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Use of role plays to enhance and assess students' communication and helping skills

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Social relationships lie at the heart of our humanness and, in turn,
communication lies at the heart of our relationships (Rogers & Escudero, 2004, p.3)

UTLC September 2006

Some definitions

Social skill

'the ability to interact with others in a given social context in specific ways that are socially acceptable... personally beneficial, mutually beneficial, or beneficial primarily to others' (Combs & Slaby, 1977, p.162)

Communication skills

'refer to the ability to realize communicative goals while behaving in a socially appropriate manner' (Kelly *et al.*, 2003, p.724)

'To perform skillfully, the individual must be able to identify the emotions or intent expressed by the other person and make sophisticated judgements about the form and timing of the appropriate response' (Becker *et al.*, 1987, p.9)

Helping skills

‘Helping is a two-way, collaborative process’
(Egan 1998, p.7)

Skilled Helper Model (Egan 1998, p.25)

- Identifying and clarifying problem situations
- Helping clients determine what they need and want
- Helping clients discover how to get what they need and want

Elements of social skills

- Are learned
- Are composed of specific verbal and non-verbal behaviours
- Entail appropriate initiations and responses
- Maximise available rewards from others
- Require appropriate timing and control of specific behaviours
- Are influenced by prevailing contextual factors

How can these be developed and assessed within a module?

Developing competence

Wilson & Sabee (2003) suggest three qualities associated with competence:

1. Knowledge (knowing what one *should* do)
2. Motivation (the *desire* to do it)
3. Skill (*ability* to do it)

Do our courses facilitate all three qualities?

Want to help students move through:

- Unconscious incompetence
- Conscious incompetence
- Conscious competence
- Unconscious competence

Hargie, 2006

Developing skills

- Microteaching/microtraining (short sessions in small groups focussing on specific skills)
 - Preparation, *sensitisation*, evaluation
- But critiqued as very 'reductionist', e.g.:
 - whole communication more than some of the parts (so *more about honing in on specific skills*)
 - spontaneity and genuineness lost (so *initial performance dip, but later automaticity can return*)

Module details

Consultation and reflection element:

- Evaluate appropriate use of a variety of helping and counselling skills.
- Use relevant theory of counselling to critically evaluate the consultation process.
- Identify personal strengths and weaknesses in their communication skills.

