

Overall respondents expressed extremely positive views with regard to the value of journal writing in relation to creating ideas which link theory and practice. They believed that writing helped them to think of issues more deeply, and link the classroom learning with their practice and were able to demonstrate this by citing specific examples. Hahnemann [1986] used

specific journal assignments to help students to learn content, to solve problems, and to think creatively. She believed that journal writing encouraged and facilitated making connections between theory and practice. Callister [1993] highlighted the fact that one of the benefits of journal writing was to help the student link with self, with nursing, and the health care system. She also believed that through active and integrated learning, the journal helps the student make essential linkages between theory, research, and clinical practice. Cameron and Mitchell [1993] and Jasper [1999] also supported this view. Wagenaar [1984] and Lukinsky [1990] emphasised the value of journal writing in the integration and application of knowledge.

One respondent questioned the value of journals in relation to creating ideas which link theory and practice, and stated that she preferred to discuss issues rather than write them down. This view was expressed by a small number of the students and also a preceptor. A small number of the respondents also felt that referencing the journal with supporting literature spoilt its effect, and interfered with the flow of writing. This view was also supported by a preceptor. One preceptor was concerned that students may decide to write about scenarios that they could find related literature to support, rather than choose one that they perceived may provide a more useful learning experience. The teachers however, encouraged this practice with their students, as they believed that reviewing the literature related to an episode enhanced the students learning.

All the respondents interviewed were extremely positive about the value of journal writing in relation to enhancing their awareness of the learning achieved, and its application to practice. The respondents felt that they were not always aware of their learning at the time, and that returning to the

episode during the process of writing was most useful. Hahnemann [1986] highlighted that in her experience it often took students a long time, often a whole semester to recognise the value of journal writing in relation their learning. Respondents did however, comment on the fact that they actually had learnt much more than they realised when they read through their journal at the end of a period of learning. Wagenaar [1984] who used journals with sociology students provided anecdotal evidence which suggested that they were really surprised to find how much they had learnt and retained as a result of using a journal. Van Manen [1990] suggests that the act of writing in and of itself is powerful. It measures our thoughtfulness, it encourages the ability to see, and it can become a means to a different way of knowing. There appeared to be a heightened awareness of the learning that was needed to assist with future care delivery. Respondents however, did recognise where there were deficits in their knowledge. They were able to state the actions that they would take in relation to enhancing communication skills. They related how they had purchased relevant books to enhance their knowledge in specific areas for example, on the action of analgesic drugs. One respondent, when questioned in this area, did not find completing the journal useful and only did so because it was required. Mitchell [1994] highlighted the fact that student midwives had expressed negative feelings about the use of reflective journal writing in education. The main areas of concern appeared to be the difficulty in expressing their thoughts and feelings, and issues related to confidentiality and the intrusion of privacy. They suggested that the provision of adequate support and guidance was essential. Jensen and Denton [1991] found that despite instructions directing student's journals to be used for reflection, a minority of the Physical Therapy

students kept journals in an abbreviated form without any discussion or reflection on their experience. This echoes the reports of others who have found that a minority of the students do not adapt well to journal writing [Holland, 1989, Cassidy and Luxton 1992]. Whether the students have problems because they misunderstand the purpose of the journal, or because they dislike the task is unclear and worth investigating. It does raise the issue of journals not being suited to all students or all situations.

Lyons [1999] highlighted the fact that despite providing information on journal writing, often the kind and quality of students' entries were very disappointing. Some students wrote in a low-level narrative mode while others wrote as a simple descriptive catalogue of external events. This was observed in the respondent's journals of those who were classified as non-reflectors in this study. Some of the respondents were only able to describe events, and did not demonstrate any analysis. The difficulty in written expression of feelings and thoughts are understandable as students past experience often encouraged them to concentrate on objective data in the writing of professional reports. Nursing documentation requires an objective, accurate and concise account of nursing intervention and outcomes, with quite often no interpretation or value judgements of events required. Journal writing however, requires different skills. Journals have been used on courses in an effort to enhance self-awareness, interpersonal understanding, critical thinking, cognitive learning and critical reasoning skills. [Jenson and Denton 1991, Landeen et al. 1992, Tryssenaar 1995, Glaze 2001]. Journal writing also allows the student to reflect on their attitudes, feelings and to expand the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. In order to achieve

effective reflective writing skills students need to be taught the skills and receive feedback on their progress.

Another consideration with journal writing is that not all students can demonstrate the same level of proficiency in reflection [Edwards 1992]. Von Wright [1992] suggests that individuals are not equally proficient at all times and in all domains. Although the level of student's proficiency in reflection varies, the encouraging news is that reflective skills can be taught. Hahnemann [1986] suggested that reflective skills may be improved if students are given opportunities to test and experiment with their cognition and beliefs about clinical practice. Rovegno [1992] suggests that reflective skill is developmental and the process takes time. Belenky et al. [1986] suggests that if the learning strategy such as journal writing requires a level of reflective skill beyond that of the student, the students' response may be anger, frustration, and withdrawal. One way to accommodate the level of the student, while at the same time enhancing the students' reflective skills, is to ask focused questions which structure the students' response in the journal so that the questions elicit a specific type of thinking [Smyth 1989, Edwards 1992].

The respondents when initially asked about the skills required to reflect, they were somewhat hesitant in replying. However, after some deliberation a number of skills were suggested. They highlighted the ability to analyse issues, to communicate, to show empathy, and to be self-aware as being important. They highlighted also a number of pre-requisites and attributes, which they considered a person needs to have in order to reflect successfully. These included being motivated, literate, being able to think clearly, having a good memory in order to recall issues, being honest with

ones-self and colleagues and to be non-judgemental. They considered that the students' readiness to engage in reflective processes was also important. Jasper [1999] highlighted from her study that students had identified a personal attitude that was needed towards reflection if it was to be productive. This was expressed as the need for a commitment to it. Although it was suggested that it is possible to be taught reflection they alluded to the personal qualities that need to be present in order for reflection to be effective in terms of learning. This seems to be related to the ability to take personal, and emotional risks when exploring experience, and that there appears to be self-awareness, insight, and the acceptance of personal agency if the full benefits of reflection are to be achieved.

Goodman [1984] suggested that qualities like open-mindedness, willingness and commitment were useful to promote reflective learning. Atkins and Murphy [1993] and Jasper [1999] also believed that these attributes were important. Appropriate time management was also considered to be vitally important which was supported by the work of Burnard [1988a], Palmer et al. [1994, Duke and Appleton 2000].

A number of the respondents believed that writing did help them to develop the skills required for reflection. They, however, found it difficult to verbalise how they saw the connection between the two. They stated that writing helped them to internalise and analyse issues, and they had to think logically before writing. Lyons [1999] suggested that reflective inquiry, as a learning tool was essential to professional education and excellence. She suggested that attention must be given to the development of the skills, and journal keeping provides an invaluable means of undertaking this process.

Journal writing is considered to be a powerful technique that enables students to learn the process and the skills of reflection, which becomes part of professional practice. It has been suggested that it helps develop a level of trust between the teacher and students. Appropriate monitoring, feedback and support from teachers are essential to support students to become reflective practitioners. Respondents expressed mixed views regarding the use of journal writing to promote reflective practice. Some were extremely positive and believed it was a 'great way' to learn. They believed that all practitioners should be made aware of what reflective practice is and where possible journal writing should be encouraged. They believed that this could be a further extension of writing reflections in their portfolio, which was encouraged by the United Kingdom Central Council [1997]. This was a view supported by Jasper [1999] in her study to explore nurses' perceptions of the value of written reflection. While there was a view that the practice of journal writing should be encouraged a number of the respondents in this study highlighted areas that needed to be considered. They raised the issue of the time involved to reflect, and to write a reflective journal. They believed that both activities were time consuming if they were to be undertaken effectively. Some respondents stated that due to the pressures of work and the demands of part-time study, sometimes undertaken in their own time, they had little time to allocate to journal writing. In a study by Jung and Tryssenaar [1999] students highlighted the fact that the journal was just one more additional stressful and time-consuming activity. This was also the view of medical students in a study undertaken by Ashbury et al. [1993]. Holly [1987] explained that a journal/diary does not only include events but a full description of situations with all players, highlighting impressions, thoughts,

motives and feelings. This is time consuming, and it is not easy for practitioners to set time aside for writing in today's cost and efficiency driven climate. Durgahee [1996] suggests that journal keeping may be seen as time wasting by some managers where practical solutions are needed with speed. Respondents in this study suggested that time should be allocated to journal writing during the study days when they attended the university. Cameron and Mitchell [1992] supported this view and they suggested that time should be allocated during the students' academic schedule to permit uninterrupted time to reflect on their clinical experience. This accomplishes two objectives, firstly, it communicates to the student the importance of reflection in the curriculum and secondly, it allows the student time to reflect. If this strategy were to be adopted the practice would have to be incorporated into an already full modular programme. Module leaders may have to omit material currently delivered from the programme to ensure that this practice occurs. This may however, be necessary if journal writing is to be successfully incorporated as a teaching and learning strategy in the future. Respondents stated that they concentrated the time available on the work required for the theory and practice components of the module that are summatively assessed and therefore graded. They allocated the remaining time to journal writing. They admitted that writing the journal was not always their highest priority. Some respondents preferred to talk through issues that they considered to be important as well as to write their reflections in the journal. Wong et al. [1997] suggested that the encouragement of journal writing and dialogue were essential to student learning. Saylor [1990] suggested that dialogue is a form of reflective conversation, and that engaging in dialogue may enhance one's ability to form perspectives. It seems to strengthen the



linkage between theory and practice, develop insights [Goodman 1984] and validate assumptions among students during discourse [Mezirow 1991]. Hurtig et al. [1998] highlighted that teacher communication is the key to enhancing meaningful student learning. Hurtig et al. [1989] and Heinrich [1992] valued the dialogue between teachers and students that was facilitated through an interactive journal.

Most of the respondents appreciated the structure provided by Kolb's cycle in the journal to aid their writing. However, others would have preferred less structure. A small number would have preferred to write freely as they found the headings used as part of the framework restrictive. Paterson [1995] suggested that giving too much structure initially enabled students to feel secure, but it may also have the disadvantage of reinforcing the teacher as the authority perspective. Kember et al. [1996] stated that the provision of an over structured journal format is likely to stifle individual reflection and may lead to stereotyped responses. However, the provision of one or two headings did serve a useful purpose.

