Robert

[Company name]  [Company address]

Nursing Assignment Sample 1

# Abstract

The importance of reflection in nursing profession is well recognised in literature. Reflection is popularly said to form the basis of professional wisdom and promote critical thinking in nursing professionals. Based on this theme, the essay was aimed at discussing the manner in which reflective practice might be used as a tool for nursing professionals. Findings of the essay are indicative of the fact that reflection helps nursing professionals (especially new graduates) in clinical practice in several ways. This includes empowering them to make autonomous decisions, enhancing critical thinking, helping them make professional connections and confirming with professional standards of practice. Furthermore, reflection also enhances a professional’s ability to better anticipate care needs of individuals, stay away from stereotyping behaviours and be more vigilant of their workplaces. In summary, reflective practice serves as an important tool for nursing professionals by helping them improve their care delivery.

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# Introduction

Reflection has been recognized as exceptionally important especially in context of nursing. Research on the importance of reflection in nursing practice indicates that medical errors might be partly attributed to the inability of nursing professionals to reflect on their practice and incorporate reflection in their profession. With increasing technological sophistication and patient acuity owing to ageing populations, it is even more vital that nursing professionals develop the ability to think independently and critically (Bahreini et al,2012). Underling the importance of reflection in practice further, research indicates that reflection is the key to developing and maintaining expertise. Reflection has also been recognised as a learning tool for nursing professionals (De Swardt et al, 2012). Reflection empowers a nursing practitioner to see things from a different perspective followed by developing insights on the experience. This serves to make it a valuable learning experience. Reflection also allows nursing practitioners to improve on their clinical practice promotes autonomous behaviour and consequently allows them to improve on quality of care provided to patients (Bogo et al, 2011).

With regard to the above discussion, the main aim of this essay is to understand how reflective practice might be used as a tool for nursing professionals. The essay would specifically focus on the perspective of newly graduated nursing professionals making a transition into professional practice from their student life.

# Reflection as a tool for nursing professionals

In accordance with a definition provided by the Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC), reflective practice might be defined as a skilled activity in which the individual involved in the activity tends to describe and analyse his/her thoughts, feelings, actions and behaviours followed about making judgements about their effectiveness (Bogo et al, 2011).

While discussing the importance of reflection as a tool for nursing professionals, it might be indicated that reflective practice enables nursing professionals to make sense of each new situation encountered. Reflective practice serves as a tool for nursing professionals by making them capable of applying personal knowledge, constructing an action plan, testing the plan constructed and making adjustments as required (Ganzer & Zauderer, 2013). This is especially applicable in context of new graduates as the phase of transition to practical nursing might be exceptionally difficult for them. They might be required to provide quality care to a variety of patients with diverse cultural backgrounds, beliefs and value sets. Under these circumstances, it would be essential for nursing professionals to possess the capability of examining their own behaviour and that of others during situations at hand (De Swardt et al, 2012).

Reflective practice might be considered as an important tool for nursing professionals as the process of thinking tends to promote systematic thinking and reduce prevalence of practice errors. New graduates while transitioning to practice based nursing from their student life might be faced with several challenges including the lack of systematic thinking. In such a situation, reflective practice with the help of its models might encourage systematic thinking. One such reflective model is Kobe’s Experiential Learning Cycle (Asselin, 2011). This model of reflection promotes systematic thinking by encouraging nursing professionals to engage in reflective observation, gain new insights from the experience and then use these insights to newly encountered situations (Hayman et al, 2012). Similarly, Gibbs’s Reflective Cycle encourages a nursing professional to think systematically by first describing the experience without making any interpretations. This is followed by listing out personal feelings and evaluating the experience in terms of its outcomes. The experience might then be analysed in light of other incidents and the literature and an action plan might be devised on findings. Systematic thinking in every situation might also serve to reduce practice errors (Asselin et al, 2013).