Role Play Outlines

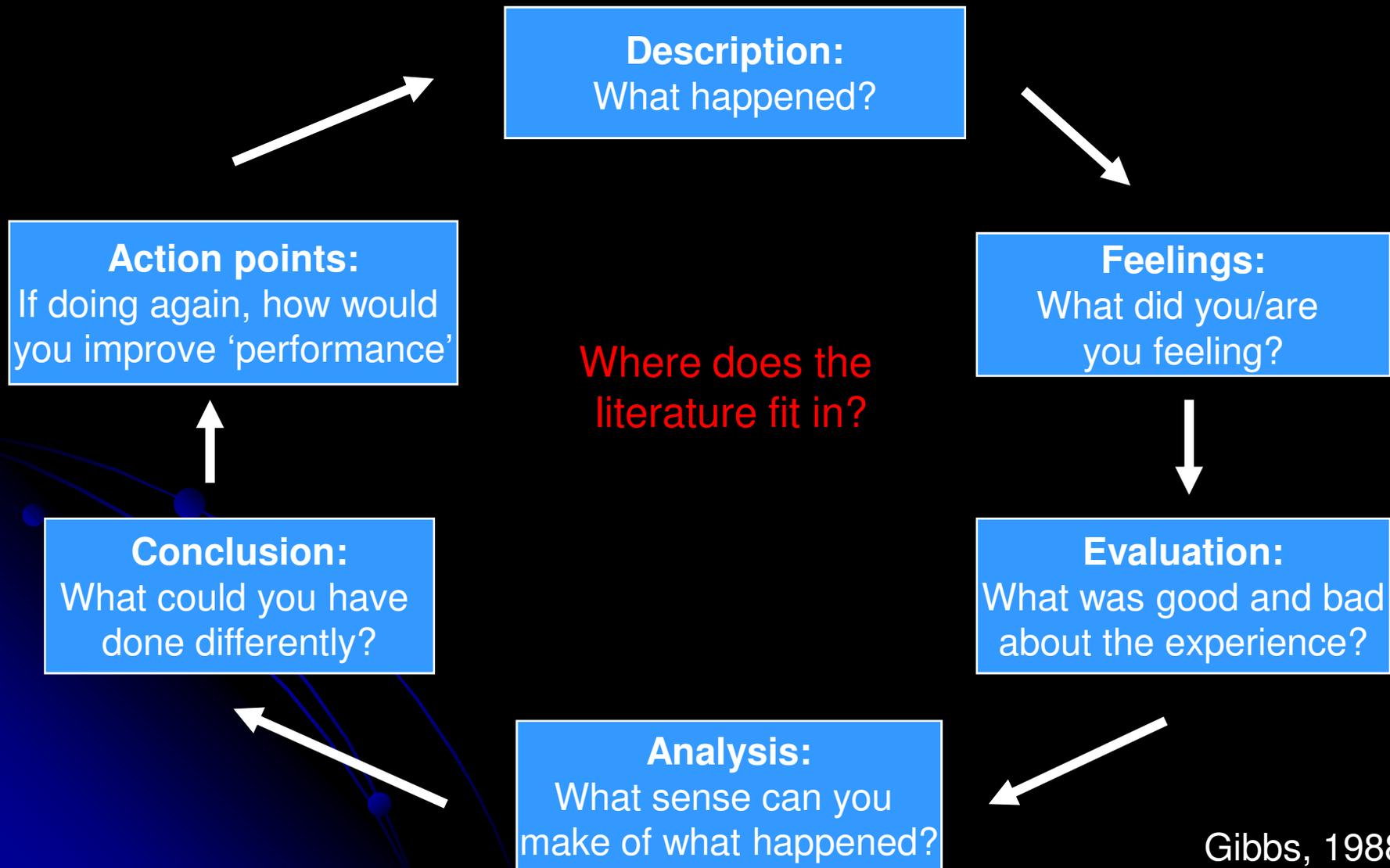
- Demographics
- Involvement in physical activity/sport
- Why you have sought advice / What you hope to achieve

Have ago (in threes)

- Please work in threes
- One person plays the *helper*, one the *client* and one the *observer*
- Please read the relevant instructions

- Instructions/Handouts
- Reflection

The reflective cycle



Gibbs, 1988

When should you reflect?

- Reflection in action
 - During the action
- Reflection on action
 - Post action
- Multi-stages reflection
 - Combining reflection at different stages

How might this relate to your role play reflective practices?

Ways of reflecting

- Talking

- Alone
- With others

mental replay, imagery
post action debrief

- Writing

- Alone
- With others

reflective journal writing
reviewing critical moments

- Reading

- Alone
- With others

professional guidelines
sharing readings of good practice

- Observation

- Alone
- With others

of others in similar situations (e.g., video)
listening to audio/video-tapes of interaction
with others

Richards & Ghaye, 2004

Ask yourself...

- What did I think?
- What did I hear?
- What did I see?
- How did I feel?
- What did I say?
- What did others say?
- What action did I take (how did I respond)?

Clips

- See actual role play outline (for S)

Exerts from focus groups

- **Transferability of skills**

“the skills that I learnt in...the role plays actually helped me to gain more information for my dissertation”

- **Ability to empathise**

“...greater understanding ...about how they are feeling, as opposed to me just wanting them to do things, it's sort of looking at it from their point of view”

Exerts from focus groups

- **Improvements in communication skills**

“you concentrate on your listening skills...you’re thinking what are they actually saying and you develop from there as opposed to just going through a list of questions”

- **Usefulness of video**

“...especially when you watch it back with someone else because other people pointed out things that you just don’t see”

Critique

- Who chooses the pairs? (Choose their own partners?)
- Extent of relating to relevant theory
- Not taking advantage of practice role plays
- Making better use of IT
- Objectivity in assessment / moderation

Some readings/references

- Dryden, W. & Feltham, C. (1992). *Brief counselling: A practical guide for beginning practitioners*. Buckingham: The OU Press.
- Egan, G. (1994). *Exercises in helping skills: A manual to accompany the skilled helper (5th edition)*. Pacific Grove, Cal.: Brooks/Cole Publishing.
- Hargie, O. (Ed). (2006). *The handbook of communication skills (3rd edition)*. London: Routledge.