A number of respondents expressed concern about the issue of confidentiality when writing in a journal. One respondent felt that it was therapeutic to write about a confidential issue, however, a number were concerned about writing material of this nature and there was a fear expressed about who would read it. Some of the respondents were also concerned about the issue of disclosure, and felt that there may be some 'come back' if certain types of information were to be included. Derlega et al. [1997] suggests that journal writing may encourage students to self-disclose. Burnard [1988b] and Landeen et al. [1992] believe that self-disclosure can be beneficial for both teachers and students and can foster a relationship of

mutual trust that facilitates development. They do however, recognise that there are risks involved in self-disclosure. A major factor influencing the development of reflective skills is the level of trust between the student and the teacher. Ashbury et al. [1993] highlighted the fact that medical students stated that their level of anxiety related to disclosure was reduced within a few weeks of starting the education programme as students realised that they could trust their facilitators not to judge or criticise their ideas. If students are not allowed to express their ideas freely, without risks of negative consequences, they may write to impress or please the teacher, not to learn from the reflective experience. Cameron and Mitchell [1993] reported that a common fear among students is that they will write something that may alienate the teacher. Students who know and trust the teacher to be non-judgemental about their ideas and opinions will be more likely to risk self-disclosure in their journals. Saylor [1990] highlighted the importance of a safe non-judgmental environment if reflection is to be encouraged. Burnard [1988b] suggests that the purpose of the journal should be discussed prior to the start of writing to ensure the level of self-disclosure is appropriate. The teachers discussed this issue with the respondents in this study during a preparation session at the beginning of the module.

Respondents were asked about the support and guidance given by their teachers and preceptors to assist with journal writing.

Firstly, to discuss the students' views on the guidance received from their teachers. They were extremely positive about the guidance received from their teachers at the beginning of the module and the ongoing support throughout the period of learning. The teachers were considered to be most approachable. Although the teachers had allocated a half-day of preparation

time to assist students with journal writing, students with limited experience required more support. One respondent who had been introduced to the concept of reflection on a teaching and assessing course believed that this had helped with her understanding. She stated that she did not find the process of reflecting or writing particularly easy, however, she had understood the concept. This respondent also found the need to find reference literature to support the journal recordings a difficult and demanding task. Another said it was more difficult than undertaking an assignment and it was something you just have to learn to do. One respondent stated that she would have appreciated more flexibility in choosing an episode to reflect upon and write up in the journal. The teachers specified that the focus should be on a topic area related to the module, and believed that this would give the student sufficiently wide scope for choice. There was also the request to be able to use exemplars or previous examples of students' journals to assist the students with an understanding of what was required. Burns et al. [2000] supported this practice. While the teachers stated that they had made some previously completed journals available for students to view the students themselves believed that more use could have been made of these examples. They believed that positive and negative aspects of journal writing could have been highlighted at different stages during the module therefore reinforcing the principles involved.

There were mixed views expressed regarding the issue of feedback on journal writing. One respondent stated that she received little feedback on her performance and another stated that she had received feedback after the module had been completed and she had commenced a subsequent module.

The teachers stated that they gave formative feedback to the students during the module when requested, and written comments were given when the journal was returned at the end of the assessment period. Reynolds [1997] advised that overall feedback should be given, and it was not necessary to spend a great deal of time making spelling and grammatical corrections, as this may discourage students from discussing their reflections and perceptions in the journals. Kember et al. [1996] in a study to explore how to develop a curriculum to encourage students to write reflective journals found that students need an introduction to journal writing and feedback on the reflective writing as it differed from other types of writing required in academic courses.

Journals were normally returned four to six weeks after the module had been completed. It could be argued that this is rather late to enable students to benefit from the feedback before commencing their next module. The teachers however, indicated that most of the students were undertaking several modules during each semester, often with related content areas, which required a reflective journal to be completed. They were therefore given specific guidance at the beginning of each module which acted as reinforcement and it was anticipated that they would benefit from the feedback given when writing subsequent journals. During formative feedback the principles of journal writing were reinforced and examples of previously completed journals were used.

All the students interviewed expressed extremely positive views regarding the support provided by the preceptors during their placement. Preceptors also supported the student with journal writing. The respondents valued the interaction with the preceptors which often involved talking through their

practice experiences as well as discussing the content of their journals. They appreciated the preceptors' experience and valued the different perspectives they were able to give on clinical issues. This involved discussing clinical topics and clarifying their thoughts in more depth, which they seemed to find helpful.

#### **8.4 GUIDANCE GIVEN BY TEACHERS TO ASSIST WITH JOURNAL WRITING**

The teachers seemed to value the role of journal writing as an educational strategy to promote reflection and learning. They assessed the students' knowledge of reflection and their journal writing skills at the outset of the module. Some students demonstrated little knowledge of reflection or journal writing, while others indicated that they had recorded reflections in their portfolio as indicated by the United Kingdom Central Council [1997]. Some had undertaken previous modules, which required them to use a reflective journal. The students' level of knowledge and experience of using a reflective journal was variable. A comprehensive programme of guidance was delivered to assist students with their reflective journal writing. This included a session which involved ensuring that the students understood the concept of reflection, and were aware of the role of critical thinking and analysis. Students were asked to reflect on a critical incident or on a focussed discussion during the module. They were required to indicate what actually happened, when the incident occurred, who was present, and their thoughts and feelings associated with the incident. They were also asked to consider how their reflections could be supported by relevant literature in the field. They were asked to consider as a result of their reflections how they would incorporate their changed perspective into future care delivery. The teachers

used clinical scenarios to illustrate the type of focus that could be used and also made exemplars available to illustrate how students should approach journal writing. They were advised on how to record reflections and the level of analysis required. The role of the preceptor in supporting students in the practice area was also discussed with the students. The teachers saw the preceptors' role as challenging and debating views on aspects of patient care, helping the student to reshape their thinking, and to discuss the possible influence of their changing views on care delivery. The teachers encouraged the students to consider that the support provided was in the form of a tripartite arrangement involving the teacher, student and the preceptor. They emphasised that journal writing involved personal and professional growth, which they wished to encourage as part of the learning process. Students were encouraged to write the reflections that they wished to share with the preceptor and the teacher in their journal. They also highlighted that the student could share the content of the journal that they felt comfortable in doing so during their discussions. They were advised to record personal reflections in a separate diary. The teachers were keen to indicate that the feedback that they had received from the preceptors regarding the use of reflective journals was most positive. The preceptors believed that journals helped the student to link theory and practice. However, the preceptors also stated that some students did not see the benefits of journal writing, and it just seemed like more work. The teachers also expressed their views on how the students viewed journals. They believed that many students valued journals as an educational tool to promote reflection, whereas others did not see the necessity for their completion. The feedback from preceptors to the teachers highlighted how

the students were anxious about the writing style required and the format of the journal. Some students demonstrated a lack confidence and were uncertain of how to write in a journal. This was also the experience of students in a study undertaken by Jasper [1999]. Some liked the framework provided by the Kolb's Cycle, while others preferred to have complete freedom to write their own reflections without headings. The teachers were aware that some students were concerned about having to discuss the content of their reflective journal. However, with the passage of time they felt much more confident and they were reassured of the confidential nature of their discussion, and that they should only share the issues with which they felt comfortable. Students eventually started to value the sharing of their reflections as their confidence increased. The teachers emphasised that the content of the journal was not graded. They were used as a formative tool to promote reflection, and the content was discussed by the student and the preceptor and linked to the practice assessment outcomes, which were assessed by the preceptor. The students were therefore required to make recordings in their reflective journal, as they were aware of the requirement to discuss the reflections with the preceptor when the practice outcomes were being assessed.

The issue of whether journals should be graded or ungraded has been highlighted by a number of authors. Grading student reflective journals may be seen as a controversial issue. Some authors have argued that the journals should not be graded, as this would inhibit free thought. Hurtig et al. [1989] suggested that assigning a grade would undermine the essence of and value reflective writing. Saylor [1990] emphasised the importance of a safe non-judgemental environment if reflection is to be encouraged. Jensen

and Denton [1991] propose that journals should be required but not graded so as to allow students to write freely without the pressure of a grade. Reynolds [1997] recommended that although no specific grade should be given for the journals, appropriate feedback must be conveyed. Although Hahnemann [1986] initially used ungraded journals she found students' put little effort into the writing, and subsequently assigned a small proportion of the course grade to the journal. Williams et al. [2000] also allocated ten per cent of the marks for the journal. It could be argued that grading would indicate to the student the importance of this requirement and that students may therefore allocate more time and effort to writing the journal. However, some authors believe that grading should not be encouraged and this may remove the spontaneity of writing and inhibit the student from writing freely, rather than marking the presentation similar to that of an assignment. This is a view I would strongly support as a result of undertaking this study.

The teachers interviewed saw the giving of feedback as being important to promote learning. They gave feedback during the module on request from the student, which was part of the formative teaching and learning strategy. Students appeared to benefit from this process. Student feedback in the form of written comments was provided when the journal was returned approximately six weeks after the module had been completed. The students who were undertaking modules with the same teacher had an opportunity to discuss the feedback that may be useful to assist with future journal writing. Students who had taken the module as a single 'stand alone' module were invited to return and discuss the comments with the teacher. Some of the students stated that it would be useful to have received written comments earlier as they had often commenced another module prior to receiving the



feedback. A six-week period normally elapses between the submission of assignments and the return of assessed work.

### **8.5 SUPPORT GIVEN BY PRECEPTORS TO PROMOTE THE USE OF REFLECTIVE JOURNAL WRITING**

There was a consensus of opinion that the preparation received by preceptors for their role was adequate. Preceptors recognised that it was necessary to gain experience in performing their role to fully appreciate what was involved. The fact that preceptors had previously completed the same module as that being undertaken by the student helped them to appreciate the expectations of the student and the preceptor.

The preceptors highlighted a number of areas that they considered were important to students in relation to the type of support required. The students valued meeting with the preceptors on a regular basis to clarify issues related to reflection, and to discuss their journal recordings. They often wanted confirmation that their recordings were appropriate. The respondents recognised the importance of writing their reflections and also talking through related issues. Journal writing and dialogue are two commonly discussed strategies that promote reflective learning among students [Boud et al. 1985], Hahneemann [1986], Smyth [1989], Mezirow & Associates [1990], Mezirow [1991], Nicasso [1992], Paterson [1995], Francis [1997] and Usher et al. [2001]. Nicasso [1992] believes that the students gain a more complete picture of their experience, when they integrate their ideas, and reflect on them. Students emphasise the value of talking about their experiences as well as writing them down. Saylor [1990] states that dialogue is a form of reflective conversation. It is suggested that dialogue can enhance one's ability to form perspectives. It seems to strengthen the linkage between

theory and practice, develop insights, Goodman [1984] and validate assumptions among students [Mezirow 1991]. The preceptors also referred to the requirement for students to use literature to support the recordings in their journals. They believe that students may choose an episode that has published literature to support, rather than choose an episode that they really wished to reflect on. They were concerned that because of this, students may not gain maximum benefit from reflection and journal writing.

While the preceptors valued their preparation for the role they asked that the guidance for the use of a reflective journal be simplified and that the educational language used be minimised. They also expressed a desire to meet with other preceptors following their experience with students in order to gain peer support particularly where they had been reflecting on sensitive and challenging issues in the fields of Palliative Care and Breast Care Nursing. They highlighted the challenges related to care delivery in these areas and would have liked to attend a debriefing session with other preceptors to exchange ideas about how they had dealt with sensitive situations. This type of support is not usually offered as part of the education programme; however, it is recommended that consideration be given to the setting up of a support group for preceptors in the future.