Reflective practice allows nursing professionals to treat each situation as new and complex while being aware of their own influences, reasoning and assumption which might affect the process. This ensures that nurses are sensitive to the needs of their patients and are not imposing their own thinking on their patients and their family members (Bahreini et al,2012). For example, a nursing professional might encounter a patient who is particularly non-compliant with his/her medication regime. Reflective practice in this context would enable a nursing professional to not completely blame the patient or his/her family members for non-compliance (Laverty, 2012). A reflective nursing professional would understand that the patient might be non-compliant owing to personal perceptions based in cultural backgrounds. These might include apprehensions regarding content of medication, difficulties in understanding action of prescribed medications and language difficulties (Lawrence, 2011).

Reflective practice might also be considered as an important tool for nursing professionals as it helps them in avoiding burnout. Research indicates that nursing professionals soon upon their graduation are expected to function within high stress environments. They are required to multitask, cover for their team members and be a part of long and tiring shifts (Lewis, 2012). Exposure to such an environment (especially soon upon graduation) often results in burnout. In such cases, reflection helps nursing professionals reconnect with their passion for their profession and avoid burnout. Reflective practice encourages nursing professionals to effectively reflect on their care provision and value the fact that they have played an active role in making life better for so many individuals. This helps nursing professionals in considering their profession as rewarding instead of frustrating thereby enabling them to provide better care to their patients (Moon, 2013).

Nursing professionals are also expected to engage in continuous learning and improve upon the aspect of care that they provide to their patients. In this context, reflection helps nursing professionals to engage with literature on a constant basis and upgrade their skills (Lawrence, 2011). Reflection also helps nursing professionals develop appropriate communication and professional skills so as to anticipate care needs of individuals who do not readily interact or have a diminished ability to correctly express their concerns and care needs (Ganzer & Zauderer, 2013).

The process of critical reflection in nursing profession has been recognised as capable of transforming the entire process of learning. Reflection opens a path towards professional wisdom and encourages a professional to rationally examine assumptions, base actions on questions and focus on presumptions which might relate to a problem at hand (Asselin, 2011). A reflective professional is therefore less likely to stereotype individuals or be biased in her opinion. Based on her reflective practice, a nursing professional would be able to keep her personal opinions about a situation aside and rationally judge a situation. For example, a reflective nursing professional responsible for caring for an aggressive black male patient would refrain from stereotypical thinking (Asselin et al, 2013). She would not blame the patient’s behaviour on his cultural or ethnic background but would try to pin point medical and environmental reasons which might have caused this behaviour. She would also try and reflect on immediate communication with the patient and would try to locate is she or any other colleague might have accidently said/done something hurtful. In summary, reflective practice would serve as a useful tool by promoting cultural intelligence in nursing professionals (Laverty, 2012).

Reflective practice in nursing professionals might also be recognised as a tool which promotes holistic functioning of individuals. Research studies are indicative of the fact that nursing professionals while engaging in reflective practice to look for patterns and meanings within their experiences and their practice also often extend this search for meanings and patterns to their clients (Lewis, 2012). This in turn helps nursing professionals in becoming holistic healers. For example, a holistic healer might believe symptoms like pain and disease as signs of inner conflicts within the patient. Holistic healers might also consider that disability or disease is a process than can only be completely understood within context of its personal values and meanings (Moon, 2013). Reflection in this context promotes qualities like self-worth, empathy and identity. Reflection allows a practitioner to clearly see differences between practice and personal values of individuals. Therefore, reflective practice might serve as a tool by promoting behavioural changes (Tashiro et al, 2013).

Reflective practice also serves to benefit professionals by promoting creation n maintenance of healthy relationships with self and others. Nursing while working in a collaborative environment are not just responsible for caring for a wide variety of patients, but also for establishing respectful relationships with their colleagues (Hayman et al, 2012). This can only be achieved if a nursing professional is able to identify and respect the fact that each individual is unique and thrives on his/her own set of values and beliefs (Laverty, 2012). Nursing professionals (especially new graduates) often find it difficult to adjust and work with their colleagues who do not share the same values as they do. Engaging in reflective practice helps these professionals in rising above their personal beliefs, knowledge and assumptions of right and wrong and connects with others as human beings. Reflective practice thereby serves as a tool by promoting a sense of common sense making and salience (Lawrence, 2011).