When asked if they wanted to raise any other issues related to supporting students they identified a number of issues. One stated that journal writing was only a tool to aid reflection and that the value of talking should not be under-estimated. They valued the opportunity to share ideas with the students verbally. They also recognised that journal writing is extremely time-consuming. The support provided for students involved discussions between the preceptor and student and then the student writing their reflections. The

preceptor subsequently read the journal entries and made comments. This type of support was also recognised by Jung and Tryssenaar [1998] in their study to explore the experiences of preceptors in supporting Occupational Therapy students on placement.

There was a suggestion that at times students felt they were duplicating their work as they were undertaking a written assignment and producing a reflective journal with a similar focus. They were required to use published literature to support both presentations.

## **8.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY FOR FUTURE PRACTICE**

In this study journals were submitted as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for a module as part of the Diploma in Breast Care or the Diploma in Palliative Care Nursing. While approximately two thirds of the respondents demonstrated reflective elements in their journals, the remaining one third were not able to demonstrate any elements of reflection. This may have been due to the fact that students had some reservations about exposing all their thoughts particularly in the case of 'negative experiences', Alternatively testing for inconsistencies might indicate weaknesses in the planning of care delivery, and this may have affected the outcome of their assessment of practice. Their readiness and ability to write in a reflective journal may have inhibited the expression of the reflective process, which students experienced, or they may not have adapted well to the use of a journal as an aid to reflection. This has implications for teachers who are required to assess the student's level of ability and provide the guidance and support required, to enable the reflective journal writing to be effective.

One might also suspect that students may reflect verbally without necessarily recording it in their journals. Some respondents in this study voiced a preference for oral communication, which should be emphasised as an important method of demonstrating the process of reflection.

The model used as a framework within the journals may need to be reviewed to further consider whether it is the most appropriate model to encourage reflection at the level required by students as suggested by Foster and Greenwood [1998]. Appropriate guidance needs to be tailored to the model used. There is evidence to suggest that the Boud et al. model [1985] adapted by Wong et al. [1995] can be used to assess the presence or absence of reflective thinking. The model could be piloted with post-registration students in the future as there is now further evidence to suggest that it is possible to assess the reliability of grading of journals using this model Williams et al. [2000]. This would enable teachers to evaluate their usefulness as an aid to promote reflection.

A number of the respondents expressed extremely positive feelings regarding the process of reflection, which led to a positive outcome for them. However, a number expressed negative feelings about the episodes that they had reflected upon. They found some of the situations anxiety provoking and stressful. It is important for teachers and preceptors to prepare students to develop strategies to deal with these situations so that their learning can be maximised. Preceptors requested debriefing sessions to enable them to manage stressful situations that had been discussed with students. It is recommended that sessions should be provided in the future which may involve the teachers.

The students who were classified as reflectors or critical reflectors demonstrated all the levels of reflection within the Boud et al. [1985] model with the exception of the level of validation. The fact that this level was not achieved may need to be explored by the teachers to ensure that the students have an appreciation of all the levels to be demonstrated. The use of exemplars may aid their understanding of the reflective processes involved.

The outcome of reflection was only demonstrated by a small number of respondents in this study. They highlighted the changed aspects of care delivery that had been implemented, and explained how their cycle of learning had been completed in relation to that episode of care. They felt confident that their behaviour had changed as the result of the learning experience and that their future practice would be influenced.

On interviewing respondents who were classified as reflectors and non-reflectors they highlighted that their preceptors were satisfied with their progress and the actions they had implemented during the module. The respondents did not however, record the outcome of their reflections in the journal. It is recommended that teachers place further emphasis on the importance of recording the outcome of reflection in the future.

Overall the respondents expressed positive views and were enthusiastic about the role of reflective journals as an educational strategy and considered that they were a useful tool to aid reflection and learning in the practice setting. However, a number of respondents expressed views on the difficulties they had experienced with writing a journal. Jasper [1999] suggests that the technique may be enhanced with practice and appropriate guidance. Kember et al. [1996] considered that reflective writing was an

ability which took time to develop, and for many students it was difficult to achieve. They stated that formal education normally requires a style of writing, which is virtually the antithesis of reflective writing. Many students find it difficult to unlearn their conception of impersonal academic writing and to record their personal reflections. It is recommended that teachers provide clear concise guidelines, monitor their use and give frequent feedback and this may assist students with journal writing. Teachers also need to monitor the student's ability to reflect as well as to write, and provide further support for those experiencing difficulty. A number of respondents expressed concern regarding the disclosure of confidential material in the journal and were anxious about who would have access to it. They wanted reassurance that the content would be handled appropriately during the assessment process. While the teachers considered that they provided guidance related to this area it is recommended that they further reinforce the confidential nature of the journal.

Some respondents also expressed concerns about having to provide literature references to support their reflections in the journal. They believed that this interfered with the flow of writing. The teachers however, emphasised the importance of encouraging this practice to further enhance students learning. This aspect of the process may need to be further reviewed with the students as part of evaluation of the use of journals.

Some of the respondents did acknowledge that they found it useful to write their reflections in a journal, while others expressed a distinct preference for oral reflection. Both methods are considered to be valuable and should be emphasised by teachers and preceptors when supporting students.

One of the constraints of using journals highlighted by many of the respondents was the time required to reflect and to write in a journal. They felt that the commitment required to meet the demands of their education programme were great. They were required, as part of the module, to submit a theoretical assignment, undertake a practice assessment, and also submit a journal. They were often undertaking three modules in one semester, each with similar requirements. All the respondents were part-time students, and they found reconciling their studies, their role as a practitioner as well as domestic commitments most demanding. They stated that having to allocate further time to the completion of a reflective journal was extremely time consuming and they often were unable to allocate the time required which may have resulted in low-level narrative entries.

This has implications for teachers who may have to review the requirement of using a journal as a learning strategy during each module of a pathway. Although keeping a journal requires a substantial commitment of time for teachers and students, careful attention to the structuring of the requirement to complete a journal may decrease this commitment and increase the benefits for both teacher and students.

The guidance given by teachers was thought overall to be most adequate. Respondents however, requested that exemplars be utilised more within the module to highlight the style of writing required. Teachers may wish to introduce this practice in the future. Respondents requested feedback on their performance from their teacher at an earlier stage, which may also need to be reviewed.

The implications of the findings of this study for preceptors highlighted the excellent support given to students, which was highly valued. However,

preceptors requested that they would value a debriefing session following the module as they found the discussion of sensitive issues which students were reflecting on most challenging. It is recommended that sessions be facilitated within the health care setting by practitioners or by teachers involved with the education programme in the future. Some attention also needs to be given to the educational language used within the journal framework so that the guidelines for use can be more easily understood by students and preceptors.

It is clear that journals can be a useful educational tool. However, journals can be seen as merely one strategy within an overall curriculum that promotes self-reflection. As self-reflection is a complex process and one that must be encouraged throughout one's professional career, it is important that it is not seen as a skill that can be taught once, in one course, and then forgotten.



## **CHAPTER 9**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **9.1 CONCLUSIONS**

The aim of this study was to explore the use of reflective journals in the promotion of reflection and learning in post-registration nursing students. A qualitative case study design was utilised as opposed to a quantitative methodology. This design was thought to be most appropriate as it would focus on a unique group of post-registration students undertaking two continuing education programmes during an academic semester. It was thought that this approach was most useful to examine the complex abstract processes of reflection and the use of reflective journals in professional practice. The data provided 'rich description' on the reflective process and the role of reflective journals that would have been impossible to achieve through the use of questionnaires and quantitative methodologies.

The findings suggest that reflective journals are a useful tool for promoting reflection and learning. Some students appear to benefit more from the use of journals than others. Approximately two thirds of the respondents were able to demonstrate reflection however, the remaining one third were unable to demonstrate any aspects of reflection in their journals. This may have been due to difficulties experienced in reflecting, or the actual journal writing experience itself. The content of the journals demonstrated a description of the student's experience with little evidence of analysis. However, for most of the students in this study, the writing of a reflective journal was a positive experience. The findings suggest that it is imperative for the teacher to

provide the student with clear guidance for their use, and non-judgemental feedback in order to facilitate their learning.

The research study involved the utilisation of reflective journals completed by a group of students undertaking one of four modules during one semester, which were analysed to determine the extent and level of reflection achieved. Following an analysis of the reflective journals, semi-structured interviews involving a sample of post-registration students from each of the categories of non-reflector, reflector and critical reflector were undertaken in order to establish their views on the role of journals in facilitating reflection and learning in the practice setting. The nature and content of guidance given to students by their teachers regarding the completion a journal was also examined, and the views of a sample of preceptors was obtained on their role in supporting students with journal writing during the practice component of the module. This enabled the researcher to gain an insight into the levels of reflection demonstrated, and the student's views on the value of reflective journals as an educational strategy for facilitating reflection and learning.

The use of the analysis of reflective journal material over a period of time and the data obtained through individual interviews enabled the transcript content and meaning to be checked with respondents, as well as enabling the checking of source materials against each other through data triangulation. The use of triangulation enhanced the validity of the study [Polit and Hungler 1999].

The process of analysis, which determined the extent and level of reflection within the journals demonstrated that student writing in a reflective journal, can be used as evidence for the presence or absence of reflection. Studies

by Wong et al. [1995] and Richardson and Maltby [1995] support these findings.

The process of allocating students to the category of non-reflector, reflector and critical reflector was achieved using the categories derived from the work of Mezirow et al. [1990] and Mezirow [1991]. Respondents within these categories clearly demonstrated specific features within their journals.

Identifying textual elements within the journals and allocating these to the finer levels of reflection within the Boud et al. [1985] model adapted by Wong et al. [1995] was more difficult due to some similarities in the criteria within the different categories and therefore proved to be less reliable and was therefore a limitation within this study.

In this study the criteria developed by Boud et al. [1985] and adapted by Wong et al. [1995] seemed to describe the process of reflective thinking. In a more recent study further effective use of the Boud et al. [1985] model has been described by Williams et al. [2000] to establish criteria for evaluating the reliability of grading reflective journal writing. The reliability of results however, achieved in this study were somewhat similar to that achieved by Wong et al [1995] using the Boud et al. [1985] model and the work of Mezirow et al. [1990] and Mezirow [1991].

The findings of this study are significant as it further developed the use of the criteria devised by Boud et al. [1985]. However, in order to improve on the reliability of the criteria within this model more time needs to be allocated to the training of personnel to enable them to assess the levels more accurately. Competence needs to be developed in using criteria to grade journals. An increased understanding and application of the criteria for grading reflection is crucial for optimal test reliability. In this study the

researcher had previous experience of grading the level reflection in reflective journals using a different model. The rater who had a knowledge of reflection and the use of journals did not however have experience in grading journals. In order to enhance one's skills in evaluating the journals it is proposed that educators use these criteria and continue to enhance their evaluation skills by openly discussing how they arrived at their findings. In this way it is anticipated that they would increase their skills in evaluating the role of journals.

The process of establishing three broader categories, however, could be justified. Even though the researcher and the rater identified slightly different textual elements within the journals, and may not have been in total agreement over the precise level of the aspect of reflection, there was no resulting disagreement as to the allocation of respondents to the categories of non-reflector, reflector, and critical reflector. Sixty seven per cent of the respondents were allocated to the category of reflector, twenty one per cent to that of non-reflector and twelve per cent were classified as critical reflectors.

It has been established in this study that the writing in reflective journals can be used to diagnose whether or not students are reflecting on their practice, and whether the reflection is critical in nature. It has been established overall that the respondents believe that reflective journals are a useful tool to aid reflection and promote learning.

The study was conducted using a purposeful sample of forty-two students undertaking two post-registration programmes in one institution. Due to the type of sampling used the results cannot be generalised to students on all post-registration courses. However, the study has provided a useful insight

into the process of assessing the reliability of grading reflective journals by developing appropriate criteria. It has also provided evidence that reflective journals can be a useful strategy to promote reflection for students who were able to adapt to the use of such a tool.

Those respondents who valued the role of journals in promoting reflection highlighted the therapeutic value of writing even though many did find the process of reflecting and writing challenging. There was a consensus of opinion that journal writing encouraged analysis and that reflecting on a critical incident promoted the linking of theory and practice. Positive views were expressed regarding the awareness of learning achieved and the application of that learning to practice and many examples were cited. An awareness of future learning needs was also highlighted by many of the respondents. Respondents found it difficult to make the connection between the skills required for reflection and identifying whether these skills could be developed through journal writing. *However, they believed that the skills could be learned and developed through writing*, which was supported by Landeen et al. [1995] and Jasper [1999].

A small number of respondents interviewed did not find reflective journal writing useful and expressed a desire to talk about their reflections rather than write them in a journal.

The study also highlighted the importance of clear guidance being given by the teachers to students on the role of reflection in learning and on how to write a reflective journal. These views were supported by Kember et al. [1996]. The importance of ongoing feedback on the performance was also highlighted. The views on whether a framework should be provided to assist with the writing of a journal was viewed differently by respondents. The

majority preferred to have some structure however, a small number preferred to write uninhibited and therefore allow their thoughts to flow.

A few respondents expressed concern regarding the disclosure of confidential information in relation to who would have access to the journal. Students received reassurance that the content was treated as confidential and would only be viewed by two members of the teaching staff involved with the assessment process and the external examiner. They were advised to record personal reflections in a separate diary.

The time required to reflect, and to write a reflective journal was also highlighted as a constraining factor that may inhibit effective writing.

The role of the preceptor in supporting students was considered to be extremely important. Students valued the support tremendously. Preceptors considered that they were adequately prepared for their role and valued the opportunity of working with students and providing support. They however, asked that consideration be given to the provision of support in the form of debriefing as they supported students who had to deal with sad and sensitive issues in the field of Palliative Care and Breast Care Nursing.

Journal writing therefore needs to be treated as an ability to be developed over time. Courses need to be planned to allow this development to take place. There needs to be provision for frequent feedback on what is written. This involves the teachers, preceptor and fellow students. This view is supported by Kember et al. [1996].

This research has provided further evidence that reflective journals may be used as a tool to promote reflection and learning in post-registration nurses. While evidence was provided in a study by Wong et al. [1995] that the presence or absence of reflective thinking could be detected when analysing

the content of journals, the focus of their study was on the development of a reliable coding system to measure the extent and level of reflection. In the study undertaken by Wong et al. [1995] the reflective journals were subjected to content analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted to illuminate the thought processes of the critical reflectors and the non-reflectors. The findings demonstrated that the interviewees maintained the same level of reflection as that demonstrated in their journals. While the initial stages of this study were similar in relation to the analysis of the journal content the study proceeded to explore the views of the respondents in each of the categories of non-reflector, reflector, and critical reflector in relation to the role of journals in promoting reflection. The views expressed by the teachers on the guidance provided to support students to aid reflection and the writing of journals were also explored. These views added to that of the preceptors who provided support to the students gave a new insight into the role of journals as an educational strategy to promote reflection and learning that is not evident in the available literature to date. Therefore this study has added to the available knowledge on the role of reflective journals in promoting reflection and learning.

## **9.2 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY**

A number of factors relating to the findings and methodological approaches used in this research study highlight its strengths

- The study provides further evidence that it is possible to measure the level of reflection achieved by students from their reflective journals. Limited evidence had been previously available.

- The study also provides evidence that it is possible to assess the reliability of grading journals using Boud et al. [1985] model. Limited evidence had been previously available.
- The study has further enhanced the knowledge available in relation to the use of criteria available to measure reflection in a model devised by Boud et al. (1985).
- The study has highlighted the range of factors that influence the student's use of reflective journals.
- Methodological triangulation was used to improve the likelihood that the qualitative findings would be found credible.
- Member checking of interview transcripts was used to validate the findings.
- The involvement of a rater during the data analysis process enhanced the reliability of the findings.
- In order to enhance the dependability and confirmability of the data a reflective diary was kept to record the researcher's thoughts and experiences.
- Using interviews as a data collection method enabled the support and guidance given by the teachers and the preceptors to be explored which was not evident in previous research studies.

### **9.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

A number of factors may have a bearing on the trustworthiness of the research. These have been discussed within the study. They are summarised as follows:



- Access to those particular practitioners who, by the nature of the study may be biased due to the positive views volunteers possess.
- The effects of bias where the researcher had previous experience of using reflective journals.
- The lack of experience of the researcher and the rater in using the Boud et al. [1985] model and the criteria to establish the levels of reflection demonstrated in the journals.
- The level of reliability achieved when using the Boud et al. [1985] model for coding the content of the journals.
- The use of the Boud et al. [1985] model as a framework to assess the extent and level of reflection within the reflective journals when the model by Kolb [1984] had been used as a framework to encourage reflection.
- The large number of variables that can affect respondent's ability to reflect and record their reflections in a journal.
- The effects of bias through the researcher's inexperience as an interviewer.
- The view that self-reporting has a tendency to produce positive findings.

#### **9.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

There are a number of areas that could be further explored.

Firstly, it is necessary to further develop a more reliable method for determining the level of reflection demonstrated in reflective journals as a precursor to further research into reflective teaching and learning. A method for determining the extent and quality of reflection is necessary to examine the influence of teaching initiatives.

There is increasing emphasis on developing the curriculum to encourage reflective learning. The teachers therefore need to have a measure of reflective thinking to determine whether the approach does improve the promotion of reflection. Other methods of promoting and reinforcing self-reflection, for example recognising the strong oral culture in nursing should be explored and researched.

Further studies that examine the reliability of grading reflective journals, using the criteria that were used in this study and further developed by Williams et al. [2000] should be conducted with students in pre and post-registration courses over a longer period of time. Such studies would not only enable educators to better evaluate reflective thinking demonstrated in journal writing but also would assist students with developing reflective thinking.

While the findings of this study suggest that the reflective journal is a useful tool to aid reflection, it need not be viewed as the only or best way to facilitate student learning. It can be regarded as one teaching and learning strategy that might be useful to students and teachers in the process of facilitating student learning in their practice setting.

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# APPENDICES

### **Mezirow's Levels of Reflectivity**

**1 Reflectivity**

The act of becoming aware of a specific perception, meaning or behaviour of your own or the habits you have of seeing, thinking and acting.

**2 Affective**

Becoming aware of how you feel about the way you are perceiving, thinking or acting.

**3 Discriminant**

Assessing the efficacy of your perceptions, thoughts and actions. Recognising the reality of the context in which you work and identifying your relationship to the situation.

**4 Judgemental**

Making and becoming aware of your value judgements about your perceptions, thoughts and actions, in terms of being positive or negative.

**5 Conceptual**

Being conscious of your awareness and being critical of it (for example, being critical of the concepts you use to evaluate a situation).

**6 Psychic**

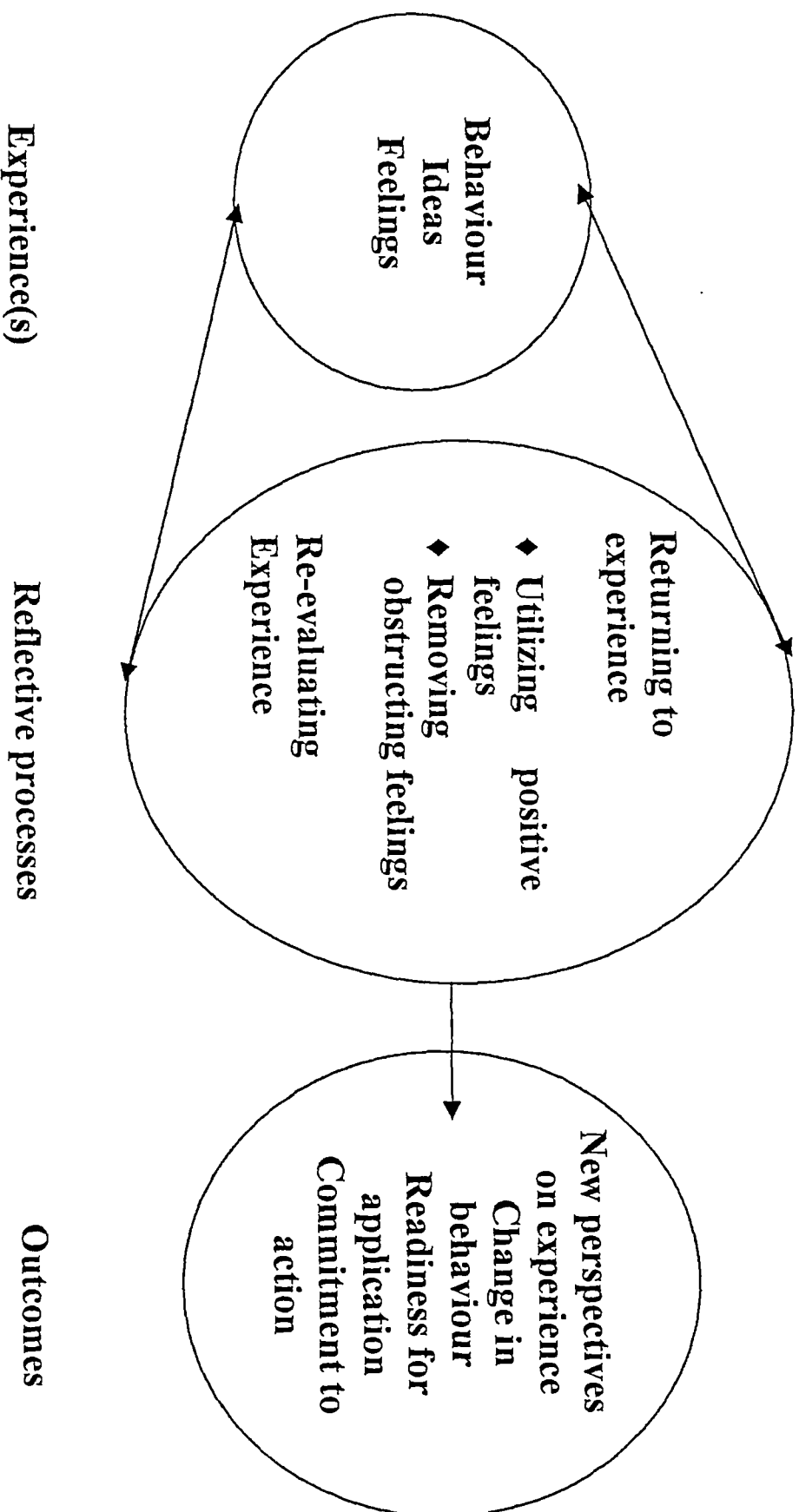
Recognising in yourself the habit of making precipitant judgements about people based on limited information.