Literature serves to recognise the importance of reflection in nursing practice by suggesting that it promotes autonomy in professionals. Nursing professionals (especially new graduates) might not be completely confident in their practice. They might rely on instructions provided to them by their mentors or their seniors and might look towards them to ensure that they are not making any medication error (Asselin et al, 2013). Reflective practice in this context serves to improve confidence in practice and promote autonomy. Nursing professionals constantly engaging in reflective practice might be able to learn from their own experiences and might begin to develop their individual action plan for dealing with emergencies and situations (Lewis, 2012). They might also begin to distinguish between behaviours and actions that are acceptable in their work environment from those that might not be acceptable in the work environment. Therefore, reflection might serve as an important tool for nursing professionals by promoting a sense of empowerment and satisfaction (Tashiro et al, 2013).

Research indicates that nursing professionals are often encountered with patient behaviours which do not have a proper explanation in literature and sometimes even in medical science. Newly graduated nursing professionals rely heavily on standards and theoretical models of practice which have been taught in nursing schools (Hayman et al, 2012). These models however might not be completely applicable in actual practice as patient behaviours might deviate from scientific explanations. Reflection in this context empowers a nursing professional to tolerate ambiguity and deploy her common sense in combination with best practice standards so as to facilitate best care possible(Lawrence, 2011).

Reflection in clinical practice also serves to promote observation behaviour which is an extremely important quality to have in professional nursing practice. Newly graduated nurses might find themselves grossly involved with a variety of tasks in their work environment leaving them with little time to observe activities around them (Lewis, 2012). Engaging in reflective practice in these circumstances would serve to make nursing professionals aware that they can also significantly learn from professional experiences of others around them thereby making them more vigilant of their surroundings (Moon, 2013). This vigilance developed as a result of engaging in reflective practice might then be deployed to other professional responsibilities such as being watchful of clinical errors in the practice setting, being watchful of communication styles and practices adopted by senior colleagues and asking meaningful questions regarding why certain actions were performed over others. Reflective practice might therefore serve as a tool by promoting vigilance in practice setting (Prilla et al, 2012).

Finally, reflection might serve as an important tool for nursing professionals by helping them in complying with professional and legal standards of their practice. Professional codes of nursing practice are suggestive of the fact that nursing professionals are required to provide the best possible care to all their patients and are required to reflect on their practice (Laverty, 2012). Reflection in these circumstances serves as a tool by empowering professionals to comply with standards of care delivery. Reflective practice also empowers nursing professionals to comply with ethical standards of care delivery as it promotes understanding of individuals and feelings like empathy and respect for individuality (Prilla et al, 2012).

# Conclusion

Looking at the above discussion, it might be concluded that reflection is an important tool for nursing practitioners (especially new graduates). Reflection enables new graduate to learn from their surroundings and be vigilant at their workplace. Reflection also serves to promote autonomous behaviour at the workplace as professionals would be able to reflect and learn from their previous experiences thereby gaining more insights into their practice. Reflection allows nursing professionals with professional standard of care delivery in Australia and empowers them to develop qualities like understanding, empathy and the capability of being a holistic healer. Furthermore, reflection enables nursing professionals to develop critical thinking in clinical practice by sticking with popular reflective models such as Kobe’s Experiential Learning and Gibb’s Reflective Cycle. Reflection promotes healthy relationships between colleagues and helps nursing professionals in valuing the uniqueness of every individual and staying away from judging others by their own presumptions. Reflective nursing professionals also tend to refrain from stereotyping their patients and take more efforts to understand each and every individual along with any personal and environmental influences on them. Reflection has also been recognised to help nursing professionals in staying connected with their profession and avoiding burnout. With the help of critical reflection, nursing professionals might be able to actively engage in the process of continuous learning and might be able to regularly update their skill set thereby enabling them to provide better quality care to all their patients.

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