**7 Theoretical**

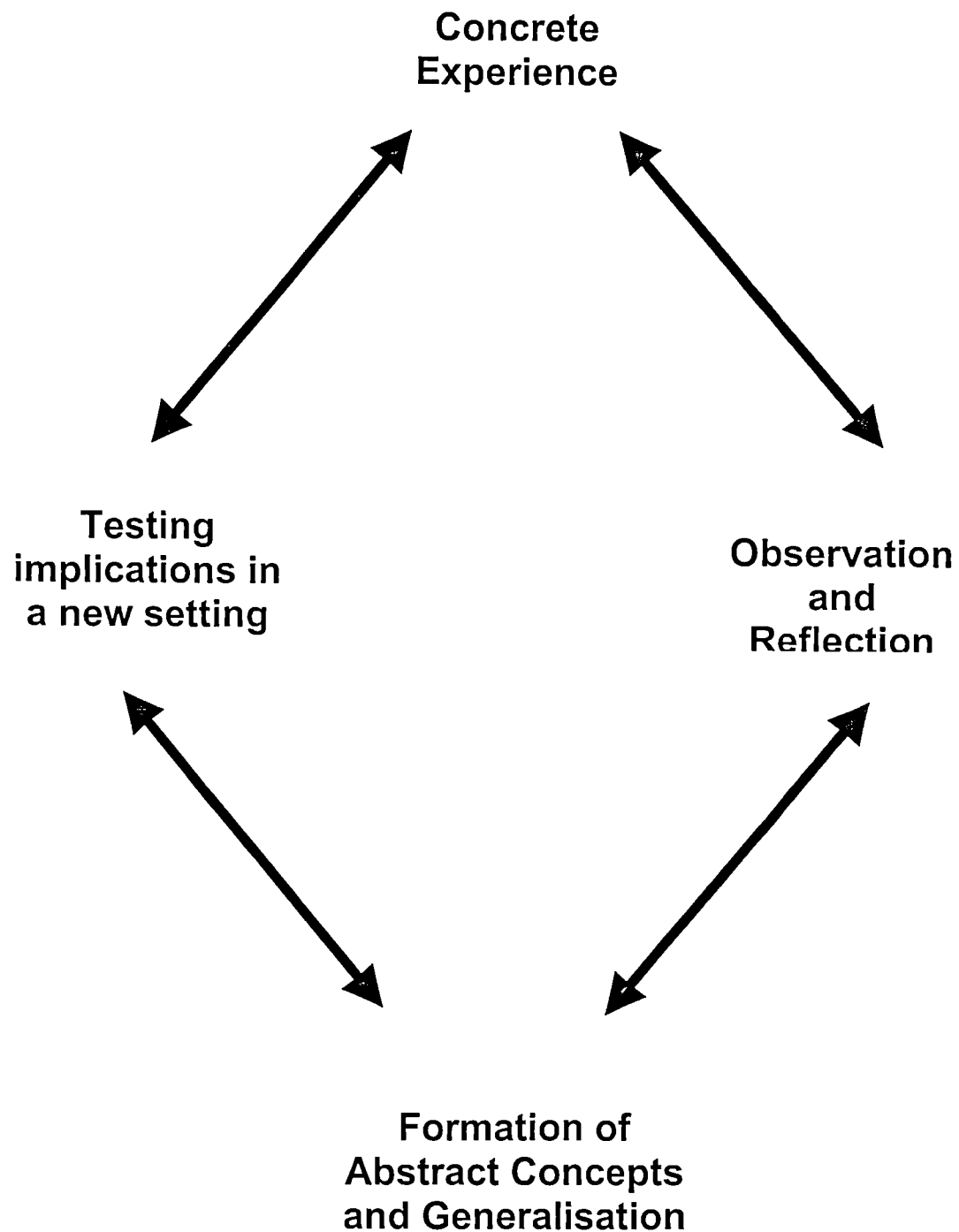
Becoming aware of the influence of underlying assumptions upon your judgement.

Mezirow (1981)

# THE REFLECTION PROCESS IN CONTEXT



By Boud, D., Keogh, R. and Walker, D. (1985)



**Kolb's cycle of experiential learning  
[1984]**



**MODEL FOR STRUCTURED REFLECTION (FIFTH EDITION)**

The following questions are offered as a guide to help reflection on experience:

**1 Phenomenon**

1 Describe the experience

**2 Casual**

1 What essential factors contributed to this experience?

**3 Context**

1 What are the significant background factors to this experience?

**4 Reflection**

1 What was I trying to achieve?

2 Why did I intervene as I did?

3 What were the consequences of my actions for:

Myself

The patient/family

For the people I work with

4 How did I feel about this experience when it was happening?

5 How did the patient feel about it?

6 How do I know how the patient felt about it?

7 What factors/knowledge influenced my decisions and actions?

**5 Alternative actions**

1 What other choices did I have?

2 What would be the consequences of these other choices?

## **6 Learning**

- 1 How do I NOW feel about this experience?
- 2 Could I have dealt better with the situation?
- 3 What have I learned from this experience?

*Reference: Johns, C (1993)*  
*Professional Supervision*  
*Journal of Nursing Management*  
*1, 9, 18*

**PATHWAY STRUCTURE**  
**DIPLOMA IN PROFESSIONAL STUDIES IN PALLIATIVE CARE**

ENTRY		
	SEMESTER 1	SEMESTER 2
Year 1	<p>HAF 704: Perspectives on Death and Dying</p> <p>HAF 813: Interpersonal Relationships for Professional Practice</p> <p>HAH 144: Research Processes and Methods</p>	<p>HAF 705: Holism in Palliative Care</p> <p>HAF 810: Loss and Bereavement</p> <p>HAF 706: Advanced Symptom Control</p>
		<p>Optional -</p> <p>Exit ENB 931 = 40 Credits or progress to complete ENB 285</p>
Year 2	<p>HAF 707: Management of Pain: Concepts, Theories and Practice</p> <p>HAF 105: The Management of Palliative Care Services</p> <p>HAF 431: Chronic Disabling Illness</p>	<p>HAF 712: Enhancing Quality with Palliative and Terminal Care</p> <p>Optional Modules: 1 x 20 Credit or 2 x 10 Credit</p>
	<p>Optional -</p> <p>Exit ENB 285 (+ENB 931) = 80 Credits or progress to complete ENB A18</p>	<p>Exit ENB A18 Professional Award (+ ENB 931/ENB 285) = 120 Credits &amp; Diploma in Professional Studies in Palliative Care</p>

**PATHWAY STRUCTURE**  
**DIPLOMA IN PROFESSIONAL STUDIES IN BREAST CARE NURSING**

ENTRY	SEMESTER 1	SEMESTER 2
Year 1	<p>→ HAF 710: Principles of Breast Care Nursing</p> <p>HAH 144: Research Processes and Methods</p> <p>HAF 813: Interpersonal Relationships for Professional Practice</p>	<p>HAH 185: Dimensions in Cancer Care</p> <p>HAF 711: The Person with Breast Disease</p> <p>Option x 10 Credits</p>
	<p>↓</p> <p>Exit ENB N09 = 10 Credits (HAF 710)</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>Exit ENB A11 = 60 Credits</p>
Year 2	<p>HAF 101: Management in a Clinical Context</p> <p>HAH 131: Health Education/Health Promotion</p> <p>HAH 175: Working with Non-Statutory Agencies</p>	<p>Optional Modules x 30 Credits</p>
		<p>↓</p> <p>Exit - Diploma in Professional Studies in Breast Care Nursing (+ ENB N09, ENB A11)</p>

**Re: Doctor of Education**

I am writing to request permission to gain access to students and a small number of academic staff in order to undertake a research study as part of the above Award.

The dissertation title is:

“The use of Reflective Journals in the promotion of reflection and learning in post registration nursing students”

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Kathleen Chirema

Dear

Your letter is timely for I have just read your proposal which should now be with you as I returned it by post last Friday.

Yes, pleased to support you. If I can be of any further assistance, please contact me.

Good luck

Yours sincerely

Dear Colleague

I am currently undertaking a study into the use of reflective journals in promoting reflection in learning amongst post registration students as part of a Doctorate in Education programme. In order for me to undertake the study I need to have access to reflective journals which have been completed by students. I am therefore writing to request your permission for me to have access to one of your journals recently completed. I would like to assure you that confidentiality and anonymity would be respected.

On receiving the journal it would be copied, the front sheet removed and thereafter you would be referred to by number. I would ensure that there is no way that the content of the journal could be identified. I have been advised by the Senior Lecturer responsible for the module, that a copy of your journal has been retained as part of the University Subject Review process. It has been agreed within the Department that I may have access, however, I also need your permission.

Following the process of analysis, I may need to interview a small number of students to obtain their views on reflection and journal writing. I therefore am also asking for your permission. I would contact you and set up all the arrangements necessary. It would involve you giving up about 30 minutes of your time sometime over the next few months.

If you agreed to take part could I ask you to complete the enclosed reply sheet and return in the envelope provided as soon as possible or by the latest Monday 22 March 1999.

I anticipate that the findings of the study will be beneficial to future students and teachers in highlighting issues related to the use of a reflective journal. I therefore would very much appreciate your involvement.

Thank you in anticipation of your reply.

Yours sincerely

## REPLY SLIP

I ..... agree to allow access for the purposes of research to my reflective journal which is currently held within the Department of Health, Social Work and Community Studies.

	Yes	No
Please tick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If required I am prepared to be involved in a short interview during the next few months.

	Yes	No
Please tick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



# INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

**Module Code:** HAF 813

**Name of Scheme:**

**School(s) Involved in Delivery:** Human and Health Sciences

**Name of Pathway(s):** Diploma in Professional Studies in Palliative Care  
Diploma in Professional Studies in Breast Care  
Nursing  
ENB Framework and Higher Award

**Module Tutor:**

**Module Status:** Transferable

**Module Type:** Acceptable  
Compulsory for ENB 931, ENB A11 and Diplomas in Breast and Palliative Care

**Module Rating (level and credits):** A 10

**Learning Methods:**

L:	12.00 hours
S:	12.00 hours
U:	44.75 hours
F:	6.25 hours

## Pre-Requisites:

Normally, the student studying this module will be a health or social care practitioner with an appropriate qualification and relevant experience.

For Registered Nurses a minimum of six months post registration experience is required.

**Recommended Prior Study:** None

**Co-Requisites:** None

**Professional Body Requirements:** ENB Key Characteristics: 1.2, 1.4.

**Barred Combinations:** HAH 117.

**Module Grading:** Graded

## Module Aims:

This module aims to provide the student with the opportunity to:

- Explore the concepts of self and take account of this knowledge and awareness in assessing the emotional impact of their work on clients, carers and team members. (1.1)
- Understand concepts of autonomy and advocacy, promote client autonomy and self empowerment. (2.5)
- Create and maintain an environment in which carers and clients are enabled to make informed choices. (2.6)
- User inter-personal skills effectively to relate to team members, clients and carers. (4.1)

### Module Synopsis:

This module aims to enable the student to develop an appreciation of the unique importance of the interpersonal relationship between client and practitioner which facilitates and supports both the client and their family during their illness.

### Outline Syllabus:

Advocacy  
Autonomy and Empowerment  
Coping and stress mechanisms  
Empathy  
Human Communication  
Barriers to effective communication

### Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this module, students will be able to:

#### Knowledge and Understanding Outcomes

1. Critically analyse the effects of their own interpersonal communication and behaviour in practice.

#### Ability Outcomes

2. Demonstrate discrimination in the choice of human skills required to support the client and their family.
3. Utilise appropriate interpersonal and communication networks when caring for the client.

### Assessment Strategy:

#### Evidence

Students will submit a critical analysis in report form of not more than 2,000 words based on the contents of their reflective journal.

Students will produce journals which demonstrate that they have reflected with their preceptors on their knowledge and experience of interpersonal relationships for professional practice.

Assessment Criteria

In addition to the generic criteria for written assessments (see Scheme Document Table 3), students must provide evidence that they have met the learning outcomes for the module.

Assessment Weighting

Students will be required to pass all elements of the module to gain credit, but only the theory will be graded.

**Learning Strategy:**

Debates  
Discussions  
Interactive group exercises  
Tutorials

**Indicative Reading:**

Arnold, E & Boggs, K	(1995)	Interpersonal Relationships: Professional Communication Skills for Nurses. 2nd edition. Saunders Publication
Bailey, R Clarke, M	(1989)	Stress and Coping in Nursing. Chapman Hall.
Bond, M	(1986)	Stress and Self-Awareness: A Guide for Nurses. Heinemann Publ Ltd.
Burnard, P	(1995)	Learning Human Skills: Learning and Reflective Guide. Butterworth.
Egan, G	(1990)	The Skilled Helper: A Systematic Approach to Effective Helping. Brooks/Cole.
Ellis, R B, Gates, R J & Kenworthy, N	(1995)	Interpersonal Communication in Nursing: Theory and Practice.
Faulkner, A	(1997)	Effective Interactions with Patients. 2nd edition. Churchill.
Hargie, O, Saunders, C & Dickson, D	(1994)	Social Skills: Interpersonal Communication. 3rd edition. Routledge.
Heron, J	(1990)	Helping the Client Sage Publishers.
Lugton, J	(1987)	Communicating with Dying People and their Relatives. Wolfe.

Assessment Criteria

In addition to the generic criteria for written assessments (see Scheme Document Table 3), students must provide evidence that they have met the learning outcomes for the module.

Assessment Weighting

Students will be required to pass all elements of the module to gain credit, but only the theory will be graded.

**Learning Strategy:**

Debates  
Discussions  
Interactive group exercises  
Tutorials

**Indicative Reading:**

Arnold, E & Boggs, K	(1995)	Interpersonal Relationships: Professional Communication Skills for Nurses. 2nd edition. Saunders Publication
Bailey, R Clarke, M	(1989)	Stress and Coping in Nursing. Chapman Hall.
Bond, M	(1986)	Stress and Self-Awareness: A Guide for Nurses. Heinemann Publ Ltd.
Burnard, P	(1995)	Learning Human Skills: Learning and Reflective Guide. Butterworth.
Egan, G	(1990)	The Skilled Helper: A Systematic Approach to Effective Helping. Brooks/Cole.
Ellis, R B, Gates, R J & Kenworthy, N	(1995)	Interpersonal Communication in Nursing: Theory and Practice.
Faulkner, A	(1997)	Effective Interactions with Patients. 2nd edition. Churchill.
Hargie, O, Saunders, C & Dickson, D	(1994)	Social Skills: Interpersonal Communication. 3rd edition. Routledge.
Heron, J	(1990)	Helping the Client Sage Publishers.
Lugton, J	(1987)	Communicating with Dying People and their Relatives. Wolfe.

**ADVANCED SYMPTOM CONTROL****Module Code:** HAF 707**Name of Scheme:****School(s) involved in Delivery:** Human and Health Sciences**Name of Pathway(s):** Diploma in Professional Studies in Palliative Care  
Diploma in Professional Studies in Breast Care  
Nursing**Module Tutor:****Module Status:** Transferable**Module Type:** Compulsory for ENB 285  
Acceptable for other pathways**Module Rating (level and credits):** A 10**Learning Methods:**  
L: 12.00 hours  
S: 12.00 hours  
U: 44.75 Hours  
F: 6.25 hours**Pre-Requisites:**

Normally, the student studying this module will be a health or social care practitioner with an appropriate qualification and relevant experience.

For Registered Nurses a minimum of six months post registration experience is required.  
Satisfactory evidence of experience, knowledge and skills equivalent to ENB 931 Pathway.

**Recommended Prior Study:** Knowledge of body structure and systems, aetiology of disease processes.**Co-requisites:** None**Professional Body Requirements:** ENB 10 Key Characteristics: 1.1, 2.2, 2.3.**Barred Combinations:** None**Module Grading:** Graded**Module Aims:**

This module aims to provide the student with the opportunity to:

- Explore concepts of self and take account of this knowledge and awareness in assessing the emotional impact of their work on clients, carers and team members.

- Apply in-depth knowledge of the physiological, pathological, psychological, sociological and cultural aspects which may influence the care of their client group.
- Use knowledge of a range of theories and models of practice to select appropriate strategies for the management and delivery of care for their specific client group.

### Module Synopsis:

This module seeks to promote an understanding of the distressing symptoms and their management in Palliative and Terminal Care.

### Outline Syllabus:

#### Assessment

The uniqueness of the individual

Assessment tools

Holistic Management of distressing symptoms in Palliative and Terminal Care

Quality of life acceptable to the individual and family carers

Realistic goals

Perspectives of Symptom Control

Pharmacological/non pharmacological

### Learning Outcomes:

Upon Completion of this module, the student will be able to:

#### Knowledge and Understanding Outcomes

1. Demonstrate critical appreciation of holistic practice in symptom management within Palliative and Terminal Care.
2. Critically analyse current research on Symptom Control and Management.

#### Ability Outcomes

3. Critically assess and identify the needs of the individual requiring symptom management and how it affects family members.
4. Identify and critically examine the role of other agencies in the care of the individual requiring symptom management.

This module provides the student with the opportunity to be developed formatively and assessed summatively.

#### Formative Assessment

As contracted with the module tutor.

The student may use the reflective journal in a formative manner as well as in the summative assessment of practice.

**Summative Assessment**

Students will be assessed in theory and practice. Each element is of equal weighting. Students will be required to pass both elements of the module to gain credit but only the theory will be graded.

**Theory:**

The student is required to present a seminar on a case study of a chosen client with distressing symptoms requiring Palliative or Terminal Care. A supporting paper of not more than 1,000 words must accompany the seminar presentation. Assessed by Tutor. Relates to Learning Outcomes 1 and 2.

**Practice:**

Reflect on personal practice in relation to an individual requiring symptom management, evaluating your own professional and personal development needs. This is to be observed and discussed with preceptor and documented in the reflective journal. Relates to Learning Outcomes 3 and 4.

**Learning Strategy:**

The approach to teaching and learning will be student centred, encouraging active participation. The learning strategies will aim to meet the individual needs of students. Teaching methods include group activity, discussion, simulation, video and audio materials.

**Indicative References:**

- |                               |        |  |
|-------------------------------|--------|--|
| Doyle, D                      | (1995) | Oxford Textbook of Palliative Medicine. Oxford.                      |
| Kaye, P                       | (1994) | A-Z Pocket Book of Symptom Control.                                  |
| Penson, J                     | (1995) | Palliative Care for People with Cancer. 2nd ed.                      |
| Penson, J Fisher, R           | (1991) | Palliative Care for People with Cancer. Edward Arnold.               |
| Regnard, C & Hockley, J       |        | Flow Diagrams in Advanced Cancer and Other Diseases. Arnold.         |
| Saunders, C Sykes, N          | (1993) | The Management of Terminal Malignant Disease. Hodder & Stoughton.    |
| Twycross, R                   | (1997) | Introducing Palliative Care. 2nd edition. Radcliffe.                 |
| Twycross, R G & Lack, S A     | (1990) | Therapeutics in Terminal Cancer. Churchill Livingstone.              |
| Wilks, G                      | (1995) | Cancer and HIV: Clinical Nutrition Pocket Guide. Jones and Bartlett. |
| Wilson-Barnett, J & Raiman, J | (1988) | Nursing Issues and Research in Terminal Care. John Wiley & Sons.     |

## PERSPECTIVES ON DEATH AND DYING

**Module Code:** HAF 704

**Name of Scheme:**

**School(s) Involved in Delivery:** Human and Health Sciences

**Name of Pathway(s):** Diploma in Professional Studies in Palliative Care  
Diploma in Professional Studies (Elderly People)  
ENB 2060, ENB A24, ENB A25.

**Module Tutor:**

**Module Status:** Transferable

**Module Type:** Compulsory for ENB 931

**Module Rating (level and credits):** A 10

**Learning Methods:**

L:	12.00 hours
S:	12.00 hours
U:	44.75 hours
F:	6.25 hours

**Pre-Requisites:**

Normally, the student studying this module will be a health or social care practitioner with an appropriate qualification and relevant experience.

For Registered Nurses a minimum of six months post registration experience is required.

**Recommended Prior Study:** None

**Co-Requisites:** None

**Professional Body Requirements:**

Primary - ENB 10 Key Characteristics: 1.4, 2.3.

Secondary - Rule 18(i): a, b, c, d.

**Barred Combinations:** None

**Module Grading:** Graded

**Module Aims:**

This module aims to provide the student with the opportunity to:

- Recognise the parameters of their professional role, extend and expand these where appropriate to meet the changing needs of their clients, developing the role alongside and in conjunction with other health care workers in changing and differing situations.



- Use knowledge of a range of theories and models of nursing, midwifery or health visiting practice to select appropriate strategies for the management and delivery of care for their specific client group.

### Module Synopsis:

Concept of death and dying will be explored from various perspectives with an opportunity to explore individual attitudes and anti-oppressive practices through examination and reflection on personal experience and professional practice.

### Outline Syllabus:

#### Ageism

Ethical and legal issues related to death and dying

Social and economic consequences of death and dying

Concepts of care of the patient and carers within death and dying

Cultural, religious and ethic differences

Exploring perspectives on loss, death and dying throughout the life span

Spirituality

Concept of suffering

Death in society

### Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

#### Knowledge and Understanding Outcomes

1. Differentiate between and critically analyse a number of perspectives on Death and Dying.
2. Identify and explore cultural and religious influences which affect the nature and experience of death and dying.

#### Ability Outcome

3. Reflect and critically examine attitudes to death and dying and the implications for their specific professional practice.

### Assessment Strategy:

This module provides the student with the opportunity to be developed formatively and assessed summatively.

#### Formative Assessment

As contracted with the module tutor.

The student may use the reflective journal in a formative manner as well as in the summative assessment of practice.

#### Summative Assessment

Students will be assessed in theory and in practice. Each element is of equal weighting. Students will be required to pass both elements of the module to gain credit for the module, but only the theory will be graded.

## Theory

The student is required to submit a written assignment of not more than 2,000 words based upon a critical incident chosen by the participant fulfilling obligations towards confidentiality. Assessed by Tutor. Relates to Learning Outcomes: 1, and 2.

## In-Practice

The student is required to reflect and analyse their practice in relation to Palliative Care Provision. This should be in the form of a focused discussion with peers and colleagues in the clinical area and documented in the reflective journal. Assessed by Preceptor. Relates to Learning Outcome: 3

A critical incident can be understood from the perspective of the Reflective Practitioner to be anything which challenges practice. Schon (1987) defines this as a "Surprise or Variation". Reacting to the surprise or variation provides the opportunity to learn something new, and also alters ones behaviour or practice.

## **Learning Strategy:**

Debates  
Discussions  
Formative assessment feedback  
Interactive group exercises  
Tutorials

## **Indicative References:**

- |                                   |        |  |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--|
| Badhamp, P & Ballard              | (1996) | Facing Death: Interdisciplinary Approach.<br>University of Wales Press, Cardiff. |
| Bowker, J                         | (1993) | The Meaning of Death.<br>Cambridge, Conto  |
| Callwood, J                       | (1986) | Twelve Weeks in Spring.<br>Lester and Orpen Dennys, Toronto.                     |
| Corr A, Nabe C & Corr D           | (1997) | Death and Dying Life and Living.<br>Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, California.  |
| Despeider L A &<br>Strickland A L | (1992) | The Lost Dance. 3rd edition.<br>Mayfield Publishers, London.                     |
| Dickenson, D.<br>Johnson, M       | (1993) | Death, Dying and Bereavement.<br>Sage Publication.                               |
| Field D, Hockey J & Small N       | (1997) | Death, Gender and Ethnicity.<br>Routledge.                                       |
| Fulton, G                         | (1995) | Perspectives on Death and Dying.<br>Jones and Bartlett.                          |
| Glaser, B & Strauss, A            | (1965) | Awareness of Dying.<br>Aldine, Chicago.  |

- |                           |        |  |
|---------------------------|--------|--|
| Glaser, B & Strauss, A    | (1969) | A Time for Dying.<br>Aldine, Chicago.  |
| Helman, C                 | (1990) | Culture, Health and Illness. 3rd ed.   |
| Ignatieff, M              | (1993) | Scar Tissue.<br>Viking, Toronto.   |
| Irish, D                  | (1993) | Ethnic Variations in Dying, Death and Grief -<br>Diversity in Universality.<br>Hemisphere Publication. |
| Kastenbaum R J            | (1995) | Death, Society and Human Experience. 5th edition.<br>Allyn and Bacon.                                  |
| Katz, J & Sidell, M       | (1994) | Easeful Death.<br>Hotter and Stroughton.   |
| Kearl, M.C                | (1990) | Endings, Sociology of Death and Dying.<br>Oxford University Press.                                     |
| Kramer, K                 | (1988) | Sacred Art of Dying: How World Religions<br>Understand Death. Paulist Publication.                     |
| Kubler-Ross, E            | (1973) | On Death and Dying.<br>Tavistock Routledge.  |
| Raiman, J. Wilson-Barrett | (1988) | Nursing Issues and Research in Terminal Care.<br>Wiley.  |
| Walter T                  | (1994) | The Revival of Death.<br>Routledge.  |
| Walter T                  | (1997) | The Eclipse of Eternity: A Sociology of the<br>Afterlife. Macmillan, Basingstoke.                      |
| Wass & Neimeyer           | (1995) | Dying: Facing Facts. 3rd ed.<br>Francis and Taylor.  |

# ENHANCING QUALITY WITH PALLIATIVE AND TERMINAL CARE

**Module Code:** HAF 712

**Name of Scheme:**

**School(s) Involved in Delivery:** Human and Health Sciences

**Name of Pathway(s):** Diploma in Professional Studies in Palliative Care

**Module Tutor:**

**Module Status:** Transferable

**Module Type:** Compulsory for ENB A18

**Module Rating (level and credits):** A 10

**Learning Methods:**

L:	12.00 hours
S:	12.00 hours
U:	44.75 hours
F:	6.25 hours

**Pre-Requisites:**

Normally, the student studying this module will be a health or social care practitioner with an appropriate qualification and relevant experience.

For Registered Nurses a minimum of six months post registration experience is required.

Satisfactory evidence of experience, knowledge and skills equivalent to ENB 931 and ENB 285 Pathways.

**Recommended Prior Study:** None

**Co-Requisites:** None

**Professional Body Requirements:** ENB Key Characteristics: 9.2, 9.4, 9.5, 9.6.

**Barred Combinations:** None

**Module Grading:** Graded

**Module Aims:**

This module aims to provide the student with the opportunity to:

- Use knowledge of national and international practice to review tools for the measurement of quality of care and evaluating current practice.

- Produce a client orientated quality programme, monitoring and evaluating its implementation.
- Develop a quality environment to enable the delivery of a standard of care which will meet the professional values of health care professions.
- Use the results of evaluation to sustain or improve quality of care programmes.

### Module Synopsis:

Audit implements for evaluating standards of practice and client/family and other carers satisfaction measurements will be addressed. These activities and processes will be explored in relation to the concept of 'Quality of Life'.

### Outline Syllabus:

Assessment and measurement methods  
Ethical issues in relation to quality of life and quality of death  
Evaluation of Quality Assessment Tools  
Quality of life and quality of life issues.  
Standard setting

### Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

#### Knowledge and Understanding Outcomes

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the concept of Quality of Life from physical, psychological, social and spiritual perspectives.
2. Identify the factors that affect Quality of Life for the individual client and family members.
3. Demonstrate critical awareness of the standards and factors necessary to provide an environment which will enable the client to achieve their optimum Quality of Life.

#### Ability Outcomes

4. Demonstrate critical awareness of those ethical issues which influence Quality of Life or Quality of Death decisions.
5. Evaluate critically the care environments in the light of observation and assessment of patient progress and professional practices.

### Assessment Strategy (evidence, assessment criteria and assessment weightings):

This module provides the student with the opportunity to be developed formatively and assessed summatively.

#### Formative Assessment

As contracted with the module tutor.

The student may use the reflective journal in a formative manner as well as in the summative assessment of practice.

Summative Assessment

Students will be assessed in theory and in practice. Each element is of equal weighting. Students will be required to pass both elements of the module to gain credit but only the theory will be graded.

Theory:

Submit an essay of not more than 2,000 words comprising of a critical review of measures used to assess the Quality of Life in a practice area of their choice. Assessed by Tutor.

Relates to Learning Outcomes: 1, 2 and 3.

In-Practice:

The student is required to reflect and analyse their practice in relation to the provision of quality care for clients. This should be in the form of a focused discussion with peers and colleagues in the clinical area and documented in the reflective journal. Assessed by Preceptor.

Relates to Learning Outcomes: 4 and 5.

Learning Strategy:

- Debate
- Discussion
- Formative Assessment Feedback
- Seminar
- Tutorials

Indicative References:

- |                                 |        |   |
|---------------------------------|--------|---|
| Albery, N                       | (1993) | Natural Death Handbook: A Manual for Improving the Quality of Living and Dying. Virgin Books. |
| Badham, P & Ballard, P          | (1996) | Facing Death: An Inter-disciplinary Approach. University of Wales Press, Cardiff.             |
| Baldwin, S (Ed)                 | (1989) | Quality of Life: Perspectives and Policies. Routledge.  |
| Birren, J E (Ed)                | (1991) | Concept and Measurement of the Quality of Life in the Frail Elderly. Academic Publ.           |
| Bowling, A                      | (1991) | Measuring Health: Review of Quality of Life Measuring Scales. OUP                             |
| Brown, R I                      | (1992) | Empowerment and Developmental Handicaps. Chapman and Hall.                                    |
| Fallowfield, L                  | (1990) | The Quality Life. Souvenir Press.   |
| Fava, G.A. & Freyburger, H (Ed) | (1991) | Quality of Life in the Medically Ill: A Psychosomatic Approach. Karger.                       |
| George, L K & Bearson, L B      | (1980) | Quality of Life in Older People: Meaning and Measurement. Human Science Publ.                 |

- Hopkins, A (1992) Measures of the Quality of Life: and the Uses to which such Measures may be put. Royal College of Physicians, London.
- Jeffrey, D (1993) 'There is Nothing More I can Do': Introduction to Ethics in Palliative Care. Patten Press.
- Neuberger, J (1997) Good Death. Haigh and Hochland.
- Osoba, D (1991) Effects of Cancer on Quality of Life. CRC.
- Patrick, D L & Erikson, J (1993) Health Status and Health Policy: Quality of Life, Assessment of Health and Allocation of Resources. Oxford University Press.
- Robertson, A & Osborn, A (1985) Planning to Care: Social Policy and the Quality of Life. Gower Publ. Co.
- Strauss, A L (1984) Chronic Illness and the Quality of Life. Mosby.
- Ventafridda, V (Ed) (1986) Assessment of Quality of Life and Cancer Treatment. Elsevier.
- Walter, J J & Shannon, T A (Ed) (1990) Quality of Life: The New Medical Dilemma. Paulist Publ.
- Younge, M (1996) Good Death: Conversations with East Londoners. Routledge.

**REFLECTIVE JOURNAL  
DOCUMENTATION**

Name of Student: .....

Module Code: .....

Name of Preceptor: .....

Context or Setting for Assessment: .....

Date Studied: .....



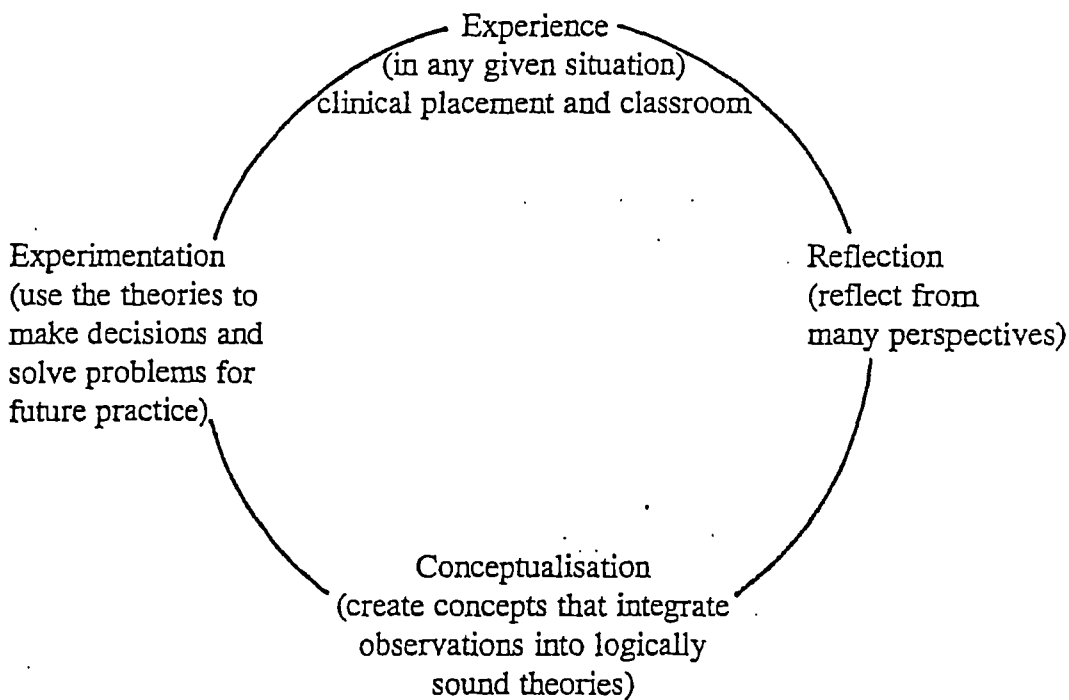
## THE REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

### Rationale

Kolb's (1984) view of learning is that of a continuous process away from the exclusion of the classroom. Thus learning is seen to be the process by which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.

Following this thinking, the belief of this faculty is therefore that students will learn most if they are enabled to find ways of gaining new knowledge from experiences and of applying and evaluating already established theories.

### Kolb's (1984) Cycle in Action



Kolb's framework is only one format for reflective writing.

The Reflective Journal will provide a means through which students are able to analyse, reflect and articulate the significance of the learning from any given situation.

The Journal will therefore include a collation of material to portray self knowledge, self exposure, personal development, skills development, application of skills and analysis of the learning process.

## **Elements of the Reflective Journal**

The Reflective Journal requires the selection and evaluation of key or significant events and clarification of the significance attached to them in terms of personal development.

The Journal provides a useful focus through which students clarify their own learning agenda, analyse their own learning as a first step to helping others. Such a process will enable the students to apply the steps logically in reassessing clinical practice.

## **How to Use the Journal**

This Journal will inform the developmental tool for this module/modules/pathway.

Students reflect on their experiences and record these experiences in the Journal. Thus the Journal will be used to note significant learning, focusing on the module's ability learning outcomes. Learning in the classroom and clinical placement areas to be documented.

The extended knowledge gained and applied in practice should fulfil the outcomes synonymous with the English National Board Framework and Higher Award.

It is a personal choice regarding how to write your journal, but if you are in any doubt your Pathway Tutor will be pleased to help.

Your completed reflective evidence should be attached to this documentation and should be submitted with your preceptor's completed process recordings.

## Interview Schedule.

You have reflected upon an episode ..... within your journal.

1. Did writing in the journal help you to reflect on your experience and the feelings you had during that experience?
2. Did writing about your experience help you to analyse that experience?
3. As you wrote about your experience were you able to create ideas that enabled you to link theory and practice?
4. Did the process of writing in journal about your experiences make you aware of the learning achieved and how you would apply this theory?
5. Did it also make you aware of further learning that was needed to help you in the future.
6. What skills do you think you are required to help you reflect and did the writing of the journal help you to develop those skills.
7. Journal writing is now being encouraged as a way of promoting reflective practice. Do you believe that this should be encouraged?
8. Do you feel that the guidance and support you received from your teacher and preceptor enabled you to understand the task of journal writing?

## APPENDIX SEVENTEEN

Coding scheme of reflective process [derived from Boud et al.'s [1985] model  
Adapted by Wong et al. [1995]

Code	Elements of reflective process	Criteria	Remarks
1.	Attending to feelings	Utilizing positive feelings  Removing obstructing feelings	about the experience  remove impediments related to experience
2.	Association	Linking of prior knowledge, feelings or attitudes with new knowledge, feeling and attitude	relating the old and the new making way for the new
3.	Integration	Seeking the nature of relationships of prior knowledge, feelings or attitudes with new knowledge, feelings or attitudes. Arriving at insights.	Relating the old and the new Synthesis Emerging originality
4.	Validation	Testing for internal consistency between new appreciations and prior knowledge or beliefs.	
5.	Appropriation	Making knowledge, one's own New knowledge, feelings or attitude entering into own sense of identity New knowledge, feelings or attitudes becoming a significant force in own life	
6.	Outcome of reflection	Transformation in perspectives Change in behaviour Readiness for application Commitment to action	

**Extracts from Reflective Diary.**

*Reflective Journals*

April 1999 - October 1999.

I have now managed to gain access to forty-two reflective journals, having contacted eighty-one students. I had anticipated that more of the students would have agreed to take part in the study. I was aware however, of the sensitivity attached to the keeping of reflective journals and that some students may not wish to share the content with other people. I do respect their views.

I have now read through all the journals once. Some were hand written others were typed. The format was easy to follow as the students had largely followed the guidelines for completion of the journal. In a few cases the handwriting was a little difficult to read however, I could understand what was being reflected upon.

I am already starting to realise the magnitude of the task of analysis. As I read through the journals, even though I am not coding them at this stage, I was aware of the elements of the reflective process and the criteria against which I would be attempting to judge the content of the journals.

I have now analysed ten journals. I have read and reread each journal several times. The students used a different model as a guide to reflection to the model I am using for analysis. I really wanted to use the Boud et al. model as it appeared from the literature to be one that had been used in a small number of research studies and appeared to be most suitable.

As it was not the model used by students it was difficult to match the content of the journal to the criteria I was using. I had to consider each paragraph as an episode of reflection and then try to see into which category it would fit most readily. Some of the content could be coded fairly easily, but other aspects were not so straight-forward. I had to constantly remember and apply the five principles of coding which I decided to use as developed by Wong and Chung [1993].

I found that some of the students attempted to be analytical with their writing of a journal. Most of the journals contained large elements of description. Some were totally descriptive.

I was fascinated by the episodes that the students had written. Most were extremely enthusiastic about the care they were delivering and they stated that they found their roles satisfying. I was also struck by the very sad circumstances that the students were writing about.

Quite a lot of the content related to death and dying in the field of Palliative Care. There was also a strong emphasis on the diagnosis of breast cancer and the implications that had for patients and their families. I had to try and

distance myself from the emotional content and analyse the content as objectively as possible. I did find that difficult to do at times.

I was most aware of the very sensitive nature of the content and felt I wanted to commend the students on the detail presented. Some were able to say how therapeutic it was to write their reflection down. Some said it helped them unburden themselves when dealing with such sensitive issues.

Some of the journal content could have easily been coded under the heading of association or integration according to the Boud et al. Model as these criteria seemed very similar. I really had to differentiate these two by looking for evidence of insight. This proved be the most challenging area of the analysis. The process of analysis took me much longer than I had anticipated.

Allocating students to the categories of Non-reflector, Reflector and Critical Reflector was reasonably straightforward.

As I worked on the analysis the other rater was analysing a separate set of journals. We met frequently to talk about the process and the difficulties related to coding. We did not however, discuss individual students until we had both completed the analysis fully.

### **Extracts from the diary of issues related to Interviews.**

November 1999 - March 2000.

#### *Undertaking Interviews.*

I undertook two pilot interviews prior to commencing the interviews as part of the study. During the first interview I realised that I needed to probe more around the question with the interviewees to get the information I needed. I also needed to rephrase my questions in a more conversational style and wait for the reply. I had to keep in mind that I was interested in their response and not my interpretation of the question. I found the second interview went better.

Some of the respondents were not able to make the link between skills required for reflection and whether the writing had enhanced these skills. I had to prompt on a number of occasions.

I was a little surprised at how coherently the students spoke about the role of reflection and journal writing. The process of analysis talked about during the interview was often not demonstrated in their journals, which was a little disappointing. I had to try not to influence the students' response by my questioning technique.

I felt my interviewing skills improved over time although some of the respondents were much more verbose than others and that did influence how well the interviews flowed.

Most respondents however, were keen to talk about the role of journals in promoting reflection.

I have now completed the three telephone interviews. This was my first experience of this technique. I was concerned that I may not always be able to relay the complete meaning through my questions. At times I did need to rephrase the questions; however, this did not seem to be any different to my experience with face-to-face interviews. The interviewees were very keen to talk about their experiences of writing a journal. Of course it is not possible to pick up the non-verbal cues using this technique. The interviewees spoke most coherently about journal writing.

The greatest challenge was recording the content of their replies to my questions. I explained that I did need time to write as we spoke. I did not have facilities to record the content of our interviews as we spoke. I would pursue those facilities if I had to undertake telephone interviews in the future. I did find it a most useful learning experience.

I found the interviews of the two teachers and the three preceptors went quite smoothly. I had gained more experience of the process and felt more at ease with the process by this stage.

March-July 2000.

I have now completed all the interviews of the students, teachers and preceptors. Initially, I thought I would record field notes however, I found I had little to record following the interviews so I just recorded briefly some of my thoughts in the reflective diary.

I transcribed all the interviews as soon after the interviews as possible as I felt it would assist me with the process of analysis. This was a long slow process. I did however enjoy listening to what the interviewees had to say. Overall they were most enthusiastic about the use of journals.

I have had five transcripts member checked. This included three students, one teacher, and a preceptor. They agreed that the content was overall a correct interpretation of what was said.

#### *Analysis of the interview transcript.*

The interview transcripts were read and reread. I made jottings at the side of the page as I read. Broad headings were created and reviewed constantly in order to decide the eventual category headings that reflected the content of what was being said. This was challenging and not quite what the textbooks said. I found I had almost to create my own system of colour coding the content that was similar, and then cutting and pasting unto large sheets of paper. I had to keep referring back to the original complete interviews to ensure I had not lost the meaning of what was being said. This was very time consuming but fulfilling as I was fascinated by the interviewees response. I was a times surprised by their responses. I thought they might be less enthusiastic about the use of journals as that had been my experience with

students. I had to try and be as objective as possible to interpret what was being said and its true meaning and not let any of my views on the use of journals influence what was said.

The students emphasised the value of talking as well as writing. This made me reflect on the guidance that I gave students on journal writing. In the future I must emphasise the importance of talking and writing to promote reflection and learning.

An area that was highlighted was the importance of time management in relation to reflection and writing. They were also concerned about the issue of confidentiality and disclosure. While there are positive and negative aspects to disclosure I had anticipated that the negative aspects would have dominated. This was not the case.

#### *Teachers Interviews.*

They were both very keen to talk about their experiences of journal writing with the students. They were most positive about their experiences. They did indicate that a lot of time needed to be spent on helping the students with writing.

#### *Preceptors Interviews.*

Although specific questions were asked regarding the guidance students required, and their preparation for the role, they also wanted to talk about the process of reflection. They seemed to value the opportunity to talk about their experiences with